

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

North Area Council Meeting:
13th November 2023

Agenda Item: 8

Report of North Area Council
Manager

Commissioning, Project Development and Financial Update

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Area Council with a financial position and forecast for expenditure based on the projects that have been proposed.
- 1.2 It highlights the need to agree a clear plan for commissioning against the priorities.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. **Members note the progress on the Environmental Community Caretaker Service recruitment.**
- 2.2. **Following the Connecting Communities Grant Review, the panel recommended and the Area Council agree to a further investment of £75,000 to enable two grant providers to continue provision for a 12month period, concluding March 2025. Full details agenda item 7.**
- 2.3. **To conduct a review of the Youth Resilience Fund requires a review to enable a decision on potential project extension to be made at the January Area Council meeting.**
- 2.4. **The North Area Council should note the existing budget position the existing the funding commitments. Section 4 of this report.**

3. Background highlighting all significant financial commitment

3.0 The Anti-Poverty Community Outreach Project

Contract 1 commenced on the 14th September 2015. This is a one-year (plus one year) contract valued at £149,000 in total. The initial contract has now concluded.

Contract 2 commenced on the 14th September 2017 for a two-year term at a contract value of approximately £95,000 per annum. On the 25th March 2019 the Area Council took the decision to utilise the contract extension clause and extend the contract until the 13th September 2020.

The Area Council agreed to continue to fund this project during the Covid-19 Pandemic and subsequently during the Cost of Living Crisis.

CURRENT POSITION: At the Area Council meeting on the 13th March further funding was agreed for two years July 2023 – June 2025. A waiver has been submitted that includes the option to extend the current contract for a further 12 months until June 2026. A maximum budget of £107,500 has been agreed for the initial two years, totalling £215,000.

3.1 The Clean and Green Service

Contract one was delivered by Forge Community Partnership commenced on the 14th September 2015. Prior to the end of the contract the tender opportunity was advertised.

The second environmental contract commenced on the 2nd October 2017 at a value of £85,000 per annum. The provider, Twiggs Grounds Maintenance Ltd, commenced service delivery on the 2nd October 2017. Twiggs continued to provide an environmental education contract in the North Area until March 2023.

From April 2023 the North Area Council entered into an SLA with BMBC Neighbourhood Services, introducing an Environmental Community Caretaker Model.

Neighbourhood services proposal costings = £120,963 to include:

- Team Leader (G6)
- Development and Demand Team (G4)
- Apprentice
- Vehicle, training, fuel, waste license, tools and contingency budget.

The contingency budget is £21,160.60 (20% of the resource requirement £100,803.00).

The service will be 80% scheduled maintenance, with priorities identified by the Ward Alliances. 20% will provide volunteering and community engagements support. Volunteering activities will be identified by the Ward Alliances and programmed into the Caretaker Team's schedule.

Update:

The Environmental Caretaker Team Leader G6 and apprentice commenced in post from 3rd July 2023. The driver role was filled from the 14th August.

The North Area apprentice is due to start in the area from 6th November.

Regrettably the Team Leader has sustained an injury on the 31st July which resulted in a significant recovery period. The post has been backfilled by a BMBC employee on secondment from the 7th August and is anticipated to remain with the team until the end of December 2023. This has implications for the contingency budget.

3.2 Housing and Cohesion Officer (Private Sector Housing) – At the November meeting 2017 it was agreed that the North Area would fund a private sector housing officer post at Grade 6 for 12 months fixed term. The North Area has had two officer in post (22nd January 2018 – June 2019 and 19th October 2020 –

December 2022 respectively). Both officers were successful in securing a promotion within the Safer Communities Service.

The current post holder commenced their duties in the North Area on the 15th May 2023. In addition to the salary fees the Area Council agreed to fund uniform, PPE including IT, phone and bodycam, plus a £5k annual working budget.

N.B.: Contractually the position is covered by a permanent contract to ensure employment rights for individuals. If the Area Council agreed to cease funding the position a 6-month notice period will be required.

3.3 Health and Wellbeing – Connecting Communities Grant

At a series of workshops in 2021 the Area Council discussed the loneliness and isolation and the impact of Covid-19. In July 2021 it was agreed to fund a grant program for two years with a budget of £100,000 per annum.

The grant opportunity was advertised at the end of September 2021 and the final date for submission was the 22nd October 2021. A total of 9 applications were received before the deadline totalling £615,710.39.

Stage one moderation took place on the 1st November and 4 organisations were invited back to present their projects on the 8th November. 3 applications were recommended for funding. The total allocated amount for these 3 projects was £186,766.44. ***£13,233.56 remained unallocated and has been recirculated into the main Area Council budget for forthcoming delivery allocation.***

Successful Projects:

- Age UK Barnsley – North Area Social Inclusion Service - £79,600.20
- DIAL Barnsley – Connection Hubs - £66,450.00
- Reds in the Community – Reds Connect - £40,716.24

UPDATE: The Connecting Communities Grant Panel met to review the providers delivery; their performance and consider if the North Area was receiving good value for money. Following which they recommended that two of the provider grant agreements are extended for a period of 12 months, to the maximum value of £75,000. (Age UK - £40,875.00, DIAL Barnsley - £34,125.00). This would mean that all the current provision would conclude by March 2025.

