

**Final Evaluation of Birmingham City Council's Local Innovation
Fund
Final Report, May 2019**



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Section 2: Introduction

Linxs Consultancy was re-commissioned in November 2018 to carry out a final evaluation of the Birmingham City Council Local Innovation Fund (hereafter LIF), having completed an initial interim evaluation the preceding year. In order to ensure the availability of one complete reference document representing the entirety of the LIF experience, some elements of the interim report are repeated here where particularly relevant. The section from the 2018 report assessing the LIF set up process (proposal development and submission) is included as an appendix for the same reason.

Since the programme was launched in late 2016 (the first proposal was approved in December 2016), there were 159 proposals submitted across the City, with 119 being recommended and taken to Local Leadership Cabinet committee for approval.

The interim reported focused extensively on a process critique. By contrast, this final report examines whether projects have impacted upon service delivery and active citizenship within their respective wards, with an assessment as to the extent to which they can be considered truly innovatory within the evaluation framework. The following key elements are included:

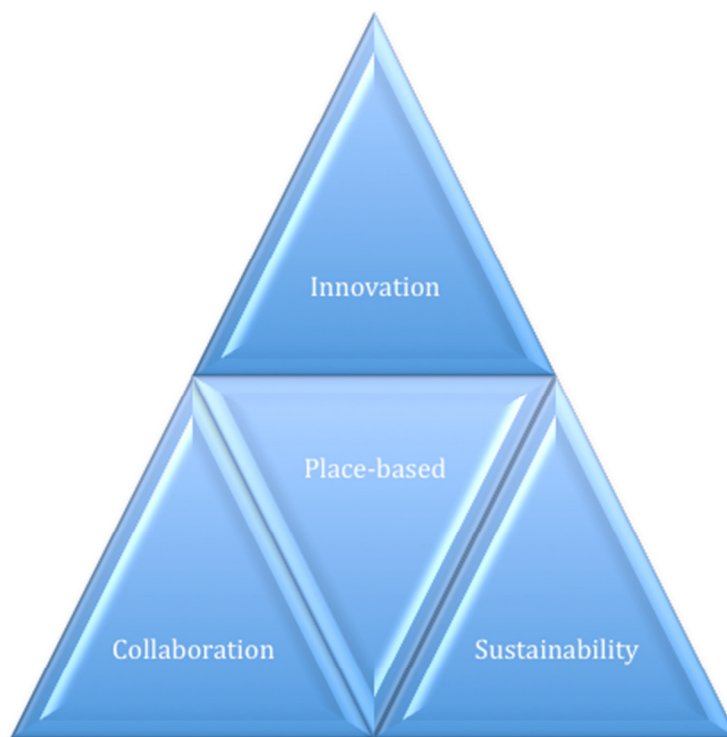
- ❖ Background and context to the Local Innovation Fund, including the recent Birmingham City Council White Paper on Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods;
- ❖ Design of an evaluation framework, specifically assessing the levels of innovation demonstrated by a cohort of projects;
- ❖ Identification of positive outcomes, good practice and areas which may be suitable for future replication;
- ❖ Reflections on the role of Councillors in their local leadership role and the Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit (hereafter NDSU) in supporting this new approach to local democratic decision-making; and
- ❖ Summary of key findings concerning the LIF regime and lessons learnt for the possible rollout of any future ward and neighbourhood based funding.

A multi-methodological approach was taken, comprising:

- ❖ Semi-structured interviews and a group session with the NDSU team;
- ❖ A drop in focus group session with Councillors;
- ❖ Document review of hard copy LIF proposals;
- ❖ Online survey with project leads (22 responses); and
- ❖ An in depth assessment of a sample of 24 projects ensuring a geographical spread across the city, including 1:1 semi-structured interviews with project representatives (twice the amount of projects assessed in the interim evaluation). As some of this cohort also submitted a survey return, the consultation ultimately encompassed 40 different projects, 34% of the total number of successful proposals.

Section 3: Background and Context

The establishment of LIF was approved by Birmingham City Council’s Local Leadership Cabinet Committee in September 2016. It was held to be in accordance with the Council’s business plan commitment “to develop a new approach to devolution within the city, with a focus on empowering people and giving them influence over local services.”¹ The key elements of LIF are:



Fundamentally the ambition of LIF is to introduce a radical shift in local democratic decision-making including a move away from the previous Community Chest approach of one-off grant funding. Rather the aim is for Elected Members to work in their local leadership role in conjunction with residents, community groups and other organisations that have an interest and stake in the area to prepare proposals. There was also a requirement that all three respective Ward Councillors sign off the proposals, with the Local Leadership Cabinet Committee providing scrutiny and final approval. Projects were then required to report on progress to the relevant ward forum. Each ward received an even allocation of £48k, constituting a total available outlay of £1.92 million. Initially the projects were planned to last up to two years in length; however, in practice due to delays in the planning, selection and approval process, many commenced significantly later.

Proposals were intended to be ‘innovative’ with a concomitant emphasis on ‘doing things differently’, through investment in transformative and active citizenship programmes, enhanced partnership working and subsequent

¹ Birmingham City Council Public Report to Cabinet Committee – Local Leadership (20th September 2016)

reduced reliance on Birmingham City Council services. It was instigated to represent a key citywide opportunity to mobilise the voluntary and community sector and develop an appropriate place-based model for the deployment of area-based funding, fitting with the overall City Council cultural change programme.²

As with many local authorities Birmingham City Council recently has had to operate with pressures on its budgets. Within this context new funding streams, such as LIF, are uncommon and an extension of LIF was reported to be unlikely without accessing external funding sources. It is partly for this reason that the sustainability and transformative aspects of LIF were included.

The City Council's policy for ongoing work in neighbourhoods has evolved further via the 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods'³ White Paper. This White Paper was approved by the Cabinet of the City Council on the 22nd January 2019. It contains the future approach including the desire for neighbourhood based work to continue playing a key role in "creating a modern, efficient city council that is focussed more than ever before on the needs of Birmingham people and helping you to achieve your goals"⁴. This White Paper also recognises that a variety of models exist for developing neighbourhood and community work which need to be flexible dependent on the needs and capacity of local areas. These models are summarised as a 'Framework of Relationships' covering increasingly in-depth approaches.

Along with aligning with local ward priorities LIF proposals are expected to meet at least one City priority and one specific LIF outcome. These are outlined in the table that follows:

Birmingham City Council Priorities	LIF Outcomes
Children – A great city to grow up in	Supporting citizens' independence and well-being
Jobs and Skills – A great city to succeed in	New approaches to investment (e.g. time banking, different ways of managing public assets)
Housing – A great city to live in	Supporting active citizenship and communities stepping up to the challenge and stimulate innovative asset based approaches in neighbourhoods
Health – A great city to lead a healthy and active life	Clean Streets
	Improving local centres

² Birmingham City Council Public Report to Cabinet Committee – Local Leadership (20th September 2016)

³ Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods, Policy Statement (White Paper), Birmingham City Council, January 2019 and Birmingham City Council Report to Cabinet, 22nd January 2019

⁴ Pg. 3, Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods, Policy Statement (White Paper), Birmingham City Council, January 2019

Supporting documentation from the NDSU team provided categories of possible innovations, as well as detailing approaches which would not normally be considered appropriate for LIF funding, most notably when focused around equipment expenditure and staffing costs rather than partnership working and neighbourhood development per se. An example of this material is provided overleaf:⁵

The NDSU has now been in operation for almost three years. Historically districts in Birmingham retained the budgets for services, and staff worked for districts; but individual services are now line managed centrally by a Birmingham City Council officer. Support for neighbourhood development, local democracy, funding and ward action did not fall neatly under the remit of any particular service however; these elements came together in the NDSU. The importance of the role of the team is that it, therefore, has a cross-directorate and pan-Birmingham remit, and is potentially the only unit operating as an interface between residents, local partnerships and the Council.

Ward changes occurred in May 2018 which reduced the number of Elected Members, including the introduction of single member wards, it thus became even more critical to have a viable and effective support structure for neighbourhood development, Voluntary and Community Sector (hereafter VCS) support and local democracy.

⁵ Neighbourhood Development Support Unit: Guidance on Good Practice

Local Innovation Fund – Guidance on Good Practice examples for spend

GOOD INNOVATION – WHAT WORKS AND WILL BE SUPPORTED

The LIF is about partnership working – encouraging groups to come together to test out new ways of doing things, It is about moving away from dependency and having less reliance on the City Council. It is about action.

- Development of local community planning – community audits, surveys, mapping to improve outcomes and actions, e.g. supporting community led regeneration
- Investment in community enterprise - community hubs and community networks, local markets, food assemblies and BID development
- Pop up community learning workshops ,peer to peer support initiatives, knowledge and skills exchange
- Support community ownership and management of assets such as Community Asset Transfer
- Support communities and agencies to come together to develop Neighbourhood Companies, Co-operatives or other forms of community enterprise
- Action to remove red tape e.g. local charters or break down barriers e.g. meet service provider days
- Identifying and supporting specific neighbourhoods where innovation by community groups will be encouraged
- Strengthening Communities – capacity building, peer to peer mentoring, skilling up local residents, learning
- Match funding with other appropriate local funds i.e. Police – Active Citizens and Community Safety – Mobilising Communities and cross ward proposals
- New forms of community led engagement and involvement, particularly enabling young people to address the challenges they face.
- New ways to allocate resources e.g. Real time community change, participatory budgeting, time-banking,
- Community led initiatives – support to active citizens and groups doing it for themselves e.g. Street Champions, Street Associations etc.
- Links to District Community Challenges
- Community managed events and activities

MAY BE WANTED AND USEFUL BUT DOES NOT MEET CRITERIA FOR LIF FUNDING

(Generally more emphasis on equipment and doing to rather than with)

- One-off equipment e.g. CCTV, Gating, Lamp posts, Hanging baskets, Christmas lights
- One –off events (unless linked to supporting new neighbourhood led networks)
- On-going costs
- Contracted Staffing
- Commissioning Reports
- Monies used to replace lost revenue budgets or core funding

Section 3: LIF Project Assessment

A review of hard copy proposals revealed that the purported focus of the majority of LIF projects centres around Active Citizenship and Communities Stepping Up (89%) and Citizens' Independence and Well Being (80%). By contrast one fifth concerned cleaner streets (20%). In terms of City priorities, proposals were most often aligned with Health (80%):

City Core Priorities	Proposals (%)
Children – A great city to grow up in	66%
Jobs and Skills – A great city to succeed in	59%
Housing – A great city to live in	18%
Health – A great city to lead a healthy and active life	80%

LIF Priorities	Proposals (%)
Citizens' Independence and Well Being	80%
New Approaches to Investment	30%
Active Citizens and Communities Stepping Up	89%
Clean Streets	20%
Improving Local Centres	46%

The table on pg.10 demonstrates spend by ward (relating to wards up to April 2018), including the number of projects and financial range of support. It is ordered by average spend and shows a broad difference between wards seeking to support 1-3 larger transformative proposals, and those approving smaller activity. In the South of the City, Weoley and Northfield have funded 19 projects between them; around 16% of the total number of projects across the whole City, with an average spend of just £5k per project. During the interim evaluation NDSU officers questioned how truly transformative projects can be with such minimal resourcing, and expected all LIF proposals to be for a minimum of £10k as a rudimentary benchmark. Within the cohort this is aptly demonstrated by the experience of LIF105 in Weoley.

It was noted in the interim report that the politicisation and strict geographical equality of LIF administration resulted in wards looking inwardly, in most instances, rather than focusing on pan-ward collaboration. This was borne out by the fact that just 9 approved proposals were multi-ward in orientation. Two such projects are included within the in-depth cohort.

Comments made from the Councillor consultations in the interim phase indicated that cross-ward proposals were not easy to develop, partly due to current administrative structures not supporting this but also partly because the time required for this type of proposal was greater than those just featuring on one ward. These cross-ward proposals would need to be discussed by ward councillors/committees across all the relevant wards which would create these delays. This delay in discussion, and subsequently in approval, was reported to have created an issue for some potential projects. The time resource needed by

these voluntary organisations in these instances was cited as being a particular issue both due to the frustration of not knowing but, perhaps more importantly, because volunteer time is not always available (as described earlier).

Previously when districts across Birmingham were in place, as outlined earlier, administrative structures were in place that could have assisted this cross-ward co-operation (for example ward advisory groups). If similar cross-ward schemes were to be used in the future the issue of suitable administrative functions may need to be reconsidered.

On a positive note the 119 approved projects are drawn from a wide cross-section of organisational types, including residents' associations, community and voluntary groups, local partnerships, and a small number of professional organisations. The NDSU stated that though 'usual suspects' (those in receipt of previous Local Authority grant funding) had unsurprisingly been approved, it was clear that funding had also gone to those who have not previously applied for Community Chest or Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, including collaborations of smaller groups. The NDSU team sampled 56 of the projects, and determined that 20 of these had no previous history of such funding, equating to 35%.

Ward	Total Allocation ⁶	Number Funded	Range (min)	Range (max)	Average
Bartley Green	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Bordesley Green	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Edgbaston	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Ladywood	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Longbridge	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Oscott	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Quinton	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
South Yardley	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Sutton New Hall	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Sutton Trinity	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Tyburn	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Washwood Heath	48,000	1	48,000	48,000	48,000
Billesley	48,000	2	24,000	24,000	24,000
Brandwood	48,000	2	24,000	24,000	24,000
Erdington	48,000	2	18,000	30,000	24,000
Hall Green	48,000	2	13,000	35,000	24,000
Sparkbrook	48,000	2	15,000	33,000	24,000
Springfield	48,000	2	20,000	28,000	24,000
Stockland Green	48,000	2	8,000	40,000	24,000
Sutton Four Oaks	48,000	2	8,000	40,000	24,000
Sutton Vesey	48,000	2	12,495	35,505	24,000
Acocks Green	48,000	3	13,361	20,730	16,000
Harborne	48,000	3	5,000	25,990	16,000
Kingstanding	48,000	3	16,000	16,000	16,000
Nechells	48,000	3	5,000	28,000	16,000
Selly Oak	48,000	3	10,000	28,000	16,000
Shard End	48,000	3	10,439	19,000	16,000
Sheldon	48,000	3	7,150	29,000	16,000
Bournville	48,000	4	3,000	25,000	12,000
Hodge Hill	48,000	4	10,000	15,000	12,000
Kings Norton	48,000	4	3,000	30,000	12,000
Moseley and King's Heath	48,000	4	8,700	18,250	12,000
Aston	48,000	5	8,500	12,000	9,600
Lozells & East Handsworth	47,952	5	4,500	26,000	9,590
Perry Barr	46,800	5	3,800	15,000	9,360
Stechford and Yardley					
North	43,130	5	2,500	13,316	8,626
Soho	38,500	5	6,000	12,000	7,700
Handsworth Wood	48,000	7	3,000	12,786	6,857
Northfield	48,000	9	2,000	10,000	5,333
Weoley	48,000	10	2,000	7,858	4,800

⁶ note that not all monies were ultimately awarded or spent due to projects which did not materialise or a small number where outcomes were not met

Analysis of Selected Projects

A cohort of 24 projects were selected for an in-depth analysis, which included 1:1 consultations with project leads as well as relevant submission and outcome evidence. Examples from the wider project survey are also drawn upon where appropriate (many of the returns provided great detail as to the LIF experience and achievements). The projects in the list were selected to contain a wide geographical spread, whilst also reflecting a range of organisational types:

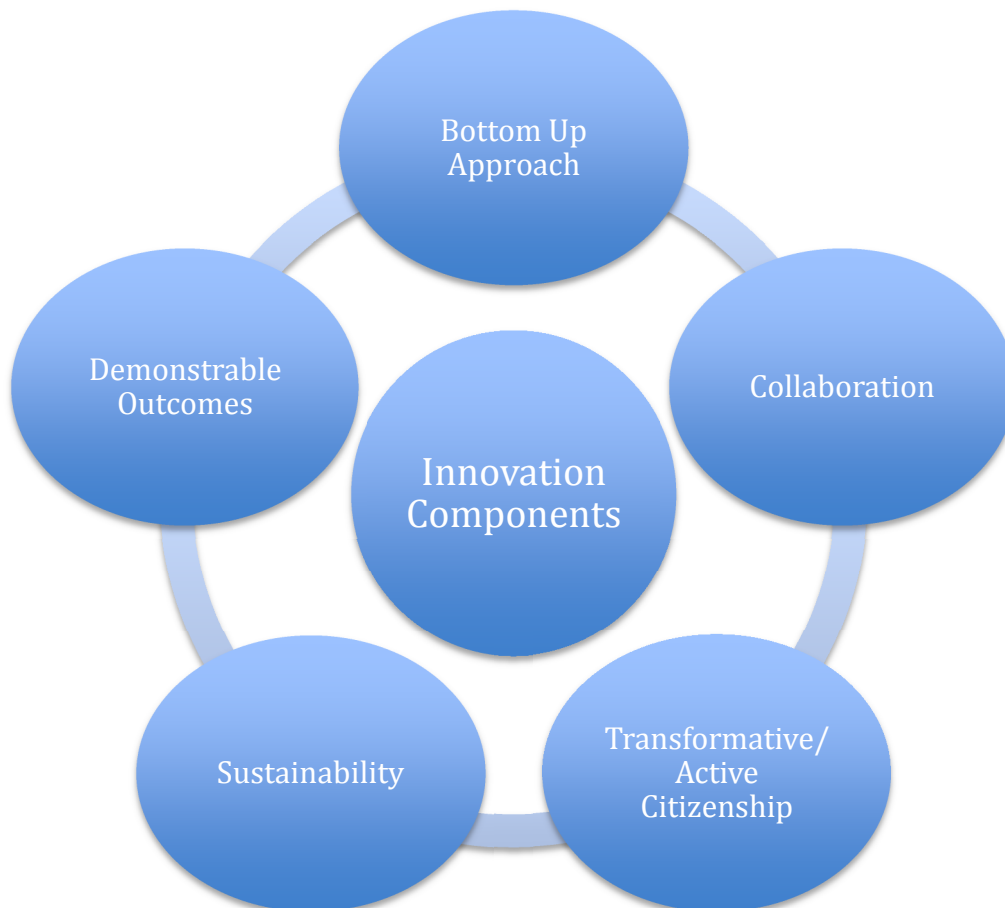
LIF NO.	Ward	Project
1	Tyburn	Outreach & Engagement Project: Creation of a tailor made 'pop-up' outreach project to take advice, volunteer and library services to vulnerable individuals in a non-traditional way.
4	Edgbaston	Edging Forward Together: Creation of a community hub in Edgbaston (Calthorpe) aimed at linking local organisations together, linked to developments at the Botanical Gardens.
6	Kingstanding	Raising Achievement in Kingstanding: Developing a social enterprise that enables young people to gain skills and vocational qualifications in horticultural services, used to offer a free gardening service for elderly and vulnerable residents.
7	Kingstanding	Health and Well Being Navigators: A health improvement programme supporting elderly and vulnerable residents, aimed at reducing the impact on statutory health organisations.
12	Sutton Vesey	Community Engagement and Planning: Establishing Boldmere Futures as a community asset, embedding partnership working through the development of a website and a planning for real process.
19	South Yardley	Hobmoor Community Centre: Bringing together community assets into a central hub for well-being and community development, empowering them to reach into the community and become more effective in the delivery of core priorities.
23	Soho	Bringing People Together: A further development of Community Development Trust in Soho building on the previous Community Reach partnership. The aim is to deliver a range of activities to aid the stimulation of the local economy.
36	Northfield and Weoley	Price's Square: Development of a shared space for community activity delivered by a host of local community organisations via the Northfield Stakeholders' Group.
44	Bournville	Community Matters Surgeries: Interactive workshops using a peer-to-peer advice model to support micro

LIF NO.	Ward	Project
		community organisations.
48	Handsworth Wood	HWCDT – Jobs and Skills: The development of a local Community Development Trust with a particular focus on developing activities to encourage local employment/training and well-being.
52	Shard End	Community Buddying: Development of a community buddying and sitting service within Shard End, including the formation of a Social Enterprise.
56	Sparkbrook	Get Balsall Heath Reading: A literacy campaign for isolated families aiming to improve parents' skills in order to help them in turn support their children's development, enhance their own social mobility and create a more integrated community.
60	Washwood Heath	YESS: Provide skills and training for young people to aid them in accessing employment and education delivery via a consortium formed of 7 local groups.
64	Perry Barr	Preparation for Neighbourhood Plan: Development by 3Bs Neighbourhood Forum of their Neighbourhood Plan.
70	Billesley	Billesley and Highters Heath Community Trust: Setting up a development group aiming to enable people to work together on practical ideas to make the neighbourhood a better place to live.
77	Handsworth Wood	Laurel Road: Development of an outdoor gym based at the Laurel Road Community Sports Centre. The gym is aiming to encourage an active lifestyle and physical exercise amongst adults and older people.
105	Weoley	Pickleball 35: Introduction of the new sport of Pickleball into the area focussed on over 35s. Delivery of early years sporting activity in alliance with local early years providers.
110	Sutton Trinity	Inter-generational Community Play Café: Revitalisation of Sutton Coldfield library through third sector delivery aimed at making sustainability of the library financially viable.
117	Brandwood	Bid Writer: Employment of a part-time bid writer to engage with local agencies and community organisations to identify funding needs and assist in funding applications.
122	Hodge Hill	Firs and Bromford Community Centre: Work with O'Dells Boxing Club to develop business case to enable the asset transfer of the Firs and Bromford Community Centre to become a local, community asset. (Note the scheme altered to become the leaseholder of the building).
143	Moseley and Kings Heath	Clean Air and A435 Partnership Working: Engaging neighbouring forums and resident organisations on the

LIF NO.	Ward	Project
		A435 corridor to work collaboratively on road safety, clean air and community safety issues.
155	Bordesley Green	Getting Citizens Active, Healthy and Involved: Development of outdoor gym at Saltley Academy for use both by the school pupils and the local community via the adjoining leisure centre.
157	Nechells, Aston and Perry Barr	29 Plus Health: Providing an assessment process of people over 29 in the area of their health and social needs to assist them into employment.
158	Ladywood	Living with Hardship: Aim to assist individuals experiencing hardship via introducing preventative measures and additional support to address the causes of their problems.

