

How Birmingham City Council's Localism policies compare with other local authorities

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Introduction

This report will seek to compare the Localised budgets of Birmingham City Council with other English Core Cities.

Background

Birmingham City Council set out its approach to Localism in the White Paper *Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods* (2019) which outlined a number of commitments to improve neighbourhood working in general and developing new neighbourhood organisations or parish councils where there is a desire for this.

One key policy within this White paper was to ensure that every ward produced a good Ward Plan to reflect the priorities of local residents in a realistic and action-oriented way, and that these Ward Plans be effectively delivered.

The White paper also reflected the support available to councillors to hold six Ward Forums per year.

The Localism brief moved from the Homes and Neighbourhoods portfolio to the Leader's portfolio following the local election in May 2022.

Localised Budgets in Birmingham

The following sets out the localised budgets that exist in Birmingham:

Budget	Ward amounts	Total
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Community Chest	£10k per single member ward, £20k per two member ward.	£1,010,000
Housing Capital Environmental Works	Varies – split across all wards with council stock	£1,200,000
Minor Transport Measures	£10k per single member ward, £20k per two member ward.	£1,010,000
Local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Crowdfunding & Grants	Split across 13 wards - Crowdfunding £1,200,000 Small Grants £230,000 Large Grants/Commissions (£1,100,000 Ladywood, £250,000 Newtown)	£2,791,765
Clean Air Fund	Single member wards £20,000 PA Two member wards £40,000 PA	£2,020,000 (£4,040,000 across 2 years)
Celebrating Communities Fund	Varies – dependent on size and deprivation.	£2,000,000
Neighbourhood Action Co-ordination	£10,000 each for 22 wards	£210,000
Neighbourhood Network Services spend	Split across 10 constituencies	£3,400,000
S106 Funding	Spread over 56 wards	Varies
TOTAL: £13,641,765		

This indicates that there is a significant amount of budget that is either devolved to the local level with Councillors being involved in the spending decision-making process, and funding that is raised locally through CIL and S106 and then spent locally.

Devolved budgets in other Core Cities

The following information has been gathered by Tony Smith, Policy Executive at BCC, through his engagement with the Core Cities programme.

Manchester

Manchester has a Neighbourhood Investment Fund – for each of the 32 wards in the city. This is currently at £20,000 per ward per annum but used to be higher. Projects have to align with the ward plan priorities and are approved by ward councillors.

The neighbourhood functions are split into North, Central and South, with teams and resources being aligned to these geographies.

More information can be found here: : [What are neighbourhood investment funds | Neighbourhood investment funds | Manchester City Council](#)

Bristol

The spending of Bristol's CIL and S106 monies is decided by six 'area committees' made of the local councillors. These committees only meet once a year.

At time of writing, we are still awaiting more information from Bristol.

Newcastle

In Newcastle, money is allocated to the 26 wards to fund local projects, either via grants or the purchases of services. This is called Ward Committee Grant Aid and can **only** be applied for by **not-for-profit organisations**. There are a variety of hoops for these organisations to jump through before they can be considered.

The minimum amount of funding that can be applied for is £150 and there is no maximum.

The amount of funding that each ward received for 2022-2023 is outlined here:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/get-involved/grants-and-funding> and ranges between £3,250 and £26,963. The Ward budgets have two parts – the main part coming from general Council funds and the second from the HRA - divided in proportion to the number of council homes in each ward.

The money from the Council's general funds is split between the wards using a formula:

- 10% of the total is evenly divided between the 26 wards
- 20% of the total is divided between the wards based on the population of each ward
- 70% of the total is allocated between the wards on the basis of deprivation. Deprivation is measured using the English Indices of Deprivation which are national statistics produced by government.

Work is currently underway on the application process and background admin to streamline the approach. Historically, budgets and service decisions had been devolved (e.g., on capital funding, road and pavement repairs and CCTV allocation) but this is no longer the case.

Leeds

Leeds has retained its locality working model through the period of austerity. There are ten Community Committees (established in the constitution) covering three or four wards each (9 or 12 councillors). They have delegations for specific responsibilities in the constitution.

There are four sources of funding for the committees:

- Wellbeing Fund – allocated by formula based on 50% population and 50% deprivation
- Youth Activity Fund – allocated according to young people population
- Capital budget
- CIL

The capital funds depend on the sale of assets or development in the area covered by the committee.

The Wellbeing and Youth funds together total about £3m across the city.

The Leader is keen to do more in terms of delegating responsibilities to the committees. The current cabinet member for communities (Cllr Mary Harland) is a former community activist and strongly pushing the localism agenda.

Liverpool

Liverpool's approach is set out below, however this will be changed in the coming year as the city moves from 30 ward to 62 and are therefore developing a new neighbourhood model.

There is currently a Mayoral Neighbourhood Fund of £912,000 to provide ward-based funding and develop initiatives to respond to locally identified needs.

- Direct allocation to each of the 30 wards for elected members to agree spend

- Not just a third sector grants programme but also used to purchase goods and services (about a 50/50 split)
- Operational delivery is managed by the Streetscene service with support from Grants and Performance team who provide admin support and carry out due diligence on requests for the grant funding element. The purchase of goods and service are subject to Contract Standing Orders conditions

Nottingham

Nottingham has Ward Budgets that local community groups apply for, and councillors are consulted on their recommendations with officers approving the spending. Resident Serviced Directorate can also access the budget to run community events and make local area improvements.

Each ward is allocated an annual budget to be applied for within the operating principles approved by the Council. Groups must demonstrate how the project meets the needs of the local area and/or adds value.

For 2022-23 two member wards received **£5,625**, and three member wards received **£7,500**. **This is subject to a reduction for 2023-2024.**

Nottingham also has an area-based grant funding system, with funds going to partnerships of VCS organisations and the council. There are 7 areas of the city which have a fund allocated by formula, and lead organisation can bid to the funds. A grants panel makes decisions on applications.

Sheffield

At time of writing we are still awaiting a submission from Sheffield.

Comparison table

Authority	Devolved Budget	Population	Money per head
Birmingham	£13,641,765	1,144,900	£11.91
Birmingham (Minus CIL and NNS)	£7,450,000	1,144,900	£6.50
Leeds	£3,000,000 (approx.)	811,956	£3.69
Manchester	£640,000	552,000	£1.16
Liverpool	£912,000	486,100	£1.88
Newcastle	£326,704	300,820	£1.08
Nottingham	£140,625	323,700	£0.43

Conclusion

Birmingham City Council is leading the way amongst the English Core Cities in terms of devolving power and spending to the ward level. Whilst many Councils are seeking to move back to a more localised system following the period of austerity, Birmingham is ahead of the pack.