

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

- (1) That the current Member Ward Fund Allocation Scheme be ceased with immediate effect.**
- (2) That current commitments to date in 2025/2026 be honoured but that no further applications be considered and approved beyond 16 October 2025.**
- (3) That further consideration be given to the Ward Fund Scheme, and funding allocation, to be applied in 2026/2027 as part of the 2026/2027 budget setting process.**

2. Date of decision

16 October 2025

3. Reasons for decision

To incur savings in the existing Council Budget which is under considerable financial pressure.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

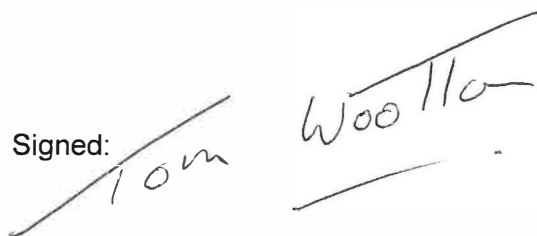
The alternative of continuing the scheme in 2025/2026 was rejected given the in-year financial position of the Council. The further option of reducing the amount of the overall Member Ward Fund Budget to £100,000 in 2025/2026 was rejected as commitments to date exceed this figure and, therefore, it was deemed more appropriate to cease the Ward Fund Scheme altogether with immediate effect.

5. How decision is to be funded

The current commitments will be funded from the Member Ward Fund Scheme Budget.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

Signed: 

Date: **16 October 2025**

Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Tom Wootton**

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: Thursday 16 October 2025

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:27October2025.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in..... NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Mayoral Decision

Date of Decision: 16 October 2025

Report by: Service Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer

Subject: MEMBER WARD FUNDS SCHEME

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To cease the existing Member Ward Fund Allocation Scheme with immediate effect for the remainder of 2025/2026.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the current Member Ward Fund Allocation Scheme be ceased with immediate effect.
- 2.2 That current commitments to date in 2025/2026 be honoured but no further applications be approved beyond 16 October 2025.
- 2.3 That further consideration be given to the Ward Fund Scheme, and funding allocation, to be applied in 2026/2027 as part of the 2026/2027 budget setting process.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To incur savings in the existing Council Budget which is under considerable financial pressure.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 To cease the allocation of Member Ward Funds with effect from 7 October 2025. The current commitments made by Ward Councillors will be honoured and those payments made to external organisations and relevant internal service areas, following receipt of required documentation. Members are to be advised of the cease of the Ward Fund allocations.

4.2 The total budget for Ward Fund allocations is £340,000 (£2.62 per Elector).

4.3 The Ward Fund Scheme is used by Ward Councillors to allocate funds to various organisations and to support service areas to deliver specific projects within their ward.

5. DETAILS

5.1 The Member Ward Fund is administered by the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager and involves the following elements of the service:

- Administer Ward Funds for each Councillor.
- Administering the allocated budget.
- Maintaining spreadsheets.
- Processing individual requests for 46 councillors.
- Checking documentation, approving criteria and signing-off.
- Clarifying details with applicants, approving invoices and payments, correspondence with all parties.
- Internal liaison with Finance and other Services.

5.2 The current spend to date for Ward Fund applications in 2025/2026 is in the region of £182,000 but this is not a confirmed figure as the amount can vary as the project progresses. The Ward Fund applications received up to 16 October 2025 will be processed and the commitments honoured.

5.3 No further ward fund applications will be received and processed from the date of this notice.

5.4 Further consideration will need to be given to the scheme, and funding allocation in 2026/2027. This will form part of the budget preparation process for 2026/2027.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6.1 The alternative of continuing the scheme in 2025/2026 was rejected given the in-year financial position of the Council. The further option of reducing the amount of the overall Member Ward Fund Budget to £100,000 to be allocated in 2025/2026 has been considered but this was rejected as commitments to date exceed this figure and, therefore, it was deemed more appropriate to cease the Ward Fund Scheme altogether with immediate effect.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues – Relevant Legal Power

There is no direct impact on legal issues as the Member Ward Fund is not a statutory provision and is not governed by legislation other than to maintain an effective administrative and financial process in place to ensure robust audit and accountability processes are in place.

7.2 Policy Issues

The criteria for the Member Ward Fund Scheme is attached at Appendix A.

7.3 Resource Issues

The impact of resources to administer the Ward Fund Scheme would not significantly change during 2025/2026 due to the continuation of progressing Ward Fund commitments to date. The resources to administer the fund are already depleted due to vacancies within the Democratic Services Team.