The intention of the analysis is to assess the extent to which the projects funded through the LIF programme have demonstrated real innovation, and a five stage criteria has been designed for this purpose. This is slightly modified from the framework used in the interim report, especially in relation to the assessment of outcomes. As displayed in the diagram overleaf, an innovatory project should be able to show that:

- ❖ It was based on a strong bottom up approach to the identification of need and project development;
- ❖ Further to the bottom up assessment, it had a clear collaborative approach to delivery;
- ❖ It was transformative in scope and/or promoted high levels of active citizenship throughout the delivery period;
- ❖ It was able to demonstrate strong sustainability and a tangible legacy beyond the period of funding; and
- ❖ It was not just successful in meeting its stipulated outputs, but also achieved demonstrable outcomes (which may actually have been outside of the scope of the original proposal and intentions).



This report now focuses on analysing each of these components, drawing case study examples from the 24 selected projects, bolstered by further information elicited from the survey and document review as described above. In each section tables are provided that show an objective assessment of the extent to which this cohort of projects can be considered to meet each component, based on an analysis of the proposal and information/clarifications providing during the 1:1 interview. For clarity of presentation a five-stage traffic light system has been utilised. Areas with a green/amber combination should not be considered to be of concern, but do not appear from the available information to be quite as strong compared to green status projects for each criteria. At the end of the section an overall schematic of the entire cohort is provided, revealing a real breadth in the levels of innovation ultimately achieved.

❖ Bottom up Approach

LIF	Ward	Project	Assessment
1	Tyburn	Outreach & Engagement Project	Green
4	Edgbaston	Edging Forward Together	Green
6	Kingstanding	Raising Achievement in Kingstanding	Green
7	Kingstanding	Health and Well Being Navigators	Green, Orange
12	Sutton Vesey	Community Engagement and Planning	Green
19	South Yardley	Hobmoor CC	Green
23	Soho	Bringing People Together	Green, Orange
36	Northfield and Weoley	Northfield Town Centre Partnership	Green
44	Bournville	Birmingham Com Matters	Green, Orange
48	Handsworth Wood	HWCDT –Jobs and Skills	Orange
52	Shard End	Community Buddying	Green
56	Sparkbrook	Get Balsall Heath Reading	Orange
60	Washwood Heath	YESS	Green, Orange
64	Perry Barr	Prep. for Neighbourhood Plan	Green, Orange
70	Billesley	Billesley and Highters Com Trust	Green, Orange
77	Handsworth Wood	Laurel Road	Orange
105	Weoley	Pickleball 35	Orange, Red
110	Sutton Trinity	Folio Library	Green
117	Brandwood	Brandwood Centre Bid Writer	Orange
122	Hodge Hill	Firs and Bromford Community Centre	Green, Orange
143	Moseley and Kings Heath	KH Res Forum - A435	Green
155	Bordesley Green	Getting Citizens Active	Red
157	Nechells, Aston and Perry Barr	29 Plus Health	Orange, Red
158	Ladywood	Living with Hardship	Red

The intention of LIF was to provide a focus for new style ward meetings and act therein as a catalyst for meaningful community engagement between residents, groups and organisations and Elected Members in their local leadership role. One would therefore expect good LIF projects to be able to demonstrate that their focus was 'bottom up', i.e. that the rationale for the project stemmed from community identified local need and that work had been carried out by and with residents and grass roots organisations in the area to understand fully the characteristics of the issue and the dynamics of change required. In furtherance of this the project should then be able to demonstrate a strong collaborative and partnership approach, having worked with residents and local organisations to achieve sustainability and successful outcomes, thus linking together the core innovation components.

As the table above demonstrates, the majority of the projects in the cohort were able to demonstrate a proposal and project development process which sought

actively to engage communities in design and the establishment of project parameters. Strong examples include the following:

LIF6: Kingstanding. This project was based on a fusion of identified community needs as well as a pilot exercise. Consultations had shown a high number of elderly residents who were struggling to maintain their gardens and experiencing an overarching sense of social isolation. Residents had also reported being threatened with eviction for their unkempt gardens. Meanwhile, a survey conducted by Kingstanding Regeneration Trust (KRT) with young residents revealed the fear of unemployability due a lack of work experience and vocational qualifications, with approximately 25% of 16-24 year olds in the area estimated to be not in education, employment or training (NEET). Engaging with residents and partner agencies through the Kingstanding Interagency Partnership and Local Delivery Group, the project was subsequently designed to train local NEET young people to provide a free gardening service for the elderly.

LIF52: Shard End. This proposal identified the need as the high volume of vulnerable adults socially isolated through an inability to leave their own homes. The extent of the issue was known based on two years of active listening events with different aspects of the community, recognising the value of a project which sought to support such vulnerable individuals by offering volunteer support and carer support networking.

LIF64: Perry Barr. This project involved the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan with the compilation of the neighbourhood plan instigated, and is being overseen, by the neighbourhood forum. This forum, chaired by one of the ward councillors, comprises a wide variety of local people. To complete the plan there has to be an extensive consultation process and engagement and much of this work is done and led by volunteers. All the volunteer members of the steering group have specific interests and lead on specific areas of work.

The forum gives local people the platform to become involved, many of whom have not experienced such processes before. This has been a steep learning curve for some who are not used to the running of meetings and how to contribute to them and they have received training and support.

However, at the opposite end of the spectrum there are two particular projects in the cohort that represent an abject failure to utilise a 'bottom up' approach. Indeed in both wards in question the vision of LIF proposals being developed by communities and grass roots organisations in conjunction with councillors as part of their local leadership role was far from reality. It will be shown later on in the report that in both of these cases there has been a subsequent lack of collaboration, community engagement and positive outcomes which can be traced back to these intrinsic set-up problems:

LIF155: Bordesley Green. This project was to install an outdoor gym at Saltley Academy for use by pupils during the day, and also the wider community via the leisure centre in non-school times. However, the following comment from the

main proposal contact demonstrates that it was developed by a specialist bid writer along with a number of other applications within the ward:

“I doubt if I can add anything to the consultation other than to say it was a mess in this Ward and had a negative impact on some of the participants. Although I completed applications for several applicants, I have no knowledge of how the end funding was applied...”

As a direct consequence of this the school, as a key delivery partner, reported that they had no awareness of the key performance indicators included in the proposal until October 2018, crucially after the local councillors had already signed it off. At the time of writing these indicators had not been met and the second tranche of funding has been withheld by the NDSU accordingly. The school have already purchased the equipment and believe that the remaining funds are therefore ‘owed’ to them, “...we have been held to ransom for something we haven’t kidnapped.”

A lack of democracy and transparency was also highlighted by the following respondents who had submitted unsuccessful proposals within the ward:

“I was very disappointed with the whole process in relation to the LIF, apart from the fact that as constituents we were only informed of the funding, the deadline a few (maybe 4-6 weeks before deadline). Despite this we prepared group and individual applications and presentations, I also consistently attended meetings on a weekly basis in the run up to the deadline.

The councillors involved showed no real support or commitment throughout this process, then to have an organisation that had already secured funding in another ward prior to the Bordesley Green proposal come in last minute and secure the funding without having to attend any meetings, present their programme was quite painful to experience. This was one of my first experiences in trying to secure funding for community projects and in all fairness left a very bitter taste.”

“I will report that we will not be applying for the fund in the near future due to the nepotism that we felt was evident in making awards of the innovation fund.”

LIF158: Ladywood. It became apparent during the consultation phase that the issues to be addressed by this project, namely rough sleeping and associated anti-social behaviour, were clearly determined by a local councillor who subsequently led on setting up and chairing the local stakeholder meetings. It appears to be a classic case of communities being done to rather than with. Akin to LIF155, the project lead from one of the consortium organisations indicated that there have been ongoing issues with partnership working, and indeed that it is most unlikely to be sustained for that reason.

NDSU representatives highlighted their disappointment that another potentially innovative project idea had been dismissed in Ladywood ward, namely a proposal for Transforming Waste and “Changing Neighbourhoods Vermiculture

Project”:

“I believed the proposed project was innovative, sustainable and was to be delivered in partnership with key stakeholders. This is because the Association has an excellent track record of sustaining previously funded council projects. [NDSU officers] also provided advice and guidance in addition to my initial encouragement and advice.

I was surprised to find that even after presenting the project idea at ward forum that it was not funded or part-funded in favour of a homelessness intervention project. Even though at the time there was quite a lot of resources from BCC being invested in a homelessness intervention team.

It is my view that local public opinion may well have been overlooked and that an opportunity was missed.”

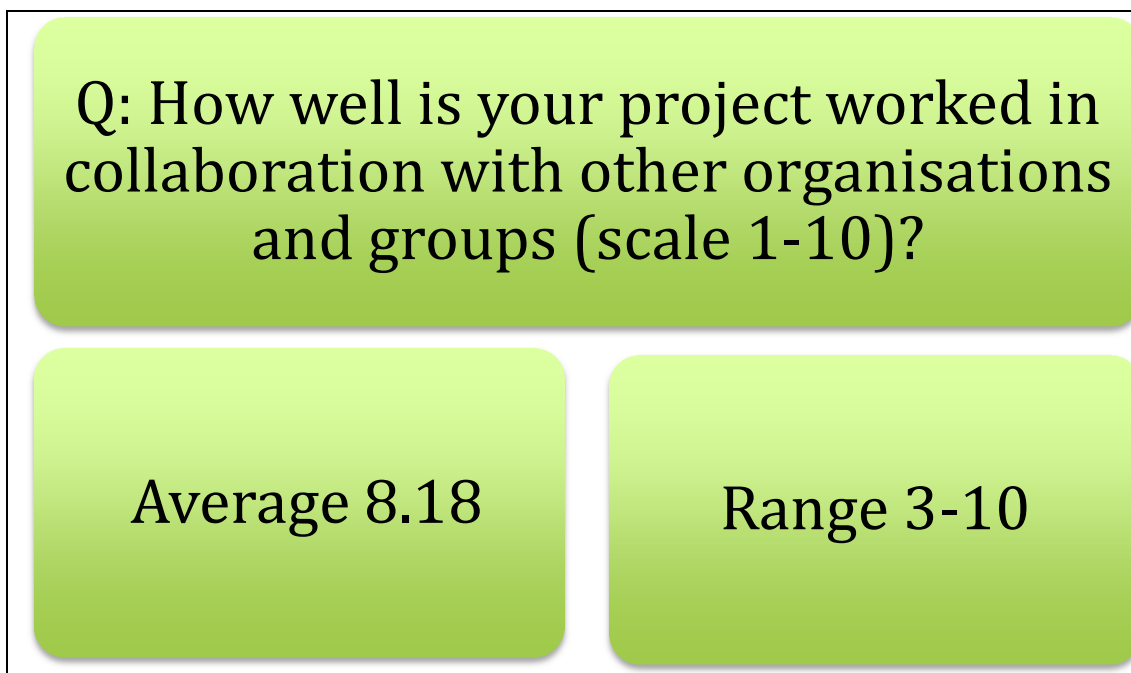
❖ Collaboration

LIF	Ward	Project	Assessment
1	Tyburn	Outreach & Engagement Project	
4	Edgbaston	Edging Forward Together	
6	Kingstanding	Raising Achievement in Kingstanding	
7	Kingstanding	Health and Well Being Navigators	
12	Sutton Vesey	Community Engagement and Planning	
19	South Yardley	Hobmoor CC	
23	Soho	Bringing People Together	
36	Northfield and Weoley	Northfield Town Centre Partnership	
44	Bournville	Birmingham Com Matters	
48	Handsworth Wood	HWCDT –Jobs and Skills	
52	Shard End	Community Buddying	
56	Sparkbrook	Get Balsall Heath Reading	
60	Washwood Heath	YESS	
64	Perry Barr	Prep. for Neighbourhood Plan	
70	Billesley	Billesley and Highters Com Trust	
77	Handsworth Wood	Laurel Road	
105	Weoley	Pickleball 35	
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122	Hodge Hill	Firs and Bromford Community Centre	
143	Moseley and Kings Heath	KH Res Forum - A435	
155	Bordesley Green	Getting Citizens Active	
157	Nechells, Aston and Perry Barr	29 Plus Health	
158	Ladywood	Living with Hardship	

Collaboration is a fundamental element of effective locality and bottom-up working. Within this criterion we examined the extent to which projects could demonstrate ongoing partnership working with other local agencies, voluntary organisations and community representation throughout the period of funding, and crucially not just in terms of initial priority setting. Across the cohort it was encouraging to note that 17 out of 24 were able to demonstrate high levels of collaboration, either in terms of active partnership working or the creation of formal links in working arrangements to meet priorities. Good practice examples of both of these approaches are shown below, which are drawn from both inside and outside of the cohort to illustrate the diversity of delivery.

This is also reflected in an associated survey finding. As shown in the caption overleaf, all respondents were asked to rate retrospectively on a scale of 1-10 how well they felt their project had managed to work with other organisations and groups since inception. The average response was 8.18 (range 3-10). This is

almost identical to the initial response provided in the interim report on 2018 (8.21).



Examples

Active partnership working

LIF5: Kingstanding. Central to this LIF project Forest Schools Birmingham have worked in collaboration with a wide array of local organisations including: Birmingham Mind, Mencap, The Local Job Centres, Kingstanding Regeneration Trust, the NHS Clinical Referral Unit, Kingstanding Well-Being Centre, Urban Devotion, The Local Police Team, YMCA Sutton Coldfield, Christ the King, Twickenham Primary and Aylesbury Medical Surgery. Working in partnership with these local groups is seen by the coordinator as key to the success of the project, as it has established two way referral pathways to support isolated residents of the ward. Birmingham Mind has moved part of their service into the café, and is able to signpost vulnerable local community members to the café for voluntary work opportunities. In addition working very closely with Kingstanding Regeneration Trust (another LIF funded project) and the YMCA has allowed access to younger active citizens within the community.

LIF8: Hall Green. This proposal focused upon enabling three centres to work together to set up an information service where local people could go for advice and guidance about problems with benefits, housing and local services. The partnership was developed at the time of proposal creation. Since this time, the coordinator feels that the partnership has flourished, with the three centres supporting each other in the recruitment and training of volunteers, sharing resources for sessions and capacity building around future funding and further sustainability. A range of secondary community groups and religious organisations also work in collaboration to promote social, recreational and

educational activities. The following comment reflects the progress made, and the intrinsic value of a collaborative approach:

“[LIF] has had an impact as it showed that groups can work together on joint bids and still keep their independence. It has shown that people can make change happen and start to pick up pieces of services that are non-existent now but are still very much needed like our community centre and the Info Hall Green Service, which is helping people with advice and getting them on computers to sort out their problems. We as a group have worked together and supported each other.... [I]t’s not all about money and costs but about commitment and persistence. We will continue to work with other groups and help with capacity building as well as Info Hall Green.”

LIF36: Northfield and Weoley. This project saw the development of a shared space for community activity delivered by a host of local community organisations via the Northfield Stakeholders’ Group at Prices’ Square. As noted later in this report, the premises has subsequently closed due to ongoing maintenance problems that were not determined in the original survey. Despite this failure to provide long term sustainability at the venue itself it is interesting to note that during the year in which the hub operated, there were clear signs of progressive and collaborative service development and referral pathways, including local school use for extra tuition, the Prince’s Trust offering employment and training opportunities, and partnership working between Northfield Arts Forum and the local radio station on volunteering and heritage projects which have continued post closure.

LIF43: Billesley. The project coordinator provided a positive reflection on the level of collaboration by stating that:

“Partnership with the Brandwood Centre and Job Centre has created a cohesive approach to long-term unemployment in the area which has engendered trust in the project. Working with the Children's Centre has also resulted in a more holistic approach to the problems facing the families in crisis in the area. The development group has meant more cooperation between services and providers and less working in 'silos' for the benefit of the community. It also means that problems or ideas from the community have a greater chance of being acted on as there are more people participating in the community.”

An example of this is that the local police, school and PCT wanted a long dark alley way lit for safety and security. The development group liaised with Big Lottery and a local contractor to fund the installation of street lighting.

LIF77: Laurel Road. The project has linked to a wide range of community groups to promote the outdoor gym and to encourage usage. These have included promoting the equipment to the existent groups who use the community centre. In addition to this they have liaised with local GPs and medical practices again to make sure they were aware of the outdoor gym especially as an option for

patients who would benefit from exercise. Further to this they have also linked to local schools and Children's Centre.

The Royal Ballet did a project with Laurel Road in the summer of 2018 and they linked to that to encourage participants to use the gym as an ongoing exercise option.

