



Environmental Improvements Policy

Background

The Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB) is a sum of money, which can be used to make improvements in the local areas. The funding should only be used, unless there is cross funding, to fund improvements that predominantly benefit council tenants.

The five housing managers are allocated a sum of money each year based on number of council properties in their patch.

Although Housing Managers control the budget and authorise spend, suggestions for improvements can come from the following sources:

- Tenant and Resident Associations or single issue groups.
- Officers.
- Councillors.
- Other agencies, including Neighbourhood Partnerships.
- Individual tenants.
- Outcomes from Walkabouts, Neighbourhood Patch Inspections.

In November 2011 tenants reviewed the current policy and procedures regarding the EIB in response to the consultation taking place on the future of Area Housing Forums (AHF). This review will feed in to the work that is being done to develop the Involvement and Empowerment Strategy. The following issues were highlighted during the review:

- Lack of consistency across the city.
- Some of the rules for spend needed updating.
- Poor accountability to all our 28,000 tenants as only a few involved tenants are aware of the budget and how it can be spent and is spend.
- Lack of a written policy.
- Lack of publicity about the work that has been funded through the EIB.
- Sharing learning from improvements undertaken in various parts of the city and use them to address similar problems in other parts of the city

Purpose of policy, objectives

- To enable Landlord Services to respond to improvement requests from tenants that will either address a specific issue or improves the local neighbourhood.
- To give tenants an opportunity to scrutinise spends on agreed Schemes.

- To support strategic aims
- Ensure there is a budget to improve neighbourhoods at a local level
- Budget available should only be used to fund Schemes costing less than £10k in total unless there is match funding from other sources. For Schemes costing more than a bid should be submitted to the Neighbourhood Investment Fund (NIF).

Regulatory references

The focus of this policy should be council homes, including communal areas covered by the Housing Revenue Account. Sometimes the surrounding locality may benefit indirectly.

Procedure

The delegation of the environmental improvement budget relates to communal housing land and property. The relevant housing manager will decide whether these criteria have been met.

The policy applies to tenants, leaseholders and household members and any Tenant Management Organisations. The policy may also apply to the local communities in which our tenants and leaseholders live.

Suggestions for improvements can come from:

- Tenant and Resident Associations or single issue groups.
- Any officers within Landlord Services.
- Councillors.
- Other agencies, including Neighbourhood Partnerships.
- Individual tenants.
- Action plans from walkabouts, neighbourhood patch inspections.

The type and range of projects that may be considered for funding through the environmental improvement budget are:

- Works that could reduce crime, vandalism, anti-social behaviour.
- Landscaping, planting work.
- Improved lighting.
- Communal fencing.
- Improved or new signage.
- Benches and seated areas.
- Work which could compliment other improvements.
- Projects which encourage involvement.

This list is not exhaustive and other projects may be considered for funding.

To secure funding, agreed rules for spend need to be met. Please see Appendix one for a full list of rules for spend.

Please see Appendix two for the scoring criteria to be used by the Housing Managers when making their decision.

Adequate and relevant training and/or advice will be given to tenants and staff if needed and relevant.

Process

- To receive an application form contact the customer service centre on 0117 922 2200 (Option four). The forms can also be downloaded via the council website: www.bristol.gov.uk/estates.
- Applications can be submitted anytime during the year.
- Application forms can also be completed by staff.
- Completed application forms (which must be costed) must be returned to the relevant Housing Manager within Estate Management Service. Housing Managers will notify the person or organisation submitting the application form of their decision and if unsuccessful detailing reasons for refusal.
- Completed applications will be assessed by the relevant housing manager using the rules for spend. If all the rules for spend are met he, she will authorise spend and pass application form to Planned Programmes for arranging works. In deciding whether to approve the scheme the Housing Manager has to be assured that interested parties have been consulted about the proposal and their comments have been taken into account and have been involved in designing the scheme.
- All works will be managed by the surveyor including gaining any permissions eg planning etc and will keep the relevant housing manager informed of the Progress.
- The surveyor in conjunction with the Senior Housing Advisor will ensure tenants are kept informed at all stages of the works including scope of the works, who the contractor is, the duration of works and how to get in touch if they have any concerns.
- Once the works are completed the surveyor will arrange for a satisfaction questionnaire to be sent to all affected tenants, leaseholders to gauge overall satisfaction with the scheme in terms of improvement to the neighbourhood and their quality of life.

Role of Tenants Panel

- At agreed intervals, scrutinise decisions made by Housing Managers and make sure they comply with the agreed rules for spend.
- Be assured that affected tenants have been consulted and have been involved with designing the proposal.
- Consider the results of the satisfaction questionnaire and be assured that the scheme has met its objectives of improving the neighbourhood and quality of life of affected tenant(s), leaseholders.
- Make any suggestions that might improve the process or effectiveness of this policy.