
Environmental and Neighbourhood budget update

Purpose

To report on the expenditure for the above Environmental (EIB) and Neighbourhood Improvement Budgets (NIB).

Background

These budgets are allocated from the Housing Investment Programme(HIP) to improve the general look and feel of estates and neighbourhoods and are generally referred to as soft investment.

The EIB total is £137,500 and is for individual projects that cost under £15,000 whilst the NIB total £462, 500 is for works over this figure.

Both budgets are allocated to schemes and projects suggested by housing officers, police, tenants, caretakers, and councilors and are often a collaborative approach. In addition, some are essential health and safety works.

The predominant criteria are security or ecological improvements, and the budgets are not to benefit just 1 tenant e.g., a garden at a sheltered scheme would be considered but not an individual fence. These budgets demonstrate our commitment to making our estates great places to live.

There is a form online for tenants to make suggestions and they are publicised at forums and in newsletters. Suggestions are welcome from all sources and the Housing officer will then commission a quote and a discussion with all affected residents

Only a couple of schemes were rejected because they were of benefit to only an individual, they were not value for money or were rejected by residents themselves e.g., a railing project in Stapleton.

Current situation

The NIB allocation is decided at the start of the financial year as the cost of the works requires strict procurement regulations to be followed, a tender process and mobilising contractors.

The NIB has been slightly overspent this year. Schemes range from Butler House gardens to major security works like the walling scheme at Priestwood Close in Henbury. The latter was included with a local Problem-solving plan (PSP) to address anti-social behaviour (ASB) on Crow lane.

This work and budget also had to adapt to extra monies of £190k being given in August and it was fortunate that schemes were ready on the shelf to commit. This prevented a loss of funding for estates works.

In summary NIB works covered:

- Larger carpark resurfacing projects & additional parking provision
- Provision of additional patio areas, paving & general landscaping
- Security measure such as the installation of fences, gates, and walls
- Foundations and structural works to address urgent health & safety concerns

The EIB is allocated monthly so housing officers who are doing patch visits and neighbourhood grading and inspections, can access the monies and request

projects throughout the year. Monthly meetings are held between the planned surveyors and the housing manager to keep the budget in focus.

Most of the works fall under the following categories: -

- Security measures such as the installation of padlocks & security gates and boundary fencing
- Improvements to bin and recycling, and drying areas
- Carpark resurfacing, marking of lines and the provision of disabled spaces
- Provision of benches, handrails, and garden works/landscaping
- Health and safety issues

Currently the commitment is on target (but if any schemes fail to materialise this will lead to an underspend).

Projects that benefited -Attached are the budget spreadsheets and photos.

The variety of NIB schemes ranged from making a play area safe at Four Acres to patio seating at Yew tree Court, from security fencing and planters at Chatterton house to carpark resurfacing at Eastcote Park-2 sites.

Whilst EIB schemes ranged from parking bollards and speed bumps to disabled parking bays and benches.

Schemes were actioned throughout the city

Conclusion

The total soft investment monies spent this year equates to £768,091.17. This money has all been spent on improving neighbourhoods and estates which is fabulous news.

There has been an underspend of £22,000, which whilst within the suggested 2.5% budget variation allowance, is still monies we would prefer to spend.

However, as with everything there is always room for improvement and any ideas on how to do this are warmly welcomed.