LIF143: Moseley and Kings Heath. Similar to LIF43 above, this project is another example of significantly improved collaboration and, crucially, the perceived breaking down of silo working culture by local organisations and departments. Focusing on initiatives to monitor and enhance levels of clean air and community safety around the A435 arterial route, the LIF project has resulted in improved relationships with the local Business Improvement District, Public Health England, Active Streets and national clean air initiatives. Better partnership working between areas such as Kings Heath, Moseley and Brandwood was also cited.

Formalisation of working arrangements

LIF64: Perry Barr. The Neighbourhood Forum is in place which is overseeing the development of the neighbourhood plan and it meets every month, chaired by one of the local Councillors. The forum is now a statutory body to be consulted on other planning applications in the area. The plan completion, as set out in legislation, involves the need to consult many agencies including Birmingham City Council.

The forum are now involved in consultations regarding the Commonwealth Games master planning process especially in relation to the athlete village which will be in their area along with the development of the transport and road infrastructure.

The community plan development process was described as “a powerful process” by the Project Lead due to the range of organisations who are involved and the collaboration that is undertaken predominantly by the local volunteer community members.

LIF110: Sutton Trinity. This ambitious LIF project has witnessed the development of a Community Interest Company and Charitable Incorporated Organisation (FOLIO) determined to establish a viable alternative funding model in order to safeguard the future of Sutton Coldfield Town Library which was facing closure. The business model is based on the creation of a play café within the library, encouraging community participation alongside traditional library services and values. The working agreement has seen Birmingham City Council contributing £110k (the equivalent of a tier 1 library service), Sutton Town Council £37k and FOLIO £45k per annum.

By contrast, three projects in particular within the cohort appear to show distinctly low levels of collaboration. For LIF155 Bordesley Green and LIF158

Ladywood, this is intrinsically related to the failure of both proposals to have come through a transparent bottom-up process:

LIF105: Weoley. The project did make some attempts to link with other local service providers, health, leisure, early years etc., to try and encourage people to try Pickleball. In this instance this collaboration was unsuccessful due to the poor quality venue meaning that very few people actually wanted to become involved either as participants or in leading future sessions.

LIF155: Bordesley Green. The two main delivery organisations involved were Saltley Academy and the adjoining leisure centre, with the project purporting to build on existent relationships relating to the use of the school's playing fields out of school hours. The link with the leisure centre for the LIF project has not worked in practice, and the planned advisory group to coordinate progress has never actually met (Saltley Academy was not even aware of the group's supposed existence until an NDSU visit, reflecting the lack of ownership consequent on the use of an external proposal writer). There has been a subsequent manifest lack of holiday activities, promotional work and community use of the facility outside of school hours.

LIF158: Ladywood. It was reported that the 13 strong stakeholder consortium central to the project was supposed to meet every two months, but had not convened since last October. The stakeholders concerned had rarely met outside of this forum to progress partnership working, and indeed the process of running the consortium was described as "like herding cats."

Outside of the final evaluation cohort LIF2 (Sheldon) is also noteworthy for a lack of collaborative intent that has limited progress. The project has introduced a speed reduction programme across Sheldon roads by purchasing, erecting and monitoring speed warning signs and data collectors. Whilst there is undoubtedly a strong background rationale for the project as a leading community concern, in its current formulation it relies entirely on a couple of volunteers to run the entire scheme, and for Birmingham City Council to install the equipment. This has led to intense frustrations at subsequent delays:

"VASS [speed monitoring] equipment has to be installed by BCC and they really have issues working to timetables and project management. Project has been delayed by 12 months against objectives and targets discussed. BCC administration appears to have no concept of operational activities, timetabling, targets and objectives.... [It] seems to be a foreign language to them."

This project must be seen as functional and transactional, purely comprising capital purchase without a wider framework that could be considered innovatory. As a LIF project it would have been considerably enhanced by a community capacity and partnership building ethos. For example, this could have centred around engaging local residents through training and accreditation to monitor road safety concerns, and developing local networks to instil greater public awareness and participation.

The difficult experience of LIF122 is also worthy of note against this criterion.

LIF122: Hodge Hill. This LIF project was focused upon the desire to bring back into full usage a local community building. The building has been used by the local boxing club but was in a poor state of repair with large areas of the building unusable. At the outset the plan was to undertake a Community Asset Transfer of the building although this subsequently altered to taking on the leasehold following professional advice.

There have been positive signs of partnership working, with a host of organisations expressing the desire to use the building once the lease is finalised, welcoming the opportunity to use a much loved local building once more. However, the view was expressed that being in receipt of funding also made their community group susceptible to exploitation, as the following comment illustrates:

“I have given [collaboration] a 5/10 as some groups who are supposed to have expertise, I found that they don't. Or after paying a sign-up fee you find that unfortunately they then can't help at all. Most know you have money to do the jobs and try to rip you off by charging thousands more for the job....[T]here are lots of greedy people out there who want your money once they find out you've got some.”

It was further stated that the project had approached Locality for assistance with their business plan, but that ultimately the project lead had to do it herself following online resources because the support offered from Locality (and paid for) was perceived to be of low quality.

❖ Transformation/Active Citizenship

LIF	Ward	Project	Assessment
1	Tyburn	Outreach & Engagement Project	Green
4	Edgbaston	Edging Forward Together	
6	Kingstanding	Raising Achievement in Kingstanding	Green
7	Kingstanding	Health and Well Being Navigators	
12	Sutton Vesey	Community Engagement and Planning	Green
19	South Yardley	Hobmoor CC	Green
23	Soho	Bringing People Together	
36	Northfield and Weoley	Northfield Town Centre Partnership	Green
44	Bournville	Birmingham Com Matters	Green
48	Handsworth Wood	HWCDT –Jobs and Skills	
52	Shard End	Community Buddying	Green
56	Sparkbrook	Get Balsall Heath Reading	Green
60	Washwood Heath	YESS	
64	Perry Barr	Prep. for Neighbourhood Plan	Green
70	Billesley	Billesley and Highters Com Trust	Green
77	Handsworth Wood	Laurel Road	
105	Weoley	Pickleball 35	Green
110	Sutton Trinity	Folio Library	Green
117	Brandwood	Brandwood Centre Bid Writer	
122	Hodge Hill	Firs and Bromford Community Centre	Green
143	Moseley and Kings Heath	KH Res Forum - A435	
155	Bordesley Green	Getting Citizens Active	Green
157	Nechells, Aston and Perry Barr	29 Plus Health	Green
158	Ladywood	Living with Hardship	Green

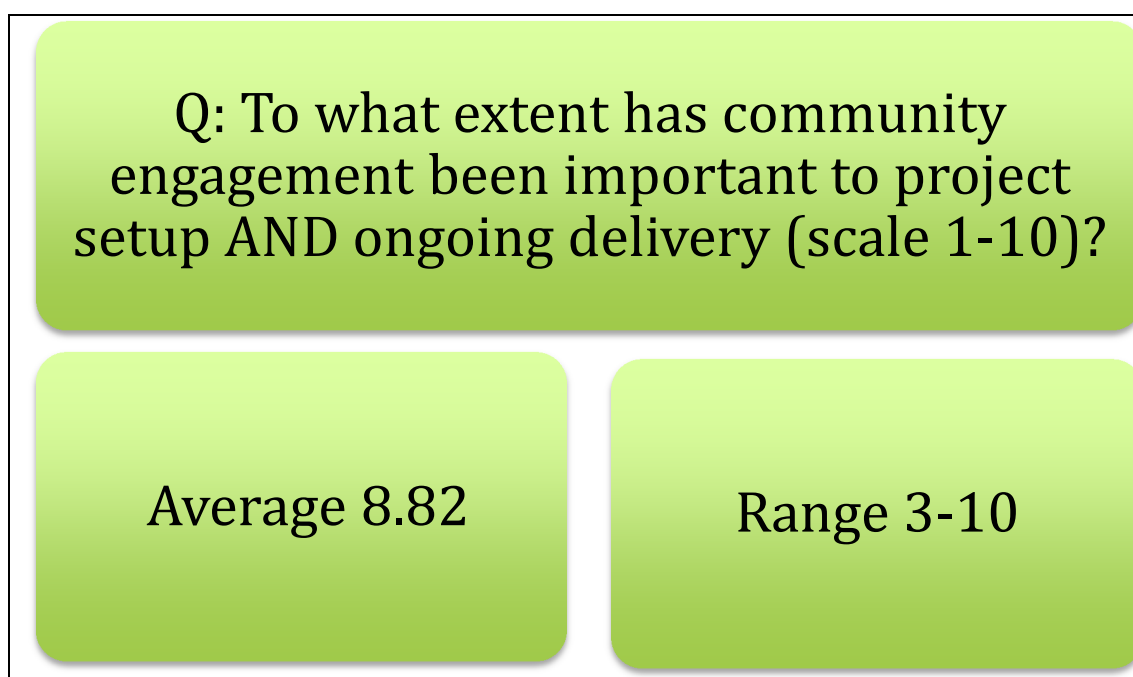
The fundamental aim of the LIF funding regime was to see the introduction of projects that sought significantly to promote active citizenship. The most ‘innovative’ projects against this criterion therefore are those that can demonstrate extensive community involvement in decision-making scrutiny and delivery, show a high social value return on investment (e.g. through volunteering hours) and/or transform service delivery at the local level.

This ethos is very much in keeping with the City Council’s White Paper referenced earlier. This White Paper outlines the council’s commitment to “helping local neighbourhoods and communities to have more influence over the services and decisions that affect their lives.”⁷ The desire to tailor this involvement to the needs and capacity of local organisations and people is also

⁷ Pg. 2 – Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods, Policy Statement (White Paper), January 2019

central to this vision. The White Paper also draws on work undertaken by Locality's publication: *People Power, Findings from the Commission on the Future of Localism* especially its depiction of the sources and aspects of powerful communities.⁸ It is also relevant to note that the White Paper's aspirations mean that Birmingham will be well-placed to respond to Central Government policy in this area such as that laid out in the *Civil Society Strategy* which covers similar themes.⁹

The table above demonstrates that most projects of the cohort for analysis have shown good evidence of achievement and intentions in this regard. There appears to be a strong correlation with collaboration, with the majority of projects scoring very similarly across the two categories. As a further indicator, respondents were asked in the survey to stipulate the extent to which community engagement was a continued important factor in project set-up and ongoing delivery. The term community engagement was chosen as a blander statement to cover the range of different LIF projects which might not readily identify with the term active citizenship. The graphic below shows the overwhelmingly positive response from the projects consulted, with an average ranking of 8.82 (range 3-10).



The following good practice examples of active citizenship are split thematically, though it should be noted that there are considerably more which could have been selected (which is a testament to the endeavour and creativity of Birmingham's community sector):

⁸ *People Power, Findings from the Commission on the Future of Localism*, Locality, 2018

⁹ *Civil Society Strategy: Building A Future That Works For Everyone*, Cabinet Office, 2018

Examples

Community Hubs

The community hub notion is where a community based partnership or organisation develops and runs a community venue for use by community groups. These hubs often include facilities that were disused/under-used and/or in a state of disrepair. Typically these facilities are developed into a sustainable venue by making it a vibrant location such as developing sustainable activities including initial support to the groups leading them and making improvements to the fabric of the building. These hubs thus become a cornerstone of the local community being accessible for activities delivering socially worthwhile work.

The development of such hubs including via a formal asset transfer is very much in keeping with the City Council's vision for Working Together in Neighbourhoods being one of the potential options for delivering their vision for building further local 'people power'. It also is in line with the Government's vision for developing civil society as expressed within their strategy discussed earlier.

LIF4: Edgbaston. The Calthorpe Estate in Edgbaston covers a wide geographical area, crossing into Harborne and Quinton at its peripheries. It has a vibrant and well-established residents' association which is the primary driving force behind the hub proposal. The area is considered to be generally affluent, but does suffer from micro areas of deprivation. Its population profile is also in a state of flux, with new demographic groups moving into the area (including the expansion of University accommodation) which has, in particular, increased the levels of young people in the locality. The estate, however, lacks a traditional centre and therefore there is perceived to be a paucity of communication between existing residents and groups, and an increasing sense of social isolation. The proposal centred around the creation of a virtual hub, bringing together diverse sections of the community through enhanced communication (social media) and community activities.

Also key to the model is the use of existing assets especially encouraging an enhanced use of the Botanical Gardens into an 'Urban Gardening Centre'. Other local community facilities have been used such as the Edgbaston Community Centre which has been developed into a community venue. Another LIF project, LIF9: Creative Harborne, has also used this latter venue.

A further strength of this project is the development of a number of diverse activities joined together as strands under the overall project managed by a volunteer committee. These strands are based on identified local needs from local residents and organisations. These have included walking/cycling, art, conservation area management plan development, traffic and parking, safety and security and developing new and existing residents groups.

A prime focus of the project, and one they wish to expand further after the LIF funding, is in relation to a notion they have described as urban gardening. This

recognises the expansion of the numbers of apartments in the area which do not have any/significantly sized gardens but have the potential for developing small scale 'gardens'. A number of other organisations such as colleges and schools also have small spaces, balconies or roofs that would be suitable for this purpose. The project has been working with the Botanical Gardens and Birmingham Metropolitan University to develop the concept whilst also enhancing the use of the gardens itself via an academy of good practice.

The different strands are managed and led by different volunteers some of whom have only become involved with the project after the LIF project started along with existent volunteers who have had a more in-depth involvement. The Project Co-ordinator stated that "LIF gave ideas and actions momentum and was a pot of glue to bring people together."

LIF19: South Yardley. The Hobmoor model is a stunning example of hub development following LIF funding. It has become a thriving community centre partnered with a range of community interest companies, groups and local service providers such as the adjoining school academy. The hub sees a footfall of 1200 people a week providing empowerment activities, education and training for adults and youth activities including in the school holidays with a food poverty project (600 young people and children use the community centre each week). There is also a strong transformative ethos to the hub's approach, with groups using the centre needing to demonstrate they can impact upon community development (i.e. it is not for hire for social occasions). The project lead stated that they have: "...created a model and theory of change and will be used and developed in the future. The Big Lottery is now using our ToC as an exemplar to others."

LIF122: Hodge Hill. This will be a particularly interesting project to monitor progress of in the forthcoming months. It has seen a transition in orientation away from asset transfer of the building towards taking over the lease from the City Council. The coordinator has stressed the huge learning journey that she has had to go through to steer the project towards its goals, a process that has been hugely beneficial personally.

The coordinator stated that: "Groups are excited that the building will be available again after 25+ years. We have been 'inundated' with groups and offers of help and our only fear is that because the building isn't yet ready we may have disappointed some of them. The community are really excited at the prospect."

Communities Stepping Up

The vision of LIF was to see the expansion of locality based active citizenship with community organisations coming to the fore to manage assets and deliver projects which complement existing public services such as library services, environmental improvements, social care and jobs/skills. It is very pleasing to note that there have been a significant number of LIF projects that have succeeded in this vein, and should be considered as real good practice examples of high end citizen empowerment. Across the city many of the volunteers

involved within LIF funded initiatives have learnt new skills, obtained qualifications and even employment on the back of their endeavours. In LIF1 Tyburn one of the volunteers has subsequently been employed directly by the Castle Vale Tenants and Residents Alliance as a financial inclusion officer. They had not worked for the previous 25 years but were seen as the “standout candidate.”

Some projects have also managed to implement a time-banking philosophy, with those benefiting from initial support subsequently working for the betterment of others in future sessions. LIF44 Bournville is a clear example of this approach. In another project (LIF12 Sutton Vesey) the community has been empowered to the extent of having a direct influence in modifying local planning processes:

LIF12: Sutton Vesey. This project began with a planning for real event which yielded good attendance and started the process of enhancing the credibility of Boldmere Futures. One big issue was demolition of adult education centre. The planning for real process gave local opinions on what the site should/should not be used for and the views have directly influenced the BCC tender specification. It will now be a 55+ residential area with an attached nursing home facility. The care facility does not fall under section 106, but the developer has still agreed to work with Boldmere Futures to invest in the community and deliver a space on the High Street, providing a tangible presence for Boldmere Futures and a location from which to do extra curriculum activities and promote youth enterprise:

“We have found an effective way of working as a community group representing the interests of local businesses. We are being listened to now and are seen as credible.”

LIF 23: Soho. The project has been undertaken by the Community Development Trust (CDT); enhanced collaboration between residents, local service providers and local businesses is a key outcome of the project in itself. The aim of the CDT and the project is to support people and develop local networks.

The residents who were involved prior to the LIF project have maintained their interest and more residents are now involved in the work of the CDT and the strands of the LIF project. The project lead believes that their involvement is at a more in depth level than previously. An example was provided whereby the environment strand is now being led by a local resident having been handed over to them from a Trust member.

LIF44: Bournville. This LIF project enabled Birmingham Community Matters to deliver a year of community ‘surgeries’ within the locality, whereby ‘surgeons’ (those with experience of running community and third sector organisations) were available to advise beneficiaries on process issues (based on the perception that BVSC does not really support micro organisations). Pre/post questionnaires revealed increased confidence to tackle respective issues. Moreover, there has been an increasing number of ‘surgeons’ as the year progressed, including some

who had previously been the beneficiaries of advice. LIF52 (Shard End) is a further positive example of a time banking approach to delivery.

LIF56: Balsall Heath. The project has developed an 'escalator' approach whereby participants in the programme can become more and more involved if they wish to do so. They believe they have involved the wider community 'hugely' and have encouraged community members to look outwards from their road into the wider community and further into Birmingham. Many of the participants of the programme previously had not known life outside of the immediate area. Specific examples were provided such as a 54 year old lady who came to the programme activities and did not speak English after coming to England at 18 and now has no family. Due to the programme she is now coming to workshops including English classes (these classes are not LIF funded but they do link to them). A further example was provided of a woman who came along to one of the 'discovery' classes and now is leading groups and activities as a volunteer.

They have also run democracy sessions which have included classes on local and central government including the electoral processes, a workshop with the local MP and a visit to Westminster. All had the aim of enhancing knowledge and understanding of civic society. For some of those who went on the visit to Westminster it was their first trip to London.

LIF64: Perry Barr. As described earlier to complete the neighbourhood plan there has been an extensive consultation process and engagement with much of this work being led by volunteers. All 10 members of the steering group have specific interests leading on different areas of forum's action plan.

As many of the volunteers have not previously been involved in formal meeting structures or at least were not 'professional meeting attenders' they were not aware of processes followed in such meetings. The volunteers have received training and support including from the City Council to assist them with engaging with these processes. This process was described as a steep learning curve for many but those volunteers have now enhanced personal skills and have developed as individuals. These skills are now being utilised in the plan development process and the work of the forum.

LIF110: Sutton Trinity. LIF funding for this project has seen the redesign (and saving) of the existing public library service in Sutton Coldfield. Working around this clearly focused agenda, the campaign group has evolved into a coherent and empowered entity with a Community Interest Company and a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The play café established provides not for profit income generation which makes an essential contribution to library costs, whilst FOLIO is now able to coordinate constant community events, both in-house and outreach in orientation (for example taking rhyme time into local care homes as an inter-generational initiative).

Health Interventions

Examples in this category are aimed at reducing the burden on health care providers through the promotion of healthy lifestyles and social prescribing.

LIF7: Kingstanding. This project has introduced an officer to recruit and train volunteers to act as health and wellbeing navigators to undertake social prescribing across Oscott, building community capacity and tapping into the local voluntary community sector. 10 volunteer navigators have been fully engaged, delivering approximately 6-10 hours of interventions per week. From a capacity perspective it is particularly interesting to note that a number of individuals now engaged as navigators were originally clients, re-emphasising the value of 'giving something back' intrinsic to a number of positive LIF projects.

