

West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum

August 2023

Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy – NCIL funds status update

Dear WBNF Member,

The Woking Borough Council (WBC) has recently issued a Section 114 (S.114) Notice in light of its recent financial collapse under the mountain of debt it had accumulated. A S.114 notice is only issued when a council cannot find a way to finance its budget and continue as a going concern on its own. As a result the secretary of state has appointed three Commissioners to monitor and advise the Council while it attempts to restructure its finances and prepare an acceptable Plan to balance its books.

The S.114 has severe ramifications for the services provided by WBC and will affect the residents for the foreseeable future across the borough affecting many services.

One of the areas impacted by this is our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL is already collected by WBC for local development projects in the borough. The idea is that the Levy is paid on local developments to provide improvements in the area Infrastructure and support the increasing population. Whilst 75% of the CIL levy can go anywhere within the planning authority area (within the Woking Borough) to improve schools, health services and roads. The remaining 25% of the CIL (also referred as the Neighbourhood CIL or NCIL) has to be spent within the Neighbourhood Forum area on infrastructure with the agreement of the local Neighbourhood Forum in line with the adopted Local Neighbourhood Plan (The Plan).

This NCIL amount owing to the West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum (WBNF) area is around £1.1m. The funds are part of WBC balance sheet but held as a statutorily protected fund. With the S.114 Notice the Council had to adopt spending controls which prevents all but essential spending. Recently Councillor Liam Lyons, the portfolio holder for planning at WBC had issued a statement confirming the current spending restrictions imposed on the Council but assured that the Council will comply with CIL statutory obligations to protect the CIL funds and make them available to the community once the current spending controls are relaxed. Since the NCIL funds are part of WBC's balance sheet they remain unattainable until such time. Based on the above we expect the NCIL funds will become available in the future to support the approved projects. At this time the Forum is unable to predict when NCIL funds will be made available and whether it will be released in full or in tranches over future years. We expect to receive some update during the Council meeting on the 28 September 2023. However a decision is expected in February 2024.

Based on the Neighbourhood plan the Forum has prepared and agreed with its Councillors a local Infrastructure Improvement List (also known as the Local 123 list). The Forum has now prioritised with the councillors the following projects in the Recreation Ground:

- 1 Tennis Court upgrade to similar to Woking Park standard
- 2 Outdoor Exercise equipment similar to Victory Park Addlestone standard
- 3 Refurbishment/replacement of the Pavilion to provide Guides and Scouts facilities, public toilets, refreshment and sports changing facilities.

4 Perimeter path connecting the above and WB Junior School Field exit and skirting cricket/football pitches.

A Community Centre has been the dream of many residents but the existing funds are nowhere sufficient to accomplish this. We also do not have the infrastructure to manage such a facility in the future. Over the last few years the Forum has been working with the area Councillors on the 4 projects listed above. These projects have been delayed in the past few years for a number of reasons. To avoid further delays, the Forum has requested the area Councillors to gain an agreement with the Council's Executives (required as per the process) during the Autumn meeting in September and fast track as soon as the NCIL funds are made available.

The Forum will continue to keep you updated on the situation and any outcomes and decisions made during the Council meetings.

Should you have any concerns, please feel free to contact West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum Committee and they will be able to provide you all the latest development on this..

Yours Sincerely

The Committee

West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum Committee