N.B. The Grant Panel will review the performance and budget availability in early 2024/25 to establish if additional funding can be identified to advertise a similar grant opportunity with revised aims and objectives, dependant on local need.

3.4 Devolved Funding to Ward Alliances

From 2014/15 to 2021/22 the Area Council devolved £10,000 to each of the Ward Alliances. This was reduced to £5,000 for the year 2022/23.

N.B. The decision was taken in 2020/21 that the funding devolved to Ward Alliances by the North Area Council would cease at the end of 2022/23.

3.5 Health and Wellbeing – focus on Young People

In November 2019 the North Area Council agreed to fund a project for up to three years. The project entitled 'An Empowerment Programme Enabling Resilient Transitions for Children and Young People Aged 8-14 Years' was advertised as a competitive grant in early 2020. The process was unsuccessful. It was agreed in on the 16th March that the opportunity should be chunked down to allow the VCS to respond.

N.B. This opportunity has been tailored to help address the fall out of COVID-19 lockdown and aid in the delivery of the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy. The grants went live on the 1st November 2020, delivered by YMCA and Ad Astra.

The Area Council has committed to fund this work for up to three years. Covid-19 Lockdown restrictions caused delays and for a time schools would not permit external partners into schools. The providers are now working within 5 schools.

The grant funding originally ran from November 2020 to October 2022.

Current Position: At the March 2022 meeting the Area Council agree to fund the project for a further 2 years, until October 2024, at £90,000p.a. Providers received a 3% financial uplift which was feasible within the current financial envelope. This security will enabling the existing providers to support students adversely affected by Covid-19 and support them in their educational transitions, primarily the move to senior school.

N.B. It will be necessary to confirm if this funding stream will continue beyond October 2024 at the January 2024 Area Council meeting. At the time of writing a preliminary workshop has been scheduled for 7th November 2023.

3.6 Cost of Living Crisis – North Area Support

Due to the unspent Housing and Cohesion allocation whilst the post has been vacant it is possible to reallocate this funding. £10,000 was earmarked for a Cost of Living based project. As a result, a workshop was held on 10th May to explore opportunities. At the area Council meeting in May 2023 it was agreed that the funding would be used to enable the Connecting Communities Grant providers to provided communal eating opportunities during autumn/winter 2023/24.

3.7 Sports Van 2023

The North Area has benefitted from the Sports Van for the past two summers. At the May 2023 meeting the Area Council agreed funding of £2,700 for fund the sports van and purchase refreshments for summer activities.

4. Financial Position

- 4.1. **The forecast for 2022/23 showed that the underspend (including underspend from previous years) was profiled to reduce to £76,259.** This is because the in-year balance is projected to exceed the annual budget by approximately £27,653.

However, this was not the case, the amount profiled for the Housing and Cohesion post was £35,000 however the internal recharge was £27,695 due to the post being vacant for several months.

- 4.2. Outlined annual commitments for 2023/24:

Contract	Proposed Spend 2022/23
Anti- Poverty – Community Outreach	£104,720
Environmental Community Caretaker Contingency	£100,803 £21,160.60
Housing Cohesion Officer – Grade 6 (+laptop and phone)	£40,000
Children and Youth People Resilience Grant	£90,000
Connecting Communities Grant 2021-2024 £100,000 per annum for 2 years	£82,500
Summer Sports Van	£2,700
Cost of Living – Communal Eating	£10,000
TOTAL	£451,883.60

- 4.3. Provided that the Area Council continues to commit funding as outlined in Appendix 1, the total spend profiled for 2023/24 is predicted to be £451,883.60. This includes the contingency budget for Neighbourhood Services which will have to be reviewed to the need for cover staffing for the delivery programme.
- 4.4. The underspend at the end of 2023/24 was projected to be £25,451 at the beginning of the year. However this includes the annual charge for both Environmental Caretaker Team and Housing and Cohesion which will not have been filled for the whole financial year. This may result in in-year savings of up to £23,100.

5. Commissioning Programme from April 2024 – Workshop Outcomes

- 5.1. A workshop was held on Friday the 23rd June. Attended by Cllr Leech, Cllr T Cave, Cllr Lofts, Cllr Denton, Cllr Tattersall and Cllr Wright.
- 5.2. Attendees were briefed on the current priorities & link with Barnsley 2030, timeline for existing commissioning and the current financial position.
- 5.3. A discussion took place regarding the future commissioning, assessment of need and measuring impact of early intervention and prevention models.
- 5.4. The Area Manager explained that the current level of investment into services is not sustainable. It may be possible to maintain current provision during 2024/25 due to the points identified in 4.4 of this report. However, the commissioning commitments would need to be reduced in line with budget constraints for 2025/26.

5.5. The group also considered the two grant funding streams:

5.6. Youth Resilience Grant

Members questioned whether the Area Council should be funding provision in schools. The Area Council Manager advised this funding stream had been developed in order to help reduce anti-social behaviour and risk-taking behaviour in the community. Workshop participants advised working with young people between the ages of 8 and 13, with attention to the transition to senior schools. The providers have been working with young people on: emotional intelligence and improving children's ability to communicate effectively, building confidence and self-esteem, advising them on