LIF77: Handsworth Wood. The pieces of the outdoor gym were designed to be accessible and provide a gentle introduction to exercise including for older people to use during the daytime. Since the installation in the spring of 2018 a wide range of age and demographic groups have used the equipment. The gym is opened up at 8am (it is within the grounds of the Community Centre) and generally older people use it during the day with other groups in the evenings. In addition to the physical health benefits the project representatives believe it has made an impact on mental health as people with mental health issues have used it and have found it useful. Project lead believes that "it has done all that it intended to do and a wider range of people have used it than we ever thought would."

They liaised with GPs and medical practices to make sure they were aware of the outdoor gym as an exercise option for patients.

Other examples of this approach include LIF5 (Kingstanding Food Community) and LIF31 (Springfield Healthy Village).

In the interim report the spectrum of community engagement was highlighted, ranging from information giving (unilateral delivery) at one end, through to true collaboration and citizen empowerment at the other:



That there were numerous LIF projects that appeared much more towards the bottom end of the spectrum and therefore more functional than visionary in orientation is a key finding of both the interim and final reporting phases.

LIF158: Ladywood is a prime example of a project which has not sought to really engage with the local community, as the issues to be addressed were driven by the local councillor.

This was a weakness which the NDSU team also regularly identified as part of

their assessment and scrutiny role, with most of this sub-group RAG rated as red or amber (thus encouraging the relevant councillors to embrace their local leadership role and work with the community groups and local organisations to enhance their proposals or indeed to select different ones). That these proposals were still advanced appears indicative of certain ward representatives' affinity with the format and remit of the former Community Chest regime. It should be noted that by no means are we suggesting that the following projects cited as examples were without merit, but that they should not have been considered as innovation within the parameters of LIF or deemed appropriate for this particular funding stream. This is because they showed limited vision and often focused upon staffing and capital costs rather than community development as their modus operandi (more discussion on this topic is provided later in the Role of Ward Councillors section):

LIF2: Sheldon. This project can only demonstrate the lowest level of community involvement (support from residents to the idea of the project at ward meetings) and does not appear to fit neatly with any of the specified LIF outcomes. The funding has been used to support capital expenditure and maintenance of speed monitoring equipment, rather than any sense of community development.

LIF65: Perry Barr. This funding provided capital for an outdoor gym in a local park, requiring ongoing funding for safety checks and equipment maintenance. The park equipment is clearly valued by the local community, but the lack of real 'innovation' (compared with LIF77 Handsworth Wood's model above) is summarised by the following comment:

"The community use the equipment and enjoy it (in fact we've been asked for more!) but the community were not directly involved in the setting up of the gym."

LIF71: Acocks Green. The rationale of this project was based on low level community engagement, funding a youth worker to consult with young people (aged 11-18) to identify how they wish to use their leisure time, in order to inform future funding applications). There has been positive progress which will benefit the community:

"Our whole project was community engagement as we were seeking the opinions and views of local people. Across the research period we managed to attain the views of over 225 young people via surveys and focus groups, over 70 adults and parents and 11 local community organisations. This helped us gather information from a wide cross-section of the local population."

However in order to be innovatory the project would have needed to upskill local residents, for example by training peer researchers, providing transferable skills and community direction.

LIF105 and 108: Weoley. Both of these projects, Pickleball and Early Years Provision were low on the engagement spectrum, and appear classic examples of

communities being 'done to' without a tangible bottom-up foundation. It should also be noted that both had minimal funding, raising the question as to what level of transformation can really be expected through approving such projects.

The coordinator noted that in the Early Years project only 2 young people were signposted to a local football club; both only went to one session and then did not attend again. Similarly Pickleball was simply promoted by word of mouth, and there was only minimal involvement in taster sessions. Those attending were not satisfied with the facility and hence did not want to pay for further participation.

❖ Sustainability

LIF	Ward	Project	Assessment
1	Tyburn	Outreach & Engagement Project	Green
4	Edgbaston	Edging Forward Together	
6	Kingstanding	Raising Achievement in Kingstanding	Green
7	Kingstanding	Health and Well Being Navigators	
12	Sutton Vesey	Community Engagement and Planning	Green
19	South Yardley	Hobmoor CC	
23	Soho	Bringing People Together	Green
36	Northfield and Weoley	Northfield Town Centre Partnership	
44	Bournville	Birmingham Com Matters	Green
48	Handsworth Wood	HWCDT –Jobs and Skills	
52	Shard End	Community Buddying	Green
56	Sparkbrook	Get Balsall Heath Reading	
60	Washwood Heath	YESS	Green
64	Perry Barr	Prep. for Neighbourhood Plan	
70	Billesley	Billesley and Highters Com Trust	Green
77	Handsworth Wood	Laurel Road	
105	Weoley	Pickleball 35	Green
110	Sutton Trinity	Folio Library	
117	Brandwood	Brandwood Centre Bid Writer	Green
122	Hodge Hill	Firs and Bromford Community Centre	
143	Moseley and Kings Heath	KH Res Forum - A435	Green
155	Bordesley Green	Getting Citizens Active	
157	Nechells, Aston and Perry Barr	29 Plus Health	Green
158	Ladywood	Living with Hardship	

In assessing sustainability as a key component of an ideal LIF project, it is readily apparent that there is a wide disparity in sustainability strategies and progress made towards their fruition. A couple of projects have not been sustained due to circumstances outside of their control. These are LIF106 in Weoley and LIF36 (Northfield and Weoley) from the evaluation cohort:

LIF36: Northfield and Weoley. Prices Square had been empty for many years and local grassroots organisations were in need of affordable space. As noted above, under the coordination of Northfield Stakeholders Group the premises ran for around a year and saw positive service development. Throughout this period the partnership had to raise significant funds for repairs not noted in the original buildings survey, including the presence of asbestos, dangerous wiring and water damage coming from the balcony of the upstairs property into the main community room. The premises was also not fire compliant.

Ultimately the trustees of Northfield Stakeholders Group have taken the decision to end the project due to the unsustainability of the business plan. It was further felt that a lack of coordination between Birmingham City Council departments was a fundamental factor, lengthening the repairs process such that financial resources ran dry. The necessary repairs to the premises had been carried out in conjunction with the Housing Department, but Property Services had failed to undertake remedial action to sort the drainage problem stemming from the upstairs property. As the premises was in the private portfolio domain and not the community portfolio, it was not available for asset transfer, even though that part of building had been empty for years. The group remains in dispute with Birmingham City Council concerning an unpaid £33K rates bill.

LIF106: Weoley. As discussed earlier the venue that was used for Pickleball was deemed unsuitable and people did not want to play the game at the planned location. A number of other local venues were sought, but this did not prove fruitful. Due to this Pickleball will not continue although the equipment is still available if this situation changed.

There are also a group of projects which appear to be either short-term (and one-off) in orientation by design, or without a totally coherent plan outside of the possibility of exploring future funding applications, some of which are present within the cohort for in-depth analysis:

LIF91: King's Norton: The following brief comment from the survey respondent reveals the lack of a vision for sustainability:

"There is not really any such thing as 'sustainable without funding. It's a political game to look good."

LIF117: Brandwood. This LIF project has provided a bid writer in the locality to identify and support local organisations in developing applications for awards. Positive work has clearly been undertaken, as demonstrated by successful bids, the creation of a network map of local organisations and the forging of relationships (breaking down barriers) between groups who had previously been uncooperative. However, as the project has focused principally on funding a post rather than capacity building there is no automatic sustainability beyond seeking additional funding for continuance.

Following advice from the NDSU work is now being carried out to create an infrastructure around a 'Friends of Brandwood' model for community organisations. The project would have been more innovative and likely to secure sustainability if such capacity building elements had been the bedrock of the proposal from day one.

LIF157: Nechells, Aston and Perry Barr. The aim of the project was to engage people over 29 and look at their health and employment needs which were preventing them from entering the labour market. The project followed a 'triage'

process for assessing needs and this process used an app which had been previously developed by one of their doctors.

Following this initial triage and needs assessment they were then tasked either towards employment support options, for example help with CVs, job search and English lessons, and where there were also health needs, including mental health needs, the in-house doctors/nurses helped with these. Approximately 70-100 people were seen as part of the project and a range of issues were addressed. Those individuals assisted included some who had minor criminal offences who felt they would not be able to access job opportunities; the project worked with them to broaden their horizon and open up job opportunities.

However the project lead felt this project would not be sustained as the funding was short and time limited and focussed on specific interventions. In order for it to be continued additional funding would need to be found via external bids, although no bids are active. They would also like additional funding for outreach work to engage with marginalised groups.

LIF158: Ladywood. The perception from a project stakeholder is that Living with Hardship is very unlikely to continue after the period of funding ends. They reflected on the extreme difficulties in maintaining collaboration between partners as a key reason for this, as was the fact that the West Midlands Mayor has a similar fund in operation.

It should also be noted that in relation to LIF155 (Bordesley Green) Saltley Academy have committed to maintaining and using the equipment in school lessons and activities. This does mean that the equipment would still be available if the planned partnership and community usage model issues were resolved.

By contrast, there are LIF examples which have sought to enhance social capital, embed skills and create an infrastructure through which delivery can be perpetuated without further external funding, or at least have enhanced community capacity to such an extent that future funding has been more easily leveraged. In some cases it was reported that the intensity of interventions might need to be scaled down slightly post the LIF funding period (resulting in a green/amber rating), but that the learning and approaches developed would be integrated into future service delivery. LIF1 (Tyburn) is a good example of this:

Examples

LIF 1: Tyburn. This pop up support service offers mobile provision for residents missing out on integral services (e.g. financial advice, health, employment and library services) due to physical disability or other vulnerabilities, providing a resource to complement the public sector and challenge social isolation. The primary delivery mechanism has been through the recruitment and training of 20 volunteers from the community to run the service alongside partnership organisations.

The coordinator felt that the flexibility provided by LIF funding had enabled the service to test approaches and learn on the job in “...delivering ongoing innovation. We have mainstreamed the ethos of the LIF project into our expanded service.” They reported that the approach described above was now being rolled out to other areas, including Falcon Lodge in Sutton Coldfield and Kitts Green.

Despite this mainstreaming approach, some scaling back was seen as inevitable:

“Our biggest issue going forward will be capacity. We may to reduce the level of intensive outreach work without the LIF funding, but it will continue. In any case some of these outreach locations are being closed by BCC, so we can scale back on a pragmatic basis as they reach their natural end. It does concern me that we won’t be able to help people to quite the same extent as before, especially with the universal credit crisis.

LIF4: Edgbaston. The philosophy of the hub has been to fund and kick-start activities and then for other residents or micro organisations to take over the management and running of them. This has seen the emergence of a core group of active volunteers, vital to sustainability along with the development of a wider range of residents groups. It also includes work with the Botanical Gardens and Birmingham Metropolitan College to set up an academy of urban gardening which the project lead feels has huge local potential.

In a similar vein to LIF1 above the coordinator does feel that there is a possibility that without the constant pump-priming that LIF has enabled, volunteering and enthusiasm may diminish. The project is therefore acutely aware of the need to try to expand the core volunteering nexus.

LIF12: Sutton Vesey. As noted above in the section on ‘communities stepping up’ one of the biggest achievements for this LIF project has been the solidifying of Boldmere Futures as a credible organisation seen as capable of delivering. A ‘Strategy for Boldmere’ has been created, and a scoping exercise is being carried out to continue to identify the key projects that the community are interested in pursuing, thus maintaining the impetus from the planning for real process. Sutton Town Council has expressed an interest in funding activity, and professional consultants with experience of neighbourhood planning and community commercialism have been engaged through an Awards for All application.

The other element of the LIF proposal, the creation of the Boldmere.org website and online portal has been commercialised in order to generate revenues to make it self-sustaining. Local traders are being encouraged to pay a yearly subscription to have links to their own websites direct from Boldmere.org:

“We will ensure it continues to evolve and meet its costs, with a long term ambition to make money that can be invested into the Public Realm.”

Another key reason why this project appears to have developed in a smooth and effective manner is the fact that the locality has benefited from Councillors who have embraced the LIF model and been more hands on in offering support to their projects, a role acknowledged by this project in particular.

LIF56: Sparkbrook. The approach behind Get Balsall Heath Reading, especially the 'escalator' notion, is now reported to be part of mainstream work within the three partner agencies. This escalator approach described as 'the reading, talking, travelling' is a thread that runs throughout all their ongoing work. This escalator thus engages people first then seeks to move people on, if they wish, to further workshops, parenting programmes and indeed onto volunteering. This will be the model which they will thus follow in the future.

In addition local community members and families who previously did not engage in services and would not use venues such as the library and children's centre now will do so. This also means that these venues are more sustainable for the future.

Due to the successes they have had, the Project Lead believes that the three organisations will continue to work on the escalator approach in future and as long as the parents want to be involved they will be. In summary this means that the sustainability is the development of a new approach and way of doing things. The project also received a national award from Nursery World magazine which is seen as a further vindication that their approach works and is innovative.

The following examples highlight LIF projects where successful delivery has led to the securing of future funding which has guaranteed futures:

LIF5: Kingstanding. The project coordinator described how the project would be continuing until at least 2021:

"This [LIF] funding was highly instrumental in allowing us leverage in order to successfully apply for other funding in order to keep the project going. We were delighted to receive funding from the Heart of England to offer a Mental Health advice service and we were also awarded 4 years of funding from The Big Lottery Reaching Communities to sustain the project through to 2021. As part of the Reaching Communities funding we were awarded a pot of Building Capabilities funding which we have invested in structuring a funding strategy to secure the future of the project into the long term."

LIF7: Kingstanding. Following on from the success of the Health and Well Being Navigators scheme, Witton Lodge have received a 3 year grant from the Department of Health to run the North Birmingham Social Prescribing hub in Erdington (there are 23 nationally). This grant is worth £150k (including 100% funding in 2018/19). The coordinator stressed that: "this £16k LIF project has brought in £150k of additional funding, almost ten times the amount!"

LIF19: South Yardley. The community centre is now sustainable through lettings income as community participation has increased and more groups use the building. Their business plan means that the running costs are covered by these lettings. All but one of the activities started with LIF funding have continued and are self-sustaining and provide income to the centre.

“Legacy has been that have left a sustainable community centre and as a big bonus a whole load of new work and funding came from it.”

In addition the hub has received £345k from Big Lottery over the next five years following a bid made. This will continue the LIF work and develop the current community groups, along with additional new groups, into forming a community movement in the neighbourhood. This will bring together the LIF projects and others into a wider movement for change including further volunteer development.

This bid was developed following a successful Awards for All bid which was used to bolster the LIF activities. In addition the local MP who has supported their work was informed that Reaching Communities funding was under-allocated for this area and recommended to the Fund’s Local Guidance Officer and the hub that they would be an ideal recipient. The bid itself required much time and resources to complete but the process itself was reported to be beneficial and will be useful in the implementation of the movement.

LIF44 in Bournville is an example of a LIF project which clearly demonstrates elements of good practice and sustainability, but will not continue in its existing format without additional funding:

LIF44: Bournville. The Birmingham Community Matters project demonstrated that repeating peer-to-peer sessions in the same location provided the possibility of a regular interface for micro organisations requiring advice and assistance. The project also developed in-built sustainability with ‘patients’ (beneficiaries) becoming ‘surgeons’ (advisers) – in some cases due to their levels of expertise they were actually ‘patients’ and ‘surgeons’ at the same event!

The project is eager to establish signposting routes to enable local organisations to receive ongoing assistance as their development journey progresses, rather than one-off assistance. The coordinator stressed however that the model established does require funding for continuity, and was focusing on a Reaching Communities bid for that purpose.

A further type of infrastructure created is ongoing community partnerships. As outlined in the Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods White Paper these partnerships can comprise a variety of different models and indeed can develop more over time. They do though provide a tangible way that the LIF projects will continue and potentially take on more functions and control in the future. Within the cohort three such examples are particularly pertinent in this regard:

LIF64: Perry Barr. The Neighbourhood Forum will continue to oversee both the development and implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The forum has received additional funding from Locality which will continue external consultant activity up to the end of the plan completion process.

Once the plan is in place it will then need to be implemented and the actions pursued. As it is a statutory document it also informs the wider planning process locally and can be used to access other funds. The plan is not an end in itself and BCC can use it and the forum as a way to enhance area's infrastructure. The forum will also look for funds to implement plan such as landfill tax, environment funds, section 106 etc.

LIF70: Billesley. The development forum which was created will continue to meet and to act as a problem solving and action partnership for the local partners. In addition volunteers will still be in place to run it and some of the activities which will flow from its meetings. It is anticipated that the various work streams that have been developed will be sustained and they will continue to seek to access external funding streams to fund the agreed actions.

LIF23: Soho. The Community Development Trust will continue to operate and will act as the overall partnership group to continue the work of the three strands of the LIF project and to develop further work. The precise methods which will be utilised by the Trust to continue this work will differ slightly for each of these strands. The environment strand should now continue on its own as local people have become involved and run the various events and they now have ownership of them. The Bringing People Together strand centred on an awards scheme and ceremony and if the awards were to be repeated then would need to raise funds (£5k approx.) to run again; however they are hopeful that these funds will be raised for this. The economy strand was focussed upon the development of a local economic plan which has been completed. The Trust will now move onto implementing actions within it such as the local business pledge for local commissioning and are looking for a base for the Make a Space social enterprise development scheme. They believe that Make a Space could also act as income generation stream for the Trust.

The Trust will also seek to establish a physical base and have staff. This will be dependent on them taking on responsibility for local service delivery which is something they would like to do. They are also looking at smaller funding pots such as Awards for All to fund activities and have explored a paid administration and bookkeeping for Social Enterprises provided by CDT members.

