

Appendix C – Local Authority Case Studies

- London Borough of Croydon
- London Borough of Southwark
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)
- London Borough of Richmond

London Borough of Croydon – an individually councillor-led scheme to empower backbench councillors and hold them accountable

Croydon's ward budget programme contrasts to Westminster in a number of ways, but mostly in that it is individually councillor-led. Rather than separating allocations out by ward, each of the 70 councillors receive £8,000 per year for community initiatives that benefit Croydon. Councillors receive training to make sure the money is spent in accordance with the principles of the scheme and sign a declaration to ensure, for example, that projects cannot be used for political lobbying purposes. Online applications go straight to councillors, rather than to officers. There are approximately 500-600 payments made per year, but very few over £10,000 and the pot rolls over indefinitely. There is a minimum spend of £250 and the average amount granted is approximately £1,000. Most funds are paid in arrears, however, unlike Westminster, there are instances where funds are paid upfront. The scheme prohibits funds to be spent on mainstream activities of an organisation.

This system empowers backbench members to take decisions and encourage projects that directly benefit their local area, as officer involvement is limited to providing advice and granting final approval. Councillors are responsible for agreeing priorities and seeking groups to come forward to apply. Individual pots alleviate problems created by politically split wards and makes councillors individually accountable for how money is spent. Some wards, such as Sanderstead, dedicate a proportion of their money to local Resident Associations, which empowers local community groups to decide on how best to spend this pot. There is a requirement on applicants to acknowledge support from the ward budget fund in any communications.

London Borough of Southwark – a structured programme consisting of multiple and themed funding pots

Under the umbrella of the Empowering Communities programme, Southwark holds twice-yearly meetings for five multi-ward areas across the Borough. These areas are made up of 4-5 wards. This is an opportunity for organisations to present funding applications from the below schemes and decisions are made by councillors at these meetings based on set guidelines. An application period is held annually between September and October. Officers review applications (which have deadlines according to the dates of the multi-ward meetings) before they are presented to councillors and manage the administration of the meetings. The pots that fall under the programme are:



City of Westminster

- **Cleaner Greener Safer** – a £1.8 million pot for capital projects. This pot is more ideas-based where specific officers investigate the feasibility of proposals. Past examples include playground renovations and tree planting.
- **Neighbourhoods Fund** – a £630,000 pot for revenue projects between £500 and £5,000 that start at the beginning of the financial year. This equates to each councillor getting £10,000, but decisions are made collectively. Approximately 370 applications are received and 220 funded. Businesses cannot apply and groups have to be constituted.
- **Devolved Highways Fund** – a fund for capital improvement to Southwark's highways and transport.

Southwark's scheme is therefore structured in terms of application rounds and assessments and decisions are made by larger areas rather than single or multiple wards, of which there are 23. Individual wards meet 3-4 times annually to promote the grants to residents and brainstorm ideas for community projects, therefore empowering community leadership and facilitating democratic engagement. Contrasting with Westminster, organisations are paid in advance. Suitable monitoring is required in order to demonstrate project success.

[Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea \(RBKC\)](#)

The City Living, Local Life scheme at RBKC, from the case studies considered above, is most closely aligned to Westminster's programme in terms of process. Predominately adopted from 2012, the scheme aims to build relationships and be approachable and accessible to community and voluntary organisations. The scheme provides each ward with between £21,000 - £30,000 to spend each year, depending on the size of the ward, on mainly short-term projects.

Key points of note include:

- Funds are paid to applicants upfront. Organisations are trusted and expected to provide monitoring of spend.
- Where local ward councillors would like this to happen, local area forums are being set up as a means to engage local residents and support decision-making at a local level. These are forums for ward councillors and residents to meet and discuss local issues, with the potential for residents to have a say on priorities which could feed into potential projects.
- Individual wards have autonomy with regards to specific rules under the umbrella of the scheme and what to approve. This is in place to represent the uniqueness of each area and for ward councillors to exercise a level of discretion over what they deem to be a priority in their ward.
- Profit-making organisations are not considered for funding and the scheme is not for salaries or to support ongoing organisation costs.



London Borough of Richmond

As part of the rolling Local Area Fund which started in June 2020, each ward, of which there are 18, has £10,000 to spend on local initiatives. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made this scheme even more necessary and the scheme welcomes applications that focus on community rebuilding. The scheme is funded through Council as well as Neighbourhood CIL funding. Key points to note include:

- There is an 'ideas' stage prior to any formal application to ensure suitability and eligibility. Once the idea has been reviewed by officers and received support from at least one councillor, organisations will be invited to apply formally. All councillors in a ward need to approve at the formal stage for it to proceed. The final approval of grant awards is made by the Assistant Chief Executive.
- There is a minimum spend of £100 and no expectation of future funding.
- Individuals can apply providing they acquire a partner organisation who can hold their grant funds. Profit-making organisations can apply, but only for not-for-profit projects that benefit the local community.
- Organisations receive funding upfront and are required to submit evaluation forms so that the success of their projects can be recorded.
- 'Community Conversations', as part of Richmond's community engagement initiative, are a forum where the Local Area Fund is communicated to local residents and communities and residents have an opportunity to influence priorities with their elected representatives.