7.4 Risks

There is a potential element of risk in respect of reputational damage due to resident perception of reduced Council funding for community projects (including those previously supported) and a negative impact on Council community projects (e.g. some funds currently used for Capital budgets), due to reducing or stopping Ward funds administration.

7.5 Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications to stopping the Ward Fund Scheme but may have a specific impact on proposed projects that may now not go ahead due to lack of funding.

7.6 Equalities Impact

There are no direct equality impacts to stopping the Ward Fund Scheme but may have a specific impact on proposed projects that may now not go ahead due to lack of funding.

7.7 Impact on Families

There are no direct impacts on families to stopping the Ward Fund Scheme but may have a specific impact on proposed projects that may now not go ahead due to lack of funding.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

There are no direct impacts on community safety and resilience to stopping the Ward Fund Scheme but may have a specific impact on proposed projects that may now not go ahead due to lack of funding.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

There are no direct impacts on health and wellbeing to stopping the Ward Fund Scheme but may have a specific impact on proposed projects that may now not go ahead due to lack of funding.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

The Mayor
Portfolio Holder for Finance
Corporate Leadership Team

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Due to the urgent nature of this decision ward councillor views have not been sought.

10. **CONTACTS AND REFERENCES**

Report Contact Officer:	Lesley Blue Lesley.Blue@bedford.gov.uk
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	None
Previous Relevant Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix A – Ward Fund Criteria and Guidelines



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

WARD MEMBERS' FUND GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA

Financial Years 2025 -2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Ward Members' Fund (Ward Fund) is intended to enhance ward Councillors' community leadership role and to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Bedford Borough.
- 1.2 Each Member is allocated a sum of money each year based on the number of electors in their ward (see paragraph 3). The Ward Fund provides ward Councillors with a dedicated and flexible resource with which to address specific local priorities. These priorities will emerge from Councillors' consultation with residents, businesses, Parish and Town Councils, voluntary and community bodies and other partners.
- 1.3 Applications for new projects are submitted online using the electronic application form which can be found here: [Ward Fund eform](#). Ward Funds aim to support new initiatives within the Borough and can only be awarded for future projects or purchases, and not retrospectively. Applications may need supporting documents, particularly for those applications supporting external organisations.
- 1.4 Projects are classified as "Internal" where work is to be carried out by the Council on Council land and "External" where funds are being allocated to a parish council, school or other body outside of the Council. Examples of External projects typically include costs of equipment for schools or local groups, contributions to community events, and start-up costs for new groups. Common Internal projects include playground enhancements, planting, double yellow lines and other Environmental or Highways work.
- 1.5 Once a project submission is made the Member will receive an automatic acknowledgement of their project. For External projects, further documentation will be required and when this is all received payment to the recipient group will be authorised. Documentation can be submitted with the application which speeds up payment.
- 1.6 Ward Funds may not be used to cover in-year costs such as maintenance, rent or staffing as the scheme is designed to provide lasting benefits. (A full list of criteria is set out below under paragraphs 4 and 5).

2. Principles

- 2.1 The Ward Fund will operate in accordance with the following principles:
 - (a) Projects should help fulfil the Council's priorities as shown in Bedford Borough Council's Corporate Plan [Together Bedford Borough - Corporate Plan 2022-2026](#) .
 - (b) Projects should not duplicate existing service provision of other public bodies or of the Council, unless the provision has been deemed to be a 'low priority'.

- (c) Members are encouraged to use their Fund for projects which have lasting benefit rather than short-term in-year goals
- (d) Bedford Borough Council must have the legal power to fund any proposed project.
- (e) Should an application be refused, the Member and applicant will be informed of the reason(s) why it did not meet the criteria.
- (f) Members should consult with ward residents, businesses, Parish or Town Councils, voluntary/community bodies and/or other partners before making project applications.
- (g) For internal projects (i.e. funding for work to be carried out by the Council) the application should show which Officer has been spoken to about the work and what cost estimate the Officer has provided.
- (h) Members may pool their funds for joint projects with other Members either within their ward or across ward boundaries
- (i) Contributions to projects which have Borough wide benefit are permissible, provided that application demonstrates the value of the project to the particular Ward area.
- (j) Councillors may request from Democratic and Member Services an update on their submitted projects and the balance on their fund as required.
- (k) There are deadlines for the receipt of each type of project application. These deadlines provide Officers sufficient time to process applications and arrange necessary work in order to meet project and budget deadlines. It is mandatory for these deadlines to be observed. Any Ward Funds not allocated by the Councillor by the final deadline of the year will be lost and cannot be carried forward to the next financial year.
- (l) All Members will be issued with an automated reminder 10 days beforehand of the approach of these deadlines. The deadlines for the current year are set out below.