❖ Outcomes

LIF	Ward	Project	Assessment
1	Tyburn	Outreach & Engagement Project	Green
4	Edgbaston	Edging Forward Together	Green
6	Kingstanding	Raising Achievement in Kingstanding	Green
7	Kingstanding	Health and Well Being Navigators	Green
12	Sutton Vesey	Community Engagement and Planning	Green
19	South Yardley	Hobmoor CC	Green
23	Soho	Bringing People Together	Green
36	Northfield and Weoley	Northfield Town Centre Partnership	Green
44	Bournville	Birmingham Com Matters	Green
48	Handsworth Wood	HWCDT –Jobs and Skills	Green
52	Shard End	Community Buddying	Green
56	Sparkbrook	Get Balsall Heath Reading	Green
60	Washwood Heath	YESS	Green
64	Perry Barr	Prep. for Neighbourhood Plan	Green
70	Billesley	Billesley and Highters Com Trust	Green
77	Handsworth Wood	Laurel Road	Green
105	Weoley	Pickleball 35	Green
110	Sutton Trinity	Folio Library	Green
117	Brandwood	Brandwood Centre Bid Writer	Green
122	Hodge Hill	Firs and Bromford Community Centre	Green
143	Moseley and Kings Heath	KH Res Forum - A435	Green
155	Bordesley Green	Getting Citizens Active	Green
157	Nechells, Aston and Perry Barr	29 Plus Health	Green
158	Ladywood	Living with Hardship	Green

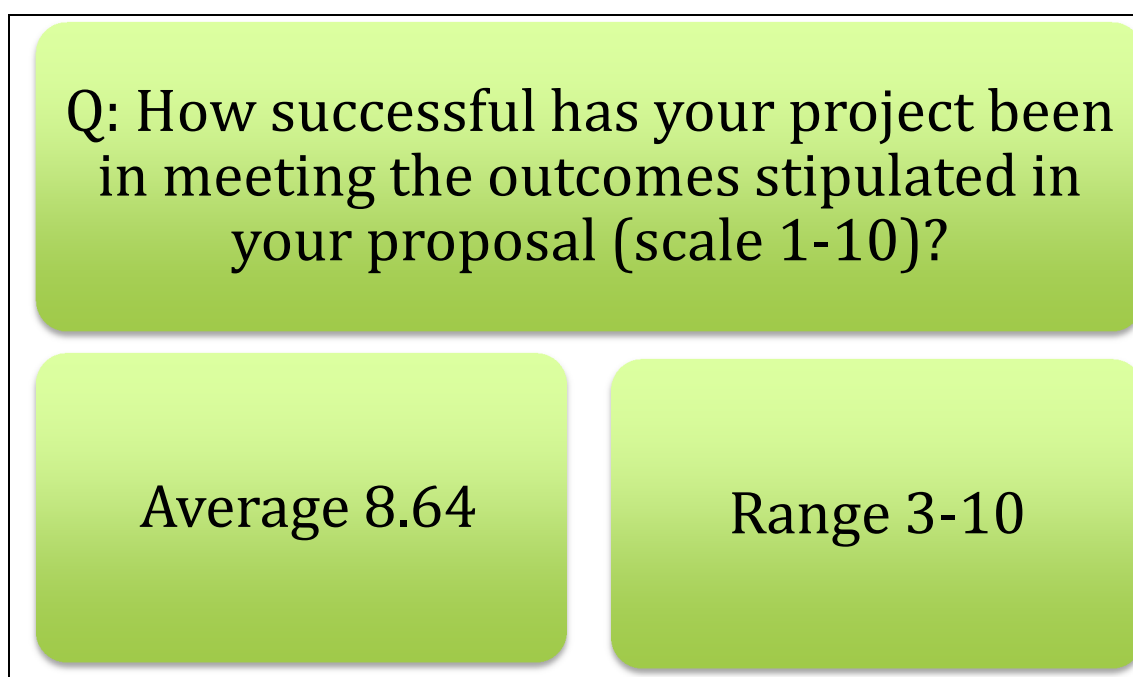
The interim report focused on assessing the validity of planned project outcomes as laid down in the initial proposal documentation. The report concluded that in a large number of cases there was confusion between outputs and outcomes, leading to simple monitoring of levels of beneficiary engagement rather than attempting to understand the extent to which broader social change was to be achieved:

“Outputs are intrinsic in nature and important for monitoring progress, demonstrating that a project is delivering to beneficiaries as intended, but they are not a real extrinsic measure of longer-term social impact.” (interim report)

There was therefore broad amber flagging for this innovation component in the report. Rather than repeating the same critique; the focus of this section is to:

- (i) examine the extent to which projects have achieved good 'outputs' and/or met their stipulated 'targets'; and
- (ii) provide a more in-depth focus as to the wider impacts of LIF funded initiatives – the 'big wins' that are more indicative of potential social change which incidentally may not actually have been intended or envisaged at project inception.

Respondents were asked in the wider survey to self-assess the extent to which they had met their proposal 'outcomes' (noting again that these were more output in orientation). A vast majority of those consulted felt they had been successful, with an average of 8.64 (range 3-10).



A small number of projects from the participants of the evaluation have been ultimately unsuccessful, including LIF36 (Northfield and Weoley), LIF105 (Weoley) and LIF106 (Weoley) due to the unsuitability or closure of venues and premises.

LIF2 (Sheldon) and LIF43 (Moseley and Kings Heath) have made limited progress due to delays. In the former case this is clearly related to the lack of collaboration and engagement intrinsic to the project format. In the latter example, delays have been experienced due to the political nature of the project consequent on the purdah period associated with elections. Reflecting this complexity of workstreams, the NDSU has agreed a six month extension to spend. In particular the project is looking to close parking bays along the A435 High Street for a 4-6 month period in order to gather long term multi-seasonal data on the level of particulate outputs and environmental impact. There is confidence that ultimately some high profile outputs and outcomes will be achieved.

In LIF155 (Bordesley Green) the final tranche of funding had been withheld by the NDSU at the time of writing of this report, as key performance indicators had not been met. Saltley Academy state that these were not agreed to by themselves, and that they relate to the other main supposed delivery partner, the Leisure Centre. The school subsequently feels that they are 'owed' £25k for monies already paid out for equipment and installation. Again, this clearly demonstrates the weakness of this project in terms of the paucity of bottom-up orientation, partner ownership and collaboration.

Some particular examples of good output and/or target achievements are as follows:

LIF1: Tyburn. Performance targets for this project were comfortably exceeded. The project lead also feels that, for a £45k fund, the ultimate income generated will be in excess of ten times that amount.

LIF4: Edgbaston. A wide range of outputs have been achieved by each of the activity strands of the project. These include the development of 4 'Blue Plaque Walks' which will be published documents for the public to follow, developing a community walking base at Chad Vale Primary School, collating existing walks and cycling routes developing local walking groups, undertaking an arts exhibitions, workshops and classes, developing a security publication, installation of 3 (to date) community notice boards and 11 resident groups being instigated and sustained.

Combined these activities have involved over 250 members of the local community.

LIF5: Kingstanding. The project coordinator provided the following summary within the survey response:

"This funding was imperative in order for us to retain our cafe presence for volunteers in the Well-being centre in Kingstanding. With the funding we developed an ongoing training program to attract new active citizens. New active citizens learnt a host of new skills revolving around food cultivation, harvesting and production. All new active citizens have been involved in developing their own training plans to best fit their abilities and skills. Perhaps one of the biggest achievements from this funding is that we have managed to attract a host of new active citizens who have previous regarded themselves as isolated within their homes. Over the duration of the project 42 Active Citizens underwent training and CPD sessions through this funding. 649 Local Citizens engaged in activities revolving around food and nutrition."

LIF7: Kingstanding. This project had a target to support 50 vulnerable adults through social prescribing, relieving the workload on General Practitioners and Adult Social Care. At the time of the interview the coordinator was able to demonstrate that they had provided full support to 84 individuals (many more had had a meaningful contact). These were clients who had an outcome star

assessment carried out, with a clear positive progression in later assessments revealed in continuing to deal with the needs of these individuals.

LIF17: Shard End. The Community Caretaker project target was to complete 100 gardens over 12 months:

“We exceeded this and continue our work beyond the 12 months sustaining the project with a small charge and partnerships/volunteers built up along the way.”

LIF21: Nechells: The following outputs were reported in the survey response:

We had evaluations completed in each session we delivered and service users reported the following: 98% of service users in Nechells ward reported feeling empowered to understand themselves at their best and enhance current support networks towards future opportunities. 95% of service users in Nechells ward increased self-awareness resulting in an appreciation of the qualities they hold and assertive communication skills towards enhanced confidence and self-esteem; 98% of service users in Nechells ward had better understanding of key issues and shared exploration of opportunities through support services. Identification of personal positive support networks 85% of service users discovered education, employment and training opportunities. Culminating in commitment to the first steps towards aspirations.

LIF52: Shard End. 1:1 support was provided to in excess in 40 vulnerable adults (twice the stipulated target). 17 volunteers were recruited compared with a target of 12. The drop in sessions for residents were also reported to have proved so popular that they were now being held weekly rather than the fortnightly stipulated in the proposal. These were now self-sustaining and volunteer led.

LIF110: Sutton Trinity. This project obviously had a much greater success story in terms of the local community becoming empowered to consolidate a business plan to safeguard the future of Sutton Coldfield Town Library. It has, however, also reported impressive output statistics which demonstrate the community response to the facility (that the presence of the play café is also promoting library usage). Statistics for April – December 2018 show a 38% increase in footfall into the library, a 108% increase in new members and a 16% increase in borrowings (34,170 loans compared to 29,420 for the corresponding period in the previous year). It is also interesting to note that nationally libraries are reporting a decline in borrowings of circa 4%.

LIF117: Brandwood. Reservations about the lack of innovation shown in the project proposal have been previously noted. However, it should also be stated that the post has been remarkably productive, with bi-monthly progress reports demonstrating in excess of £40k received by community organisations through successful applications, more than the cost of the post itself.

This section now proceeds to provide examples of LIF projects which have reported achievements that are far more outcome focused, demonstrating that they have developed skills and capacity within their communities, created a sustainable community resource and are having a significant impact on transforming service design and delivery. These are showcase achievements that reflect fully the ethos of LIF as originally intended.

Examples

Developing Skills and Capacity within Communities

LIF6: Kingstanding. The young people engaged in this project received training in confidence building, self-esteem, professional relationships and interview techniques. They obtained health and safety qualifications and green card accreditation allowing them to work in the construction industry. This has culminated in a real success rate in terms of enhanced employability with 75% of young people engaged having positive outcomes (70% into work; 30% into further training). Kingstanding Regeneration Trust has subsequently become an approved training body for the construction industry. The following case studies also demonstrate the social value of this project:

CASE STUDIES

Tony

Tony is a 65-year-old Kingstanding resident. A former Para Trouper who was very strong in both mind and body, and also a keen gardener. Whilst serving in the forces Tony was paralysed from the neck down when his parachute failed to open. Tony has been looked after at home by his family and carers that come in daily ever since, which has had a big impact on him physically and emotionally.

Initially Tony coped well with normal tasks and was far too proud (and stubborn) to accept help. However; over time he found it increasingly difficult to manage everyday tasks including the garden. Tony did his best to not give in, eventually becoming a danger to himself. Last year Tony suffered a scalding accident and become bed bound and very depressed. It was during this time that Tony responded to KRT's flyer regarding the Kingstanding LIF project.

Tony felt increasing frustrated that he could not tend his garden, this impacted massively on his mental health and his self-esteem. Tony contacted the office and a member of the team made an appointment to assess the work required.

Tony was almost apologetic for accessing the service; he explained that not being able to look after his garden affected his wellbeing but not actually being able to enjoy his garden made this much worse.

Two trainers and four trainees spent a day working on Tony's garden. They cut down overgrown hedges, mowed lawns, pruned and weeded beds, and reshaped the rockery.

Whilst work was being carried out Tony spoke with KRT's wellbeing Officer. Tony explained what a negative effect not being able to look after the garden had on his mental health; he also said it made him feel less of a man. KRT's Wellbeing Officer chatted with Tony about an array of services available locally which would help with his self-esteem and isolation.

Tony said that the service provided by KRT had improved his wellbeing and given him a new lease of life. Tony also started to access wellbeing services at Kingstanding Wellbeing Centre. Tony now feels more socially included/connected and has seen a big improvement in his mental wellbeing and self-esteem.

Jack

Jack is 17 and holds no GCSE'S. Jack has been NEET (not in education, employment or training) since leaving school and has developed a strong dependency on cannabis. He signed up to the LIF as advised by a family member in order to obtain a CSCS card (certification scheme for the construction industry) and accredited qualifications. Jack lacked motivation and his only aspiration was to achieve a CSCS card.

Initially Jack was hesitant to listen to the advice and guidance provided at Kingstanding Regeneration Trust. He had very poor attendance and did not respond well to instruction. Jack displayed an unhelpful, bad attitude. Trainers and information, advice and guidance workers supported Jack and showed him he could break the cycle of quitting when he found things difficult and to ask for help when required. Jack did not wish to reduce his cannabis intake and stated he would not agree to routine drug and alcohol testing when on site in the future knowing it could cost him a job.

Jack continued to focus on his accreditations, completed his work experience with a glowing reference from the trainers. He achieved six accredited qualifications and was eager to job search.

Jack became ill, was depressed and took four weeks off to recover. They remained in contact with him, via telephone and he spoke with KRT's well-being officer regarding his illness. The well-being officer was able to provide advice and support and put him touch with specialist support services

Jack has now recovered and has high aspirations to work and earn his own money. Jack has stopped smoking cannabis and is now very hopeful about his future. Our officers are supporting Jack into work; he has been signed up to Birmingham City Councils Talent match and achieved a paid, full time position. Jack's attitude has really changed. Both Jack and the staff at KRT are really hopeful and positive about his future with Jack saying:

"I think I can show my mum and my nan that I'm not a waster and can make something of my life."

Liam

Liam was referred from the Probation service. Liam had recently left the care system and had very little work experience. He had low confidence and was not convinced that work or training could benefit him. Liam was living in a shared house, regularly smoked cannabis and often used 'legal highs.' Liam felt that he was coping ok and his home-life did not need to improve.

Although initially hesitant to engage with the project. Liam decided that it could prove beneficial and he soon became a punctual, hard-working trainee who was regularly praised by the trainers on site. As the weeks continued his thinking began to change and his confidence thrived. Liam began to speak about his future aspirations and allowed himself to be open to support. Excelling expectations, he began to use his initiative and took control of his probation appointments.

After disclosing barriers and personal problems he was struggling with; Liam was referred to Pause (a support network for under 25's) by the project Well-being officer. Although Liam requested the officer accompany him to the initial meeting he then found the confidence to attend the weekly meetings on his own.

Liam completed the programme with six construction qualifications; together they applied for an apprenticeship with the Jericho Foundation as a Landscape Apprentice. Liam was offered an interview. He arranged the appointment and his transport independently; he passed numeracy and literacy assessments and excelled at the interview. He was offered the position and commenced employment. KRT continue to liaise regularly via telephone with Liam who said:

"I am so grateful for your help, you put up with me for months and never gave up on me even when I was playing up and ready to leave."

Liam is now trying to save for his own flat and no longer uses 'legal highs'. His cannabis usage has become an issue for him; he has admitted he has a problem and sought help from the project well-being officer and the Jericho foundation. After attending an intervention meeting, he has been referred to Aquarius for support with his habit.

Employability successes have also been cited by LIF43 (Billesley) with 24 long-term unemployed individuals placed in training or work experience, with 21 offered full or part-time work as a result. In LIF52 (Shard End) two of the volunteers trained by the project have now found employment in related sectors (e.g. care homes) and are undertaking NVQ qualifications. Losing these volunteers was described by the project lead as "being a victim of our own success!"

Capacity building skills development was also a clear outcome of certain projects. The most notable example is the aforementioned LIF110 (Sutton Trinity) with the development of FOLIO to secure the library service. It is pleasing to note that, with the enhanced skills and confidence that this success

has brought to the group, FOLIO is now concentrating on a range of community engagement activities to continue to promote library and inter-generational values. Another interesting example is LIF 64 (Perry Barr):

LIF64: Perry Barr. As was discussed earlier through the development of the plan and involvement in the Neighbourhood Forum a range of community members have obtained new skills, confidence and have now been tasked with leading elements of the work. They did initially have a gap in knowing how to run/participate in meetings and the processes used in these forums but they received training from BCC on these issues.

The plan itself will be long-lasting in terms of its impact and the ability to access other funds from a variety of sources. The LIF funding was a stage in the process of development but has enabled longer term impacts to be possible.

Sustainable Community Resources:

Every thriving community has anchor points within it; facilities that can be used and accessed by its residents and local businesses. These facilities provide a focus for that community and a place for activities to take place in turn enabling people to become more active and involved. Where these facilities do not exist, or have fallen into disrepair, this can have a negative impact on that community. A number of LIF projects have sought to bring back into life local facilities, or have, like LIF48 (Handsworth Wood), sought to improve the viability of facilities by encouraging more usage. Two good examples of where this has been possible are provided below.

LIF19: South Yardley. This project had as its aim the creation of a vibrant community centre which could act as a hub for the community. Via a range of activities which were initiated and supported by LIF funds the Project Lead stated that:

“Having a vibrant community centre now is the big outcome of LIF.”

Further outcomes that were provided as occurring included it being a trusted and safe centre for people of all ages, demographics and religions to use and attend, it being a presence in the community, and that the community centre is now self-sustaining from letting income all from worthwhile groups. The centre also has participated in a range of specific activities including ‘Art in the Yard’ and a ‘cutting edge’ summer holiday project providing activities and food using the relationship with the next door Oasis Academy.

The successful application process for Reaching Communities Big Lottery funding to create a community movement was felt to be a particular success and one where they would not have been in a position to achieve without the LIF project.

LIF122: Hodge Hill. As discussed earlier the project aim is to take over the lease for a building partly used by the boxing club but which is mostly dilapidated.

There is now a new legal structure in place approved by the Charity Commission which includes trustees and a management board, with members each having different skills and expertise. This has meant that they are now a registered charity.

The Business Plan for the building is now in place with a range of possible income streams identified and in place. They already have new volunteers involved, new classes are starting and repair works have been planned. At the time of the consultation interview the project were still liaising with solicitors to get the transfer of the lease and its final terms finalised but they still had just over half the money left. Based on advice the scheme changed from the original LIF bid from an asset transfer to having a lease on building, demonstrating the benefit of a flexible funding stream.

The main project lead has done much work herself and says she has learnt a lot and developed personally greatly. She stated:

“Personally it has been amazing and I'd now like to help other groups.”

Transforming Service Design

The following examples have shown real impact on the way in which services are coordinated and delivered at a local level:

LIF1: Tyburn. The project lead cited a huge transition in how vulnerable adults were now supported locally through an enhanced collaborative outreach model:

“LIF provided the springboard. It has enabled us to do things differently. It's literally had a transformative effect on people's lives through the extension of a 'help when and where you need it' ethos. For people without benefits or utilities we've been immediately able to remove barriers. Without LIF Castle Vale would be a poorer place.”

The following two specific examples of assistance were provided:

Person A had mental health issues and was sanctioned by the local Job Centre for looking for work. The project helped him with his utilities and got his benefits reinstated, and also challenged the benefits they should be on. The case went to a tribunal a year later. The lead officer was appalled that situation had been allowed to go on, and made a complaint to the Department of Work and Pensions. The client now has universal credit.

Person B was a further individual with mental health issues. He became a carer but subsequently had a breakdown. He was supported to attend GP, with the GP seeing the client at a project location. Unfortunately he was also being financially abused by acquaintances, with rough sleepers staying at his house including one serious offender wanted by West Midlands Police. The project reported the case to the Police to get the individual removed and arrested, as well as helping the

client with benefits and debt assistance. This individual is now “back to the person that he was before.”

LIF7: Kingstanding. There has been a direct impact on the mode of delivery of the local social work team due to the role and prominence of the Health and Well Being Navigators within the community, enhancing the three conversations working model. Social work liaison officers now make direct referrals to the navigators for social prescribing and vice-versa. The social work team also now hold regular meetings at Witton Lodge. This is providing a joined-up continuity of care in supporting vulnerable individuals.

LIF12: Sutton Vesey. As noted above, Boldmere Futures and the planning for real exercise had the direct impact of influencing the tender specification for the demolition of the adult education centre and creation of a 55+ residential area with attached nursing home facility. The coordinator stated that the community space that Boldmere Futures was receiving from the developers could be worth in excess of £50k, and a valuable community asset. The care home development has also been further modified to include underground parking, consequent on the planning for real exercise showcasing local parking issues:

“This is a real tangible that would not have happened without LIF. LIF enabled learning on the job to the extent that we were able to bend the contractors to the whim of Boldmere.”

LIF70: Billesley. The Development Group where local partners and community members meet and prioritise actions is seen by the project as a truly innovative way of working. This group has influenced and made a real difference to local delivery so that local agencies now do not work in silos especially via the quarterly problem-solving meetings.

The Project Lead stated that:

“These meetings bring to life a list of services, now we can talk to people about what is needed and on new needs. We now look more holistically at range of local activities and local issues.”

A specific example was provided where the project managed to influence the National Lottery to run a 'Dragons Den' style session for local applicants instead of needing to complete application forms. This change was requested due to potential bidders literacy issues especially dyslexia. As a result of this session £34,500 of local projects were approved.

LIF143: Moseley and Kings Heath. The project provided a joint neighbourhood response to a planning application which would have had significant impact on community wellbeing in both neighbourhoods. KHRF led on a consultation with schools, residents, faith and voluntary sector groups to consider a planning application for a 49 bed unregulated hostel on Kings Heath high street. They also worked with local elected members to evidence properly their joint concerns

and to lay out a joint approach to supporting better homeless people and those with complex needs going forward. The application was refused:

“We are keen to keep this dialogue going between us to look at a better way to respond to the needs we have. The partners include: Kings Heath BID, Moseley Society, Moseley Forum, All Saints Church, Moseley Outreach project and the 8 schools in the immediate vicinity. This is an outcome we can continue with after the LIF ends.”

The Learning Curve and Changing Outcomes

As has been outlined above many LIF projects have amended and adapted their work, aims and activities as they have been implemented. This is to be welcomed as clearly a project is more likely to make an impact if it reacts to new circumstances and events rather than carrying on with the initial plan regardless. One particularly strong example of where a project has adapted and changed is outlined below.

LIF56: Sparkbrook. The project changed from the original bid for a variety of reasons. This was partly due to changes in role and direction of the Children's Centre with it moving away from universal service provision towards targeted work, meaning they would not be able to work with as broad a range of parents as initially intended. It also became clear that many parents who they were seeking to work with actually did not know a world outside Balsall Heath. Parents did not use the library much even though it was only a 5 minute walk for them.

At heart of the original bid and project was that three partners were involved and they had the aim of moving people from one partner/activity to the next one. The change in emphasis of Children's Centre away from universal to targeted thus did create a problem in the project emphasis. GDPR also created a further problem in working together and sharing data especially from the Children's Centre. This resulted in the project having to get consent to share data to all 3 organisations.

They thus expanded its focus by seeking to open the residents up to a wider world. This included expanding the activity programme from January 2018 to include visits other than just educational/reading to include visits to other activities including a visit to the pantomime. This change was made after liaison and help from a member of the NDSU team; assistance they found very useful.

The pantomime visit involved getting 55 people on a coach and going to the Hippodrome and those who went had never been to city centre before. Some of these also then went to the ballet subsequently and indeed the project ran a parliament visit to London. This visit followed from a democracy workshop that was held. Again this was the first visit to London many had made even though some had been in the UK for 30-40 years.

After the visits and workshops they then set up a programme 'Get Families Talking' on a Friday covering a range of topics. One of these groups has been led by someone who had come on the programme as a participant and who had not been involved in any other activities before.

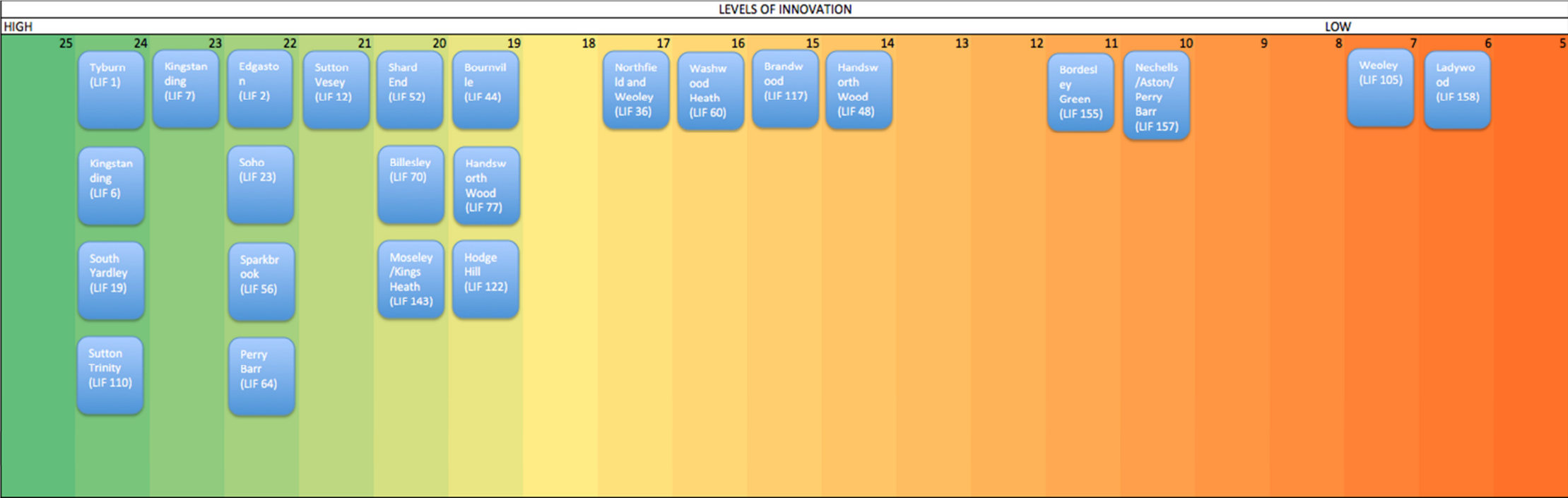
The project representative says that outcome now has been:

“Opening their minds and getting involvement in things be it swimming, lessons etc.”

In terms of specifics; the project put on 2 parenting programmes and about 10 parents went on this, a further session is planned. They have also had 3 people going onto become volunteers running a Summer Holiday Programme for vulnerable people from the Children's Centre. Out of these three people 1 has continued to be a volunteer, 1 has become employed and 1 has now moved abroad. They now also have a further 4 volunteers from the subsequent visits ready to move to the volunteer programme. Enhanced communication and confidence of these people is believed to be a key outcome alongside the volunteer development.

The Project lead stated that collaboration could have been better. Whilst still seeking to use their 'escalator' approach, in retrospect there was an element of the three partners working separately and focusing on their own elements, not least when the centre changes occurred.

As stated earlier the project won a Nursery World national award in 2018 after being a finalist in 2017 this is clearly real national recognition for the project.



Section 4: Reflections on the Role of the Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit

In the interim report there was generally a positive response to the role of the NDSU from project leads and local councillors alike (the first survey provided a satisfaction rating of 7.33 out of 10). It was pleasing to note that this perception was very much also present within the final consultation. Respondents to both the survey and interviews stressed that NDSU representatives had provided multi-faceted support across two key areas:

Role of a Critical Friend

Administering the LIF process has been a challenging period for the NDSU, particularly because the team has simultaneously had to support and scrutinise projects whilst ensuring that they were helping to facilitate local democracy rather than overtly steering it. However, the NDSU have managed to overcome the dilemma of acting as both the 'carrot and the stick' through a critical friend role which most projects have greatly valued. In certain cases the representatives have been able to assist projects to change their focus in order to maximise innovation and the potential for real outcomes (e.g. the work with LIF117 (Brandwood) to establish a 'Friends of Brandwood' group as a sustainable legacy). The following comments illustrate these points:

"How would I describe it? It has been a critical friend role. They've scrutinised but it has been an essential relationship which has blossomed. Everything has gone to plan."

"We have linked well with the NDSU. This has included where changes were proposed from the original LIF bid, for example publicity boards in the Botanical Gardens project. [Named officer] has been to all the progress meetings and has questioned us on our spend. [Named officer] is always on the end of the phone and we are very lucky to have them."

"We have found that the support we have received from our representative to be fantastic and would like to sincerely thank the Local Innovation Fund and local councillors for the support in accessing this funding. Without it, our project would not be in existence any longer."

"We have had a lot of help and support from this Team. They have been very helpful and very supportive keeping us on track with what's necessary to fulfil the outcomes we started. We've had lots of involvement with [named officer] and we've welcomed this as 'they say it how it is'. They have also helped with signposting us to other potential funding sources and on possibility of using underspend."

"The NDSU are invaluable! They have decades of experience in Birmingham's communities, they are supportive helpful, professional and most importantly respected by communities, councillors and stakeholders alike."

"We have received lots of support from [named officer] as this was a very local project. They have been incredibly helpful and given lots of good advice."

Problem Solving

The transition from Community Chest to the LIF criteria and procedures was a real change for local councillors and necessitated a more progressive and democratic role in working with groups to prioritise and formulate proposals, as well as maintaining ongoing oversight through ward forums and beyond. There has been a clear dichotomy in the councillor response to this new way of working, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section. From an NDSU perspective this has necessitated a sizeable time resource, commitment and real hands on work in some wards to navigate and resolve councillor tensions and promote collaborative problem solving. In certain wards such as Ladywood such attempts have not proved fruitful. This mediatory role was very much valued by a number of project leads:

“[Named officer] has been crucial to sorting out initial issues with the councillors which would have really limited the potential impact of the project. Without [named officer] the project would not have developed in the same way.”

“[Named officer] has been an absolute God-send. The councillors have been bullying and unsupportive. The NDSU have been essential for my confidence and perseverance to start and continue the project when I felt at times that it wasn’t worth the hassle.”

The NDSU role in engaging with councillors was absolutely massive. It was pivotal in bringing the project to fruition.”

Some project leads did indicate that they would ideally have liked more assistance from the team, but did also recognise that the NDSU was a stretched resource, especially given the necessity to undertake a problem solving role in certain areas. Indeed the NDSU originally had 4 designated Community Support and Development Officers and 3 Governance Managers split geographically across the City. Following the completion of a secondment arrangement, the number of Community Support and Development Officers was reduced to 3, meaning the workload has been spread across remaining staff. This did cause relationship issues in some areas, due to a new representative being introduced without full knowledge of the local dynamics and contacts:

“The project had really good support from [named officer] who helped us with how to apply for funding and attended ward meetings to inform us of the Local Innovation Fund. [Named officer] was also very supportive with the whole process and had several meetings with us about HHCC as well as Info Hall Green. [Named officer] also advised us about what our strengths were and as a community centre we had potential to be the local Hub in the community. These were positive actions and words which helped us when we thought it would be struggle. Project scrutiny has been a bit confusing as [named officer] left and we did not see anyone after that. We had emails from [named officer] who was planning to visit us all but that got delayed.”

In terms of enhancing the role of the NDSU to support locality working better in the future, a couple of respondents stressed the need for the team to remain in contact with projects after the period of funding, in order to understand and disseminate lessons learnt. It should be noted that the NDSU are intending to bring projects together at one

or two large events to provide this opportunity for reflection and the sharing of good practice:

“I feel that the initial support has been helpful which has contributed to a good project and in turn participants have expressed their interest in the provision continuing. In terms of scrutiny or constructive feedback I feel that support around our own reflections on the project, and improving it further for the needs of the community would be helpful and important for the project to continue after the funding has ended.”

Two respondents to the survey stated that they had no knowledge of the NDSU or Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit, even though named officers were mentioned within their submissions. In terms of identity the following statement from the interim report remains accurate:

“The strength of the NDSU as a cross-directorate team is also paradoxically its fundamental weakness. The unit recognises the need to do more to promote their existence, function and achievements across the City. Indeed various stakeholders commented on the existence of an invaluable relationship and respect for the supporting role provided by the individual officer, but this appears to be a legacy of their (former) ward and district roles, and not a recognition of the NDSU as an entity in its own right.” (interim report pg.7)

Section 5: Role of Ward Councillors within LIF

In keeping with their role as leaders within their community, Elected Members have a crucial role in the LIF process. As described in the interim report they should have been actively involved throughout the stages of the LIF process, namely:

- (i) identification of community concerns;
- (ii) development of projects;
- (iii) encouragement to develop collaboration/innovation;
- (iv) making recommendations that projects should be approved; and
- (v) receiving reports back on progress at ward forums.

Participants of this evaluation, including Councillors themselves, were asked about how effective local Councillors were as the LIF process developed. The primary issues relating to the role of Councillors, including how this may develop in the future, are outlined below.

Supportive Role of Local Councillors

Representatives from the projects consulted with were asked about the ongoing support and contact they had had with their local Councillors throughout the life of their project. Many of these project representatives (n = 19) stated that their local Councillors had been supportive throughout the process. This figure is notable especially given the changes in ward boundaries, numbers of Councillors and the subsequent, and usual, electoral changes that occurred over this process. These views are exemplified by the following quotes from Project Leads:

“Our Councillors were aware and supportive of the project throughout its lifespan.”

“Maintained a keen interest ... involved in scrutiny and visits and has shown keen interest in how the LIF money has been spent.”

“We had excellent turn-out of the local Councillors and have also participated in many sessions we delivered throughout the project.”

These views clearly are in keeping with the aim and ethos of LIF as intended, namely that the local Councillors would have an active role throughout including receiving reports and updates on progress and achievements.

Issues Relating to Change in Ward Boundaries and Councillor Numbers

However there were though some less positive experiences reported by the project representatives covering a variety of issues, some of which were related to the change in boundaries and Councillor arrangements.

Where the changes in boundaries and/or individual Councillors occurred self-evidently this meant that the ‘new’ representative was not the one who had approved the project in the first instance. For even the most assiduous Councillor this would present a challenge with the need to build new relationships and contacts, indeed one of the Councillors consulted stated that:

“The change in boundaries must’ve made an impact.”

The process of making these contacts and receiving details about the LIF projects in their new ward was raised, with some participants saying that they were not aware of the contact details or that the new Councillor did not have any interest in their work. Similarly comments were made by Councillors that they were not actually provided with full details of LIF projects within their new wards either.

However, in addition, some projects reported that the new Councillors did not show any interest in their project or seem to be concerned with asking for, and receiving, progress reports. This is exemplified by the following quote from a Project Lead:

“New member is a waste of time, has Facebook page but no interest in local people. Has not engaged and they are now a one-member ward. Has no interest. Old ones were at least grounded and local [name of ward provided]. It is concerning that LIF was supposed to be a local democratic process yet Cllr is detached from reality.”

Other project leads also reported disappointment with not receiving responses to emails including requests to attend events or assist with overcoming barriers they faced.

Process Issues

A number of Project Leads, including those from Projects that were unsuccessful, also reported concerns regarding the LIF process.

Issues raised included those relating to the process being ‘too political’, claims of bias and favouritism in contact with projects and their development. These concerns related both to the approval phase for projects but also in relation to ongoing contact and with the resolution of difficulties. Some of these respondents stated that their experiences in this regard would put them off from becoming involved in a similar funding process in the future. For example the following unsuccessful Project Lead stated:

“I was very disappointed with the whole process in relation to the LIF, apart from the fact that as constituents we were only informed of the funding, the deadline a few (maybe 4-6 weeks before deadline. Despite this we prepared group and individual applications and presentations, I also consistently attended meetings on a weekly basis in the run up to the deadline. The councillors involved showed no real support or commitment throughout this process, then to have an organisation that had already secured funding in another ward prior to the [ward name provided] proposal come in last minute and secure the funding without having to attend any meetings, present their programme was quite painful to experience.

This was one of my first experiences in trying to secure funding for community projects and in all fairness left a very bitter taste.”

A further successful Project Lead also reported on tensions between Councillors which they believed impacted on the implementation of their scheme. They stated:

“The new Councillors have been too political and I feel they would not have funded us if they had the chance. I feel that the tensions between parties are behind this.”

These claims may only represent one side of the argument, but clearly these are the perceptions and viewpoints from those involved. They do, however, point to the need for absolute thoroughness and openness in decision-making and for any potential personal feelings to be set aside in dealing with queries and issues from approved projects.

A limited number of Project Leads also reported issues in relation to not being fully aware of the reporting requirements and that they had not been invited to, for example, ward forums. It should be stated that this requirement was a condition of the LIF approval so the individuals concerned should have been aware of this condition. This has meant that some projects have not gone to ward forums at all to report progress and be scrutinised on what was being achieved. Partly, this was reported by NDSU representatives, as being a result of some councillors not embracing fully their scrutiny role inherent in the LIF process. The NDSU feel that:

“Only about 25% are interested in a scrutiny role, yet they should be as part of their local leadership responsibilities.”

LIF projects should also be mentioned in ward plans as they are updated especially with the new wards being instigated. It is unclear to what extent this has occurred in practice.

Sharing of Practice

The need for sharing of practice from LIF projects was highlighted in the interim report. This again was raised in the Councillor consultations especially with the Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods policy focus, and by Project Leads. One Councillor summarised this desire to share practice as follows:

“There is a need to focus on learning achieved even if the projects failed.”

The Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods White Paper did include plans to develop a portal to enable good practice and policy relating to neighbourhood based working to be shared. This type of arrangement was supported in the Councillor consultations highlighted by the following comment:

“National good practice needs to be used more but there is a place for having a local Birmingham portal to share Birmingham good practice. This would include practical advice and support for Councillors. Maybe this could be a whole Birmingham portal and not branded/run by the Local Authority. This could be run/branded by communities, or community organisation, and be based on swapping ideas and sharing practice.”

The wish for the outcomes of this evaluation to be shared amongst Councillors and officers was also raised as being beneficial. As stated earlier the NDSU reported that they plan on holding one or two events for projects to share good practice.

Comments were also raised from Councillors, and some Project Leads, regarding the desire for advice to be available from individuals, or organisations, in developing future service models, accessing funding and encouraging innovatory work. For example Councillors stated:

“Need support from experienced people to encourage different models of service design and delivery.”

“Smaller organisations needed more support and time allocated to them to develop innovation.”

Funding Model

The potential future funding and working model for locality working was discussed in the Councillor session.

The interim evaluation report discussed the legacy of the previous ward-based funding stream namely the Community Chest. There are clear differences between Community Chest and LIF relating particularly to the focus on innovation, the development of proposals between Elected Members and community groups, and the scrutiny process outside of the ward inherent in LIF. Fundamentally the Community Chest is a different type of fund designed to support ward priorities and assist community groups’ activities but not necessarily with an aim to be innovative. Councillors consulted recognised that there is a place for a small fund scheme (it was suggested that there should be a limit of £500-£1000 per group) which would enable community groups to deliver worthwhile activities. However this would be separate from any other work aimed at being more transformative or requiring more involvement from groups such as those from the ‘Framework of Relationships’ highlighted in the Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods White Paper. The following quotes from Councillors set out this viewpoint:

“I feel that the Community Chest and LIF are two different funding models with different needs. Community Chest for small bids, LIF larger. There needs to be a fund for small bids/grants but the projects in [ward name] were not LIF ones.”

“If want genuine action in communities then we need genuine resources. We need both 1 – LIF style fund for bigger projects and 2 – small grant regime for community groups with little or no funds. The second element could have limit of around £500 with little or no paperwork.”

“The small scale grant regime could be operated via Neighbourhood Networks with £2k ish per ward.”

“The legacy of Community Chest was that was felt in some areas that they could just ‘dish out’ funds. LIF missed the chance that it wasn’t just another year of Community Chest.”

Indeed there was a further view expressed that the:

“[R]eal positives and successes of LIF could be the template for Working in Neighbourhoods.”

A further issue that was raised in regard to LIF by Elected Members was a ‘1 year timescale for delivery’ questioning as to whether innovation could really be expected to have been achieved over this time period. This view is highlighted from these Councillors:

“Any ‘LIF 2’ should be longer term with larger sums of money and still be innovative”

“The 1-year LIF funding made it difficult to achieve innovation/sustainability, and the one-off nature made it problematic”

“The principle of LIF was sound but the 1-year timeframe was not easy. If LIF could have been split over several years then we could have continued the good projects.”

It should be noted however that the planned time period for LIF was actually 2 years. Shorter time frames were only evident due to delays within localities in seeking and nominating LIF projects. These comments from Councillors fail to recognise this point.

The implication is that any future funding regimes or models of operation should be longer such as some of the models envisaged within the Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods policy.

Section 6: Additional Issues

Same Amount per Ward

The issue of the same allocation of funding per ward was analysed in the interim report (and included in the appendix of this report). Comments were raised by some participants of this evaluation too questioning the equal allocations for each ward. Principally the objections were related both to whether the allocations should have met need more directly, as defined by deprivation measures for example, and whether a central pot could have been top-sliced (a view shared by the NDSU itself). Suggestions as to how this top-slice could have been used included being used for particularly innovative or transformative projects, including those that may cross a number of wards, and being used to provide city-wide assistance and support.

The arguments for both models were also discussed in that interim report and can be found in the appendix to this.

Joint Projects and Working across Boundaries

Developing this latter point, and as discussed earlier, very few LIF projects were developed and implemented across ward boundaries. A range of reasons were outlined for this in the interim report including the requirement for potential projects to be scrutinised and agreed by ward councillors. Since there are no current effective cross-ward committees this process was problematic for many. Some participants reported that this was a shame as the same needs presented themselves in more than one area but also that natural community areas do not always fit with administrative boundaries.

This situation is of interest in the future with the desire from the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper to focus localised working upon "neighbourhood boundaries ... defined by their residents and communities and not by the City Council."¹⁰ If this flexibility is to be realised then the management processes of any future similar initiatives needs to reflect this reality.

Streamline Bureaucracy Going Forward

As with the interim evaluation several project representatives felt that the bureaucracy attached to the management of the LIF process was too long-winded and onerous. Delays in receipt of funds, procurement and legal issues with City Council departments and dealing with monitoring requirements were all cited as being frustrating and time consuming.

The quotes from two project leads illustrate this:

"The procurement process was a pain and took a long time for £10k. It was a long, long process. I recognise the need for probity but there needs to be more balance in this process."

¹⁰ Pg. 4, Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods, Policy Statement (White Paper), Birmingham City Council, January 2019

“I believe the process took too long especially the set-up process. We could have lost the community support and that of local community groups at this point.”

Local Control and Focus

In contrast to these comments the local focus and accessibility of LIF, and the fact the administration was handled by Councillors and officers who knew the local area, was highlighted as a positive aspect. This contrasted sharply with other national funding streams, as the following comment from a project lead demonstrates:

“LIF is good, local and responsive unlike other funders.”

This focus on local priorities and neighbourhood concerns fits well with ongoing devolution of decision-making planned by the City Council.

Use of Social Media

It is of note that several projects stated they made extensive use of social media and the internet and that this aided the success of their work. The purposes of this usage were wide-ranging including promotion of the project, seeking good practice, the take-up of specific services, networking and seeking additional funding. In itself this can be seen as innovative practice and an area of work that can be expanded upon further in the future. Some examples of this usage are provided below from Project Leads.

“We have had much praise from outside groups about the Boldmere.org website and we plan to work with our Councillors to help support other Wards with similar activities in the future. We are also better connected to Arts Forums and the wider community as a result.”

“We’re more than happy to promote and share social media posts to help them with their provision and to generate interest through our social media streams.”

“We have offered our advice and talked through our experience with several local groups and we have a page dedicated to sharing what we've learned.”

“The website ... set up successfully and operational for 12 months with 2000 hits a month. It has become more of an operating facility ... with an online portal for bookings.”

“The social media groups have enhanced collaboration.”

Sharing Advice to Others

A further impact that LIF has had is upon both the projects and the personal development of those actively involved was that several participants stated that they now were either in a position to share their experiences or had already done so. This aspect has the potential to be built on further in the future in a range of scenarios; for

example, if a subsequent programme is developed, in assisting with external funding bids or in relation to the upcoming Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods implementation. Some of the comments made to exemplify this perhaps unplanned benefit of LIF are provided below from Project Leads:

"We will continue to work with other groups and help with capacity building."

"We feel we have built the capacity and understanding of a number of individuals and groups which has helped them to develop project ideas and secure funding."

"I have learnt a lot and developed; personally it has been amazing and I'd now like to help other groups. I would recommend this to anyone who wants to do it, it is good for the brain even if there are frustrations to get over, I would definitely do it again and I'd love to do another one."

One of the Councillors also stated:

"Presentations were made for other wards on how to do it and the need to be innovative."

Section 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the information provided earlier in this report, and to an extent the interim report, we have made a series of conclusions and recommendations. These have been designed to highlight key themes that have emerged from LIF and also that can then be used in shaping future work, including the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods policy.

Conclusions

The LIF Experience

The LIF programme and broad successes observable clearly demonstrate the importance of neighbourhood-based grant funding (vis-à-vis a commissioning model). In areas where Elected Members have truly embraced their local leadership role and democratic accountability as part of localisation, some truly innovative projects that have revamped the future of neighbourhoods and service delivery have emerged across the city.

Benefits of a Bottom-up Approach

As was outlined earlier, and as extensively covered in the interim report, much attention has been placed upon judging the extent to which LIF projects were developed and implemented from the bottom up.

As well as being a crucial element in an innovatory project, those projects that were developed in a bottom up fashion were generally those which were more successful in delivering sustainability and locality outcomes. As these outcomes covered a range of aspects such as developing skills and capacity within communities, creating a sustainable community resource and transforming service design/delivery, this is an important lesson for future neighbourhood based work. It also shows the importance of a funding regime (and indeed officer resource) dedicated to a bottom-up approach.

Development of Sustainability Models

A wide range of sustainability models are evident within LIF projects to continue either the project in its entirety or to mainstream successful elements therein. Given this sustainability was a key element of the LIF process this situation is heartening. That these sustainability models are not restricted solely to accessing additional (external) funding is further testament to the impact made by LIF.

In itself the fact that many community based projects will continue is also a useful bedrock to build on for ongoing neighbourhood based work including, specifically, the implementation of Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods. That policy includes the desire to tailor the scale and type of involvement to the desire of the relevant groups and areas concerned. There are a variety of models of operation that have developed from LIF which could match many of the 'Framework of Relationships' from the White Paper. The existence of these groups is thus a further tangible outcome

of the LIF process and makes Birmingham well placed in rising to the challenge of Government policy in relation to enhancing the role of civic society.

It should be noted, however, that given a wide range of LIF projects did not respond to the consultation process for this evaluation no judgement can be made on the absolute scale or proportion of projects that have been sustained.

Supporting Levels of Engagement

The LIF experience stretches across the spectrum of community engagement from consultation through to empowerment. Whilst it is the higher end projects which should be considered more 'innovative', it should still be recognised that individual communities may want to engage with influencing, delivering and controlling local services to a greater or lesser extent. It has always been the case that some communities may not wish, or yet be in a position, to deliver all of these options but it should be their choice to do so. Supporting communities to become more involved if they wish to, but do not yet have the skills to do so, should remain open to them.

This spectrum is not dissimilar to the 'Framework of Relationships' from the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper which outlines a range of options for future neighbourhood work. The needs and requirements to enable these to be taken advantage of also support the analysis within this report. In addition what is clear is that the LIF process has positioned well many areas of Birmingham to encompass these approaches.

Personal Development

As has been demonstrated throughout this report there are numerous examples where the LIF projects have enhanced individuals' lives and their skills. This relates both to the beneficiaries of the projects where some powerful testimonies were outlined earlier but also to those involved in implementing them. Again there are many examples where their skills have been enhanced and individuals are now in a place where they may be able to develop other schemes, whether by replicating or continuing current work or in testing themselves with other modes of delivery and citizen control.

Range of Active Citizenship Models

In addition to the previous points, through all the LIF projects a wide range of different active citizenship models have been developed. These relate both to specific themes such as health, environment, and employment as well as functions such as making community facilities more viable and individuals directing strands of work. These can be seen as good practice which can be drawn on so that future activities have local context, sources of advice and models to adapt in work in the future.

Departure from Previous Grant Regimes

Notwithstanding the degree to which true outcomes were actually planned and delivered LIF did mark a change from previous grant regimes. In particular it moved away from a 'stop/start' regime whereby small grants funded worthwhile yet time

limited activities towards an outcome focussed regime, including an element of payment by results (rather than just demonstrating spend) and a more hands-on relationship through the NDSU. Further work is required in educating projects and officers as to the purpose and scope of outcomes vis-à-vis outputs, but this culture change can be built on in future neighbourhood work.

Impact of Boundary Changes

The decision to reduce the number of Councillors and make changes in ward numbers and boundaries had an impact upon the link between LIF projects and local members. These issues, as outlined earlier, included projects being approved by Councillors other than the current ones and vice versa for Councillors including, in some cases, the project now being in a different ward than previously.

This situation created a lack of continuity for both projects and Councillors with the need to build up new relationships and project knowledge. Where historical issues were present, such as barriers to implementation which either had been resolved or had led to the project being amended, these would have been unknown to the new Councillor. Whilst these were overcome in many instances, at the very least these changes caused some delays in the implementation process and a degree of duplication of tasks such as re-briefing of the project aims.

It could be argued too that based on the LIF experience some wards, without significant support and assistance, could have a challenge responding to the upcoming Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods policy.

Clarifying Innovation

Throughout this and the interim report we developed the 5-stage model to enable us to judge whether a project could be seen to be innovatory. What became clear from this, and from the participants of both evaluations, was that there was a misunderstanding amongst some projects and Councillors alike as to what exactly was meant by innovation. In certain wards it even appeared that the innovation concept was largely ignored in favour of piecemeal funding of smaller projects (in sync with the former Community Chest model).

In itself misunderstanding is perhaps not surprising as it is self-evident that if you are trying to do something new then there is no blueprint to enable this to be implemented. It also should be stressed again that simply providing a set of worked examples for projects could stymie innovation as they just take these examples and amend them slightly to local circumstances. However it is clear that some stakeholders took innovation to be doing different activities rather than a sophisticated and involved process of doing things differently, resulting in radically different models of service delivery. It would thus be helpful for the future if more clarity could be provided and understood by all involved on what is meant by community-based innovation such as the components of the 5-stage model utilised here.

It also should be noted that within the content of the Working Together in Neighbourhoods White Paper there is much information that outlines both the range of options available for neighbourhood working and what is meant by 'people power.'

Learning from 'Failure'

Whilst there were very few projects from those analysed in depth which palpably did not deliver all or much of what was intended, those that did 'fail' should not necessarily be seen as a negative. With a new and innovative initiative it should be expected that some projects would not work fully. Indeed from the analysis earlier actually it can be argued that fewer projects than may be expected have not worked and this is pleasing to see.

However what is important is that the learning from these projects should not be lost and that only the good practice is shared. If all practice is shared this means that positive aspects can be replicated and adapted to local circumstances and the negative aspects are not tried again with the increased potential that they will 'fail.'

Another key lesson is that real transformative change requires greater investment. There were clear examples of projects failing (e.g. in Weoley) due to minimal resourcing levels akin to the old Community Chest system.

Recommendations

Ward Plans and Forums

To ensure local accountability is maintained all area based initiatives should be required to report to local ward forums, or similar structures that may evolve. There should also be absolute synergy with ward plans: projects should reflect area based needs and priorities, but project learning and outcomes should also be included within ward plans to help shape future priorities and potential delivery models.

Future Funding Model

If future funding regimes and programmes are developed then two distinct elements should be in place. This would comprise firstly a small grant fund type arrangement whereby community groups apply for support for micro but worthwhile activities as determined by local elected members. Secondly a further pot should be in place where larger amounts are available. This second element would be to support innovative work that develops new forms of local service delivery and is based on achieving clear social change outcomes. The timescale for this second element should also reflect that meaningful change cannot always be achieved quickly.

The accountability and processes that accompany these regimes should be commensurate to the scale of the funding and also the level of risk attached to each scheme. There should be a commitment that such processes are as simple as possible so as not to be off-putting for community groups, often run by volunteers, to manoeuvre.

Consideration also should be given in future regimes as to the process for accessing the funding, especially the larger innovation element. A strictly equal allocation to wards may not be in keeping with the desire to achieve social change. The inclusion of a central allocation for which projects can apply to should be considered.

Also reflecting the often long lead in time for neighbourhood work; underspends for these funds should be retained for future locality working.

A model comprising these elements would build upon the good practice developed through LIF and support the outcomes of the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper. It would also embrace the invest to save concept, acknowledging that key elements of this ethos should be around localisation and co-working, rather than just service development.

Sharing of Good Practice

There is now much local (and indeed national) expertise, experience and practice available to shape and support neighbourhood based work. Measures should be put in place to ensure that expertise is available to be drawn on and used in project development. These measures could cover a variety of forms from access to experienced officers, on-line portals of good practice, workshops, published case studies and having a pool of peer mentors available for other community groups.

The creation of a LIF network or LIF community movement could be considered so that the lessons learnt by these projects and individuals are maintained and developed. This network can be added to as future neighbourhood work is implemented.

It is noted that within the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods White Paper many support resources and options are planned including the development of a Birmingham portal. These are welcomed and should be a key priority to support community activity.

The NDSU clearly has already much expertise and local track record and this unit should be seen as the basis for developing future support.

Information Packs for New Councillors

A simple measure which would assist new Councillors when they take responsibility for area based initiatives would be to provide an information pack and/or briefing on these projects as they take office. This would assist in making contact between projects and Councillors and initiate the future relationship development process.

Ongoing Flexibility

As has been articulated throughout this evaluation, the White Paper and Central Government work *different communities want different things and are at different stages in development*. Future local policy should continue to reflect this and should not rule any group out from participating in enhancing the life of their area. This should range from supporting groups who wish to undertake small, maybe one-off activities through

to Parish Councils and the devolution of local services. The framework of relationships should be seen as a fundamental element in developing neighbourhood based work.

Toolkit for Proposal Evaluation

An appropriate model should be used in the future where a competitive regime is being used to evaluate proposals. This would ensure, or at least make it more likely, that proposals are recommended for approval that have the potential to be transformative and innovatory. The 5 element model we have used in this evaluation is one potential framework as is Locality's referred to earlier in this document. These models should be used in such a way as to strengthen local accountability and democracy in future funding regimes, rather than reverting back to an arbitrary Elected Member decision-making system.

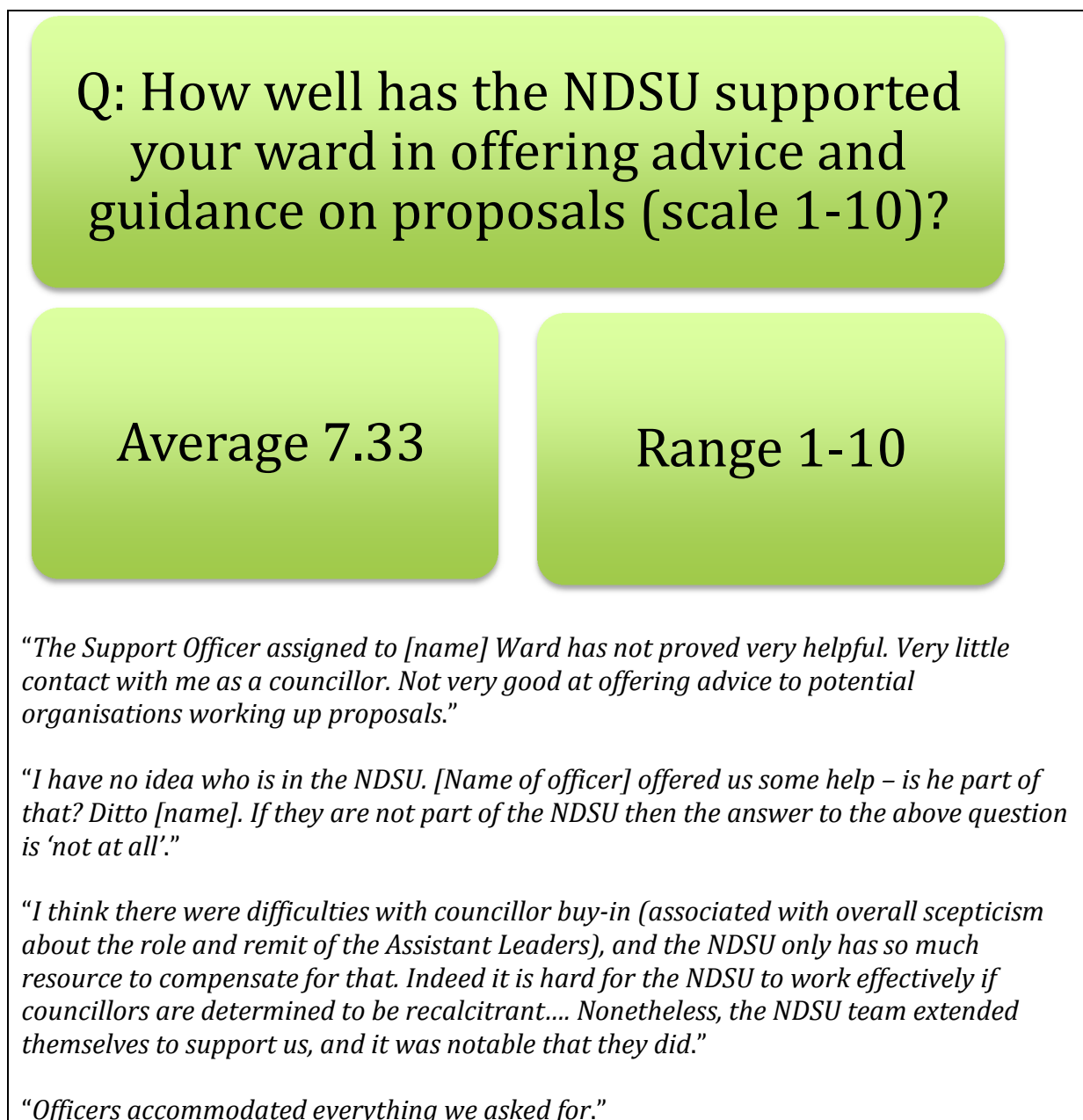
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Appendix: LIF Process Assessment from Interim Report (2018)

The analysis in this section is focused upon the administration and implementation of the fund.

Role of NDSU

In relation to the NDSU's role in administering LIF, Councillors were asked within the survey consultation to rate the support they were receiving from the team. The results and associated comments are displayed in the graphic below:



Whilst the average (7.33) is positive, of greater interest is the polarised range of response from 1 (not at all) through to 10 (very well). There could be a number of potential reasons for this discrepancy:

❖ *Resourcing*

The NDSU originally had 4 designated Community Support and Development Officers and 3 Governance Managers split geographically across the City. Following the completion of a secondment arrangement, the number of Community Support and Development Officers has been reduced to 3, meaning the workload has been spread across remaining staff. The consultation revealed that this has caused relationship issues in some areas, due to a new representative being introduced without full knowledge of the local dynamics and contacts. It should also be noted that the under resourcing restricts the unit from being able to dedicate sufficient time to individual specialisations, for example maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of funding streams and building good practice libraries, elements which should be considered essential for most effective delivery.

❖ *Identity*

The strength of the NDSU as a cross-directorate team is also paradoxically its fundamental weakness. The unit recognises the need to do more to promote their existence, function and achievements across the City. Indeed various stakeholders commented on the existence of an invaluable relationship and respect for the supporting role provided by the individual officer, but this appears to be a legacy of their (former) ward and district roles, and not a recognition of the NDSU as an entity in its own right. The second comment in the graphic on the previous page is a particularly good example of this.

