

**North East Area Council Meeting:
22nd September 2022**

**Finance & Procurement Report
Appendix 3**

**Report of Interim Area Council
Managers, Lisa Phelan & Claire
Dawson**

Welfare Services Review

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To apprise Members of locality-based review of welfare services provision.

2. Recommendations

2.1. **Members refer to sections 3 to 7 of this report and discuss, with additional insights from the anti-poverty priority working group.**

2.2. **Members consider options available, in section 7 and agree the preferred option for the North East Area.**

2.3. **That the preferred option be developed in more detail at an Area Council workshop to be arranged in the future.**

3. Background

3.1. BMBC, through our Healthier Communities Service, currently funds a town centre-based core welfare provision offering information, advice and guidance.

3.2. Across the borough a range of different provision is currently in place to support communities. This provision is funded by both Area Council's and Ward Alliances. The provision varies significantly in terms of scale across the borough.

3.3. The feasibility of a universal borough wide hub and spoke model was explored through a review led by colleagues in Healthier Communities, but the funding is not available in order to expand the existing centrally commissioned provision. However, the potential efficiency in commissioning practice was identified as we currently have several different commissioning arrangements.

3.4. The Area Councils have been requested to review their arrangements for the commissioning and procurement of welfare services to determine whether there is any efficiency which can be derived from a more coordinated approach.

3.5. The North-East Area Council provision is currently via services funded through Ward Alliance grants as follows:

- Monk Bretton Ward funds CAB for fortnightly sessions – £3636
- Royston Ward funds DIAL for weekly sessions - £4750
- Cudworth Ward funds CAB £1,860 for monthly sessions (new from October 2022)
- North East Ward – No provision

4. Area Council Provision

All Area Councils have provided data for all locality-based advice services to evidence the level of demand in each area in order to steer the initial review. The data that was provided covers the periods 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, and indicates there has been demand for advice services across the borough during these periods.

The data shows a significant increase in utilisation between 2019/20 and 2020/21, which is maintained in the first half of 2021/22. As the increase coincides with the covid pandemic, it is assumed that this is either due to services being able to accept more referrals when not providing face to face clinic, and/or, an increase in demand linked to issues relating to the pandemic. Within the North East Area, access to welfare advice services is Ward dependent. It is anticipated that requests for such services will increase due to the increase in costs that many families are facing.

5. Opportunities identified

- 5.1. Combined commissioning provides an opportunity to condense the management fees
- 5.2. Encourage collaborative tendering by providers to co-deliver
- 5.3. The providers are all operating to the same standards and are AQS accredited.
- 5.4. The 'approved provider' list is concise.
- 5.5. Standardised collection of performance data to compare data between different areas.

6. Threats identified

- 6.1. The increase in the cost of living will require an uplift in contract value when contracts are renewed to ensure the same standards of provision can be maintained or reduced delivery expectations to reflect the financial envelope.

7. Options

- 7.1. Do not continue to fund a locality-based welfare provision service
- 7.2. Continue to commission a welfare provision service for the North East Area on an independent cycle, based on local need through the Ward Alliances
- 7.3. Look at options to commission welfare provision service for the North East Area on an independent cycle, based on local need through the main commissioning budget.
- 7.4. Align commissioning cycles and procure provision for multiple areas in one process, using different lots for individual area councils.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1. Area Manager to arrange a further workshop to work up a delivery model for the priority, with the support of specialist officers.

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Date:

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