Internal projects – work carried out by the Council		
25 July 2025	Bulb Planting	All bulb planting works where either the planting or supply of bulbs is being undertaken by the Council's Environment Team.
12 September 2025	Greenspace	Any other kind of Green Space projects including shrub border refurbishment and tree planting (but not bulbs).
	Highways	Any requests relating to highways or traffic such as yellow lines, zebra crossings, signs, cameras, pathways, bus shelters, street lights, street furniture, dropped kerbs, bollards etc.
3 October 2025	Greenspace	Any other environmental improvements which do not require any planting, such as playground refurbishment projects, Litter bins and benches
21 November 2025	CCTV, alley gates	CCTV and alley gates
	Salt Bins	Requests to have new salt bins located on the Ward.
External projects – work carried out by external groups		
12 December 2025	External	All projects which will carried out by an external group and not by a Council department.

3. **Allocation of funds**

- 3.1 Each Ward Councillor will receive an allocation for their ward which is calculated at £2.46 for each registered elector within their ward.

4. **Criteria: what can be covered by Ward Funding**

- 4.1 Projects must be consistent with the principles set out above. Subject to this a Member may use their allocation to provide:
1. One off project, equipment or other costs.
 2. Members are encouraged to fund projects which provide lasting benefit to the community. Contributions to one-off celebrations or events should provide ongoing benefits to the community or have a follow up plan of community engagement.
 3. Start-up costs for a new group or organisation.
 4. Start-up costs for Parish Council Liaison Meetings in their Ward.
 5. Match funding for projects – evidence will be required that such funding has been secured.
 6. VAT costs if the organisation is not VAT registered and therefore unable to claim back the VAT incurred.
- 4.2 Where a Community Group to which a Member wishes to make a donation does not have a constitution or bank account, the donation may be made subject to the Council being satisfied that all reasonable and necessary checks have been made and recorded against the payment.

5 **Criteria: what can not be covered by Ward Funding**

- 5.1 The following will **not** be covered by Ward Funding:
1. In-year costs with no lasting benefit such as insurance or maintenance costs
 2. Direct staffing costs.
 3. Planning application costs, including solicitors or other fees.
 4. Donations to individuals.
 5. Donations to commercial bodies or events.
 6. Premises rental (unless these form an element of the start-up costs for a new group/organisation or for Parish Council Liaison meetings).
 7. Match fees for sports fixtures.
 8. VAT costs if the organisation is VAT registered and able to reclaim the VAT incurred.

6 Documentation required

- 6.1 Proof will be required for any External project before the application for funding can be approved. Examples include:
- Details of the project including a description, a location and, if appropriate, a site plan to show where any fixed object is to be sited.
 - Two quotes to show the cost of any External project (three quotes if the value of the project is above £10,000). Quotes may include written quotes from suppliers or links to a relevant website(s) displaying the costs.
 - Where relevant, details of any other funding or grants received from the Borough Council for the projects.
 - Where relevant, evidence that match funding has been obtained.
 - Where relevant, evidence that planning permission and/or any other consents required have been obtained.
 - Where applicable (not required for parish councils or schools), a copy of the recipient Group's constitution/rules or, in their absence, a reference from a partnership organisation (e.g. the Council for Voluntary Service or Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity) able to verify the group(s) intentions and capacity to deliver the project.
 - Current Bank account details (not required for schools) in the name of the group or organisation applying or, where the grant is to be paid to a partnership organisation, in the name of that organisation.
 - Once the project is completed, proof will be required to show that the money has been legitimately spent.

Should any required documentation not be provided within required deadlines, the Council reserves the right to refuse the application. The Member and external applicant may then be asked to re-apply with the correct documentation.

7 Recording and Evaluation of Projects

- 7.1 All projects for which funding is made available will be recorded against the Council's corporate goals (see paragraph 2.1(a)).
- 7.2 A list of all projects supported by each Councillor's Ward Fund will be published on the Council's website each April, after having given the relevant Councillor the opportunity to comment on the details of their projects which are proposed to be published.
- 7.3 Where monies have been unspent within a financial year, these can be rolled over into the next financial year. The rollover arrangement ceases on the 31 March of a year when Borough Councillor Elections will take place (ie. 31 March 2027).