❖ *Role*

There was also a perception expressed during consultation amongst members of the NDSU that certain Elected Members wanted them to exceed the boundaries of their role and be more active in directly facilitating ward events and taking the lead in writing proposals. The team were keen to stress the importance of their remit as **supporting** and not **steering** local democracy.

This supportive role has been multi-faceted in the administration of LIF, and at times appears crucial. One officer described how there were concerns in one particular ward that LIF related ward meetings would be dominated by supporters of one specific organisation. The officer explained how he/she had adopted an interceding role to ensure that other organisations and community groups were given the confidence and platform to develop proposals, which were ultimately successful. Another NDSU representative described the importance of the role in being able to support Elected Members to reject proposals, because they were clearly outside of the scope of LIF criteria, but subsequently to work with those groups in question to apply for alternative funding (for example, a Lawn Tennis Association proposal for tennis provision and training in Sutton Trinity).

During 1:1 and survey consultations with LIF project representatives, there was almost universal approval for the support they had directly received from the NDSU throughout the process. Criticisms were procedural rather than relationship based: issues relating to systematic delay and perceived 'red tape' are described in a later

section, see below pp.17-18). The following comments illustrate the value placed on the support received:

"[Name] has been amazing. They helped me to see how our local projects could be linked without being totally submerged into one another. I was really concerned beforehand."

"I was helped enormously by being able to talk to a City Council officer about the process. It could be improved by better opportunities to talk with our local Councillors about our application as it developed."

"[The process was] fairly straightforward with assistance and guidance from the District Community Support and Development Officer."

Role of Elected Members

Local Councillors play a vital role in the implementation of LIF with their local leadership role. For LIF to work as envisaged Councillors should be actively involved throughout the process from identification of community concerns, development of projects, encouragement to develop collaboration/innovation through to the recommendation that projects should be approved and receiving reports back on progress.

❖ Preparation for LIF roll out (Understanding the Concept)

Due to this there was therefore a potential for LIF not to be implemented as intended if Elected Members did not embrace it fully or did not understand their role completely. In order to mitigate this, and prepare Local Councillors for their responsibility to collaborate on developing LIF proposals, the NDSU provided two dedicated training sessions, as well as five information sessions for officers and the provision of on-going support materials.

However, sign in sheets reveal that only 40/120 Elected Members attended either of the two sessions, leaving a gap in knowledge to be filled (if sought) by colleagues and the NDSU team. The following comments from both project leads and Elected Members show how this gap translated into varied practice:

"Some councillors don't get their new role as community leaders or sort of neighbourhood managers."

"LIF depends on the ability and quality of local members."

"Not convinced that all councillors got the difference and the external scrutiny."

"LIF was too complicated for people to understand. The only people who knew it well were the officers working on it full-time."

"Councillors understood Community Chest. They do not understand this."

"We found out about LIF through a ward meeting announcing LIF funding. Our Councillors have been very supportive, but as the process has gone on it has become clear that their knowledge of what LIF is and how it works is very limited."

compared with:

"The information provided [about LIF] was clear. I connected with Local Councillors to clarify details."

"We obtained feedback from Councillors on our proposal and the selection process. They really understood it, particularly [name]....allayed our fears and the whole process was very transparent."

There was also great variety reported in how Councillors undertook the need identification process in their wards. Whilst the needs identification should be tailored to local circumstances and personal preferences, the differences in approaches could be, in part, due to this knowledge gap. Elected Members highlighted the following different processes which they adopted:

"Ward meeting to initially discuss fund followed by a meeting with one of the Assistant Leaders came and discussed fund. This was followed by a ward meeting that split into workshops to identify ideas and commonalities. Once main ideas and delivery groups identified then we undertook a series of meetings to develop applications"

"We brought various organisations and local people together with our Flip Chart. The residents were able to say and describe how they will be able to shape the ward. There were different workshops on different subjects and areas in the ward. At the end of the day, it was clear as to what is needed in the area and how it could be achieved."

"Feedback from local residents reviewing what worked well and what didn't work so well in the Ward. Reviewed comments from Ward forum meeting, PACT meetings and (named organisation) members. Visited groups that use the local community centres. Visited local sheltered housing schemes. Contact with local schools and places of worship."

"We told community activists in the ward (at a special Ward meeting and Saturday morning conference) about the money and they came forward with project ideas."

"Emailed to all known groups in the ward, advertised on social media, not hard to get potential projects to come forward."

"We used ward meeting and had meeting to decide which bids were appropriate."

"I was aware of a need in my Ward. The LIF had already been noted by a local charity (name provided) and I became aware of their interest. I joined the 2 thought streams up and we proceeded together."

It was further reported that that not all Local Councillors understood what was meant by innovation, i.e. that it was about people within neighbourhoods doing things for

themselves. This confusion is highlighted by the following response to the Councillor survey:

“Why do we have to have innovation, if by now we don’t know what works and supports the development of active local communities when will we ever know? The endless desire for innovation merely has the impact of making good projects dress themselves up as ‘innovative’.”

Whilst this may be a reflection on the relative abilities of Councillors to grasp the opportunity fully and understand the concept, it should be noted that it was also argued that the understanding of innovation could have been enhanced if more case studies had been provided. This represents a clear conundrum for the NDSU; the creation of a series of such examples could actually have led to greater replication rather than creativity based on local need.

Nevertheless, a further suggestion was that officers with suitable vision and experience could have held ‘blue sky’ sessions with ward fora (or similar) to assist in explaining what was meant by innovation and encouraging suitable proposals to be developed:

“We did get a case study on job creation but more would’ve helped even if they were fictional. It was a bit lacking on innovation for an innovation fund scheme. It would’ve been useful if a person with imagination like (Officer name provided) could’ve got some proper ideas together and brainstormed them together.”

It was suggested this could be in the form of a ‘how to’ guide which would encourage Councillors to undertake a more detailed process of identifying appropriate proposals. It was recognised by this Councillor that this would result in the process being more resource and time intensive but could result in proposals being more closely linked to local need.

Notwithstanding the above limitations, that some Elected Members and wards truly grasped the concept is highlighted by a response from another Councillor who said:

“LIF has been a really good idea – encouraging us all to work in a much more creative and joined up way – Councillors, residents, local organisations.”

This statement clearly demonstrates the potential for the scheme to be transformative in terms of modes of operation where the opportunity is understood and grasped fully.

❖ *Collaboration not competition*

LIF had at its core a desire to strengthen neighbourhoods through support and capacity building, as well as establishing new models for the operation of locally based services. This desire came from the way in which local issues and needs are identified, through to designing an appropriate project to the delivery of that project itself. Developing collaboration between projects also could reduce the amount of competition between them and encourage them to seek common ground.

A number of projects did follow this model. Comments were made from Councillors that LIF should be seen as a way to embed this collaborative approach and that it could be a model for the future sustainability of local services. In addition collaboration between services was proposed as a potential way to improve commissioning arrangements in the future; making them more in tune with local priorities. Indeed one Councillor stated that they would like to see this collaboration being forced upon organisations in the future, while a further Elected Member suggested that some officer resource could be dedicated towards developing collaborative approaches.

The notion of a co-operative council, principally developed by Oldham Council, was seen as a further policy driver in relation to the LIF process. This notion is linked to the collaborative principle but is not pre-requisite in achieving it. This principle was seen as being a key element to the most imaginative and innovative LIF proposals but also fitted in with the broader ethos of the City Council in embracing the 'Our' concept of service design and delivery (i.e.: 'Our Council', 'Our Park' etc.) and of the wider cultural change programme.

A particular aspect of collaboration which the LIF process developed was the need for all three ward councillors to provide the final sign-off on projects. This aspect was reported as being especially valuable in wards where councillors had mixed political party allegiances. This approach was stated to:

"Force collaboration and co-operation and avoided exclusion of one councillor from the process." (Elected member)

This approach was reportedly different to some previous local discretionary funds, for example local highways funding, where the majority party could decide.

❖ *Timing of individual ward processes*

There was clearly a lack of urgency in some wards in coordinating events to identify local community needs and develop proposals. In October 2017 over a third of the total available spend (£750k) had not been allocated, leading to a last minute rush to submit proposals. This has negative implications against the time required to generate interest, identify community concerns and develop innovative and collaborative project ideas. Party politics and character conflicts between Elected Members were cited as contributory factors, as was the timing of the unexpected General Election which included the 'purdah' period.

It should, however, be noted that the NDSU highlighted a range of wards as truly embracing the LIF model and used it as an opportunity to develop a shared view of citizenship, transcending party politics and cultural backgrounds.

❖ *Transparency*

A number of respondents (including project leads, NDSU staff and Local Councillors) indicated that, despite purporting to be a local democratic process, it has not operated with full transparency in their respective wards and has been compromised, to an

extent, by Elected Member self-interest with regard to their own 'pet projects' vis-à-vis organisations or individuals they did not approve of:

"[Elected Members] just fund projects they like."

"[Resident Association] put forward a really transformative proposal which has been blocked due to Councillors' championing their own project. It is an example of a good blocked project, whilst some that are not even 'projects' have been funded. The resident association were encouraged to apply, worked with the NDSU and were blatantly blocked. Having gone through the process it fuels the fear of another funding source being seen as parachuting and communities being done 'to' rather than 'with'."

"I knew of an organisation who wanted to bid but did not apply because he knew the Local Councillors did not get on with him. He laughed when I asked him, but I know he does really good work locally and could have put together an important project. Councillor bias is a strong factor."

"The main problems aren't with the NDSU team. It is with my colleagues in (Ward name provided) holding up the process and the lack of transparency with the final proposals. I wasn't really involved. It was taken over by the ward chair's wife."

❖ *Legacy of Community Chest*

An issue that was presented in the consultations, especially from the Elected Members, was the legacy of a previous funding stream, the Community Chest, which was also ward based. However there are fundamental differences with LIF seen in the focus on innovation, the development of proposals between Elected Members and community groups, and the scrutiny process outside of the ward. Crucially the role of Councillors is to *support and not approve* proposals. These factors have created some confusion, or even resentment towards LIF, from some Elected Members as "Community Chest was much loved."

Scrutiny is provided systematically by the NDSU, who support the ward proposal processes and advise on the extent to which projects meet the LIF criteria, Birmingham City Council Assistant Leaders, who receive each proposal and advice from the NDSU, and the Local Leadership Cabinet Committee itself, which provides final approval for each project. It was reported that some ward members did not appreciate this scrutiny and thus were not fully supportive of LIF. This was despite the fact that ultimate decision-making could not occur at ward level as Councillors do not have the delegated power required. The view is summarised by the following comment from an NDSU officer:

"LIF is out of the control of Elected Members vis-à-vis Community Chest. Some have really struggled to grasp the difference and the increased democratisation. What Members really do not like is that they do not have the final power to approve projects. It goes via Cabinet ultimately."

In addition the focus on innovation, and the need for proposals to be developed in conjunction with community members, was reported not to have been fully embraced

or understood by all Councillors. This was highlighted by the following comments from Elected Members:

“Community chest...was better able to fit with ward plans and provide solutions to problems that existed.”

“LIF was too complicated for people to understand. The only people who knew it well were the officers working on it full-time.”

The potential for LIF to be innovative though was recognised by some; this is highlighted by the following quote:

“LIF has been a really good idea – encouraging all of us to work in a much more creative and joined up way, Cllrs, residents, local organisations”.

In summary one Local Councillor stated that:

“Community Chest was easy for members to do but is also different in nature to LIF. There is no reason, if resources allowed, that you couldn’t have both as they do different things”.

Synergy with Ward Plans

Q: How well do you feel that LIF approved projects dovetail with ward plans (scale 1-10)?

Average 6.19

Range 1-10

In comparison to the other quantitative questions in the Elected Member survey, Councillors were less inclined to feel that LIF proposals were directly advancing ward priorities. There was also a broad disparity in the responses, with the whole range from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very well) represented. A key background factor here is that many existing ward plans at the time of proposal development were three to four years out of

date, and the current batch are only now just being produced.¹¹ It should be considered a missed opportunity that the ward planning and LIF proposal development periods were not in synergy and seen as an intertwined and mutual process, as this would have helped to ensure the marriage of innovation and vision, enhancing the potential legacy value. Instead, it was reported that many areas clearly failed to engage with the empirical data and profiling (provided by the NDSU) and fell short in developing robust planning processes. Many proposals are more functional than visionary accordingly:

“Proposals are very much, ‘this is the issue...this is the resource’ rather than ‘this is the vision for our ward(s)...these are the organisations who can be developed and have the capacity to deliver against these objectives which will help the vision to become reality.”
(NDSU Officer)

The development of new wards from May 2018 could provide a further opportunity to incorporate the lessons learnt from the LIF process, including the identified needs, into new ward plans.

Alternative LIF models

It was noticeable within all stages of the consultation process that many respondents questioned the LIF framework, both in terms of resource allocation and the sole focus on innovation per se. The £48k even allocation per ward resulted not only in it: “feeling too much like another manifestation of Community Chest; funding that was supposed to be objective became politicised from the get go,” (NDSU representative) but it also was seen as failing to recognise the disparity of deprivation and associated relative need for transformation across the City.

It should be stated, however, that a number of participants in the evaluation were supportive of the even split of resources. This in particular related to the belief that all wards should receive something no matter what the actual need was. This belief was highlighted by the following quotes from a variety of Councillors:

“I recognise that the same amount per ward meant it didn’t match real need but it was needed politically.”

“It was a good idea to give all wards the same and not have it based on need.”

“The philosophy of every place matters was good and I’m supportive of all wards having some resource.”

Meanwhile there was a perception that the emphasis on innovation was “too adventurous” and represented too much of a shift away from resourcing current “good projects” and local practice, as the following comments from varied sources demonstrate:

“...too much reliance on new projects instead of supporting existing work.”

¹¹ In some areas of the city Neighbourhood Plans have also been, or are being, developed in part in response to requirements from the Localism Act.

“There are micro organisations who need support, and that are important for grass roots community development. These could have benefited greatly from the funding but they (and their Councillors) do not necessarily understand how they contribute to the bigger picture. Such funding would not necessarily have been innovative but it is necessary. Only way this could work within the LIF framework is through an expansive umbrella bid which brought the micro together into a cohesive proposal, but examples have been few and far between.”

An alternative model which could have addressed these issues would have been to allocate a smaller discretionary grants pot to each ward (£15-20k), allowing for ‘quick wins’ and the support of development work at the micro level. The ‘innovation’ pot could then have been retained centrally within the NDSU team. This would have encouraged wards to work together, and given the NDSU the flexibility to work across political boundaries, by joining up areas and organisations seeking to advance similar transformative agendas. Such a model would have seen the NDSU role as **enabling** citywide capacity building rather than just **supporting** localised activity, and was indeed suggested by the NDSU as the preferred model of delivery when LIF was conceived.

Developing Proposals – The View from the Projects

During the consultation process, project leads were given the opportunity to comment on their experience of the proposal design stage, and how this could be improved in the future. Experiences were generally positive, as the following selection of comments demonstrates:

“The proposal stage was straightforward.”

“Yes, we found the process very user-friendly.”

“The information provided was clear.”

“The form was straightforward and the targets were clear.”

“The process was clear with additional support when needed. I think the process is fine as it is.”

“The application process is sound.”

Some project leads reported that they found out about the scheme either from existent contacts they had with officers or indeed via internet searches for potential funding schemes. This highlights that information about LIF was readily available through traditional routes for interested community groups who were seeking to develop local initiatives.

“We only found out about it due to contacts in the Local Authority.”

"I found out about LIF through a Google search as part of my process of searching for funding sources."

However, there was a perceived lack of clarity within the information and advertising which had impacted upon parties' understanding of LIF purpose and process:

"At first it wasn't clear that the process was actually open for proposals. We thought it was awarded through consultations with local residents."

"There was little clarity in the process of putting together the proposal as we had no criteria or definition of innovation."

Communication was also raised as an issue in relation to a lack of feedback or updates on the proposal submission process:

"It has taken a long time to go through and had no communication about the outcome....had to keep chasing for information."

"There were long periods of silence. It felt more like a commissioning process. That's ok for us. We are used to it as a professional organisation, but would it put off community organisations?"

This latter point about the potential impact on community groups is particularly concerning. Indeed, another respondent contacted the NDSU directly to outline their concerns. They described how they had applied for funding in multiple wards across their district, and had experienced vastly different levels of communication in each. Moreover they had also struggled with the time demands that the proposal process placed upon a voluntary organisation:

"[F]ormal communication between each ward varied widely. There appeared to be an expectation that we would attend numerous meetings to discuss the same item, and then received little, if any, response. One of the wards we applied to offered immediate feedback, one took several months but finally offered formal feedback, whilst we are still awaiting any response of any kind from the other two wards. This is extremely disappointing given the time and effort we have put in to applying for bids to these wards, and given BCC's expectation of us attending meetings to often duplicate existing work...BCC can sometimes come across as lacking understanding of how community organisations and charities operate (particularly around staffing levels). [Name of group] for example, is entirely voluntary, and so taking time out to attend regular evening meetings and respond at short-notice is not as straight-forward as can be the case of a paid role in another organisation. Showing sympathy towards this would soften a willingness on many community groups' part to engage more meaningfully with BCC."

Primary recommendations from respondents centred around bureaucracy, with project leads feeling that the proposal administration process could be improved by establishing more formalised timescales, reduced delays and less document resubmission including post-approval responding to issues such as registering

organisations on the City Council's vendor system. These points were raised by multiple respondents, as the following comments demonstrate:

"Once the application was finally approved and was with the City for payment, we were asked to provide the same documents over and over and were still being asked for the completed Conditions of Grant Form weeks after we'd received the first payment. It would be a good idea if the whole process was time-lined for applicants so we'd know how long it will take before we can start a new project."

"I had a feel that the process could have been slightly crisper. Maybe more formal deadlines, contact points. But generally it was clear enough to work out what it was and where to get information from."

"The decision process was far too long. It needs to be shorter."

The NDSU team themselves found the conditions of grant aid (hereafter COGA) bureaucracy equally frustrating to administer, and consideration could be given to reducing some of the burdens of due process in order to allow co-production and true devolution to flourish.

It was also suggested that Councillors and officers should be more inclined to visit projects and community groups physically so that they had a better understanding of the intentions and purported benefits of proposals in real terms, rather than within abstract paperwork. For example one project lead stated:

"This interview is the first time I've been questioned in any depth on our project and what we're planning to achieve. I would've expected a more robust process in relation to the evaluation of bids as long as smaller organisations can be supported through that process so not to put them off."

This ethos has been taken on board by the NDSU team, and projects are now being routinely visited in order to offer support and observe progress towards outcomes.

It should be noted that a small number of project leads consulted (three) suggested that the proposal development stage was compromised through attempts by Elected Members to manipulate proposals in furtherance of their own agendas. One respondent felt "bullied" into working with another organisation which they believed would significantly dilute the impact of their proposal and actually hinder partnership with other existing agencies. They subsequently redrafted an alternative proposal and proceeded to pay tribute to the role of the NDSU officer in demonstrating how a collaborative approach could be worked through. A further respondent highlighted their negative experience in the following way:

"The idea for the LIF proposal came from the community. The Councillors got their hands on it and manipulated it for their own agenda. Councillors have too much power. They tried to modify the bid to include a capital cost, which would have actually limited the project's potential for social change and impact on people's lives. They did not comprehend

this at all. We should have been able to deliver cross-border too, with other organisations, but this was also prevented due to Councillor interests."