

Proposed Reduction to Community Initiative Fund (CIF) Budget: Feedback from Members of the Council

All 70 members of the Council were invited to submit comments to the Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities on the proposed reduction to the CIF budget. The deadline for this was 10 January and this paper summarises the responses received. Any comments relating to the crowdfunding approach will also be considered as part of the review of the West Sussex Crowd in Spring 2019.

1. Responses received

A total of 17 responses were received, equating to a low (24%) response rate. The spread of these based on County Local Committees (CLCs) is as follows:

Adur	2
Arun (Eastern)	1
Arun (Western)	0
Chichester (North)	0
Chichester (South)	1
Crawley	4
Horsham (Chanctonbury)	1
Horsham (North)	2
Mid Sussex (Central and South)	4
Mid Sussex (North)	1
Worthing	1

2. Summary of responses – key themes

Of the seventeen responses, there were three members who accepted the reduction and thirteen who did not. Most of these thirteen raised concerns regarding the crowdfunding approach, suggesting that it is too rigid and complex to use for applicants, and that this has led to a reduction in applications for funding. Several members felt that the West Sussex Crowd is “one-size fits all” approach which is particularly difficult for the smaller community organisations reliant on volunteers, and requested a more mixed approach, using both crowdfunding and (for smaller groups and projects) a return to the previous approach to CIF allocation.

a) Acceptance of the proposed budget reduction: three members supported the reduction of the CIF budget in view of the pressures on the Council’s budget, with one commenting that “the current funding is more than adequate for the applications we have been receiving” and that “given the financial pressures we have, this reduction feels logical”.

b) Concerns raised: issues and concerns raised by the thirteen members who did not support the reduction in the CIF budget are set out below:

- The process for making applications is difficult and time-consuming, particularly for small local organisations which do not have the resources to complete the application process. Many rely on

volunteers, who may not have the necessary skills or capacity. Several members suggested that the crowdfunding approach has led to a reduction in applications.

- Not all CLCs regularly fail to allocate their CIF budget – with one member commenting that their CLC “always managed to allocate all of our CIF funds and have always been over-subscribed with applications”.
- Concern regarding the commission paid to Spacehive (the crowdfunding provider) reducing funds available to the applicant.
- That the proposed reduction is the precursor to getting rid of CLCs.
- It is too soon to be looking to reduce the CIF budget as the crowdfunding approach has been in place for less than a year and has not yet been reviewed.
- That the proposed reduction in CIF would impact most on support for vulnerable residents and the voluntary sector.

c) Alternative options: a number of suggestions were put forward, including:

- Wait until crowdfunding has been in place for a full year, and review this approach fully before considering any reduction to the CIF budget.
- Look to make staff savings in other areas of the Council to avoid any reductions to the CIF budget.
- £2,000 could be given direct to members to allocate, rather than pooling through CLCs.
- To make the original CIF application process available for smaller organisations, meaning a mixed approach, still using crowdfunding for appropriate projects.
- Allocate an equal amount to each local member to spend on community projects in their divisions, without going through the crowdfunding process, with simple criteria for smaller groups run by volunteers to apply to.