

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL



CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO CABINET

23 June 2026

Report Title: Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Fund

Submitted by: Service Director - Finance

Portfolios: Finance

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
To establish the Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Fund to enable Councillors to respond to local priorities within their wards.			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
That Cabinet:			
1. Approves the establishment of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Fund which allocates Councillor's a maximum of £2,500 per annum to address local priorities within their wards, as identified by their local communities.			
<u>Reasons</u>			
To boost the wellbeing of the community and to provide an enhanced, flexible response to local priorities.			

1. Background

1.1 A Councillor Community Fund is being proposed to provide Councillors with a dedicated ward budget so that they can respond to ward priorities.

1.2 The aim of the ward budget is to:

- Increase ward Councillor responsibility, in terms of devolved resources,
- Recognise the role of ward Councillors, with their local knowledge and insight being increasingly vital in maximising the use of local community skills, assets and resources so that residents can implement positive action to improve lives and make their community thrive.

1.3 The ward budgets will ensure that Councillors continue to:

- Play a vital role in their communities by encouraging greater collaboration with partners, voluntary organisations, residents and businesses to maximise resources and assets,

- Empower local communities to develop and deliver projects that are shaped by local people,
- Encourage the community to maximise ward budgets by raising other funding through external grants and donations.

2. Issues

- 2.1** Ward budgets will enable ward councillors to put forward proposals for expenditure against a specific earmarked allocation for their Ward, to promote the wellbeing of the community and to respond to local priorities. Details of how ward budgets can be used, and how they should not be used are shown in the protocol at Appendix 1.
- 2.2** The scheme is intended to be flexible, responsive and quick to deliver, enabling councillors to determine how their Ward budgets are spent, but processes are transparent and accountable.
- 2.3** Proposals must be consistent with the council's objectives and contribute to the aim of putting residents first. They should meet an identified need from within the ward and deliver value for money
- 2.4** Rather than inviting general applications, which may result in disappointment for some, ward councillors should use their local knowledge and insight to identify proposals.
- 2.5** Retrospective applications cannot be considered and the costs of these projects cannot be funded from a ward budget.
- 2.6** Individual ward councillors should not submit any proposal in their ward where they have an actual or perceived pecuniary interest.
- 2.7** The Civic Pride Investment Fund was launched with a budget for Ward Councillor allocations of £500, amounting to £22,000 for the year, during 2025/26 with the aim of providing small grants to local organisations and community groups.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1** That Cabinet approves the establishment of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Fund which allocates Councillor's a maximum of £2,500 per annum to address local priorities within their wards, as identified by their local communities.

4. Reasons

- 4.1** To increase ward Councillor responsibility, in terms of devolved resources and to recognise the role of ward Councillors, with their local knowledge and insight being increasingly vital in maximising the use of local community skills, assets and resources so that residents can implement positive action to improve lives and make their community thrive.

5. Options Considered

5.1 Options involving a ward Councillor allocation ranging from a continued £500 to £5,000 were considered. An allocation of £2,500 per ward Councillor has been recommended to match fund the allocations of Councillors at Staffordshire County Council (£2,500), and to total the allocations of Councillors at Stoke-on-Trent City Council (£5,000).

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

6.1 The Council has a duty to provide value for money services. This funding is covered within existing budgets.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 There are no differential equality issues arising directly from this report.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 Allocations to the Civic Pride Investment Fund (Ward Councillor allocations of £500 totalling £22,000) and the Civic Growth Fund were approved by Council on 11 February 2026.

8.2 This decision represents a budget virement from the Civic Growth Fund contribution totalling £88,000 from the ceasing of the Environmental Sustainability element of the contribution of £75,000, and a further £13,000 from the Place Development element of the contribution.

8.3 The revisions noted above will provide a sum of £2,500 per ward Councillor.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

9.1 Awards could be made that are against the ethos of the initiative. A clear protocol regarding the use of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Fund is provided as Appendix A.

9.2 There is a risk of limited engagement with the initiative. Efforts will be made to promote the fund and develop ownership of local issues.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

One Digital Council

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Sustainable Council

We will deliver on our commitments and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 This is a not a key decision, it represents an £88,000 enhancement to Ward Councillor allocations.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

13.1 Allocations to the Civic Pride Investment Fund (Ward Councillor allocations of £22,000) and the Civic Growth Fund were approved by Council on 11 February 2026. This decision represents a budget virement from the Civic Growth Fund totalling £88,000.

14. List of Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 - Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Fund Protocol.

15. Background Papers

15.1 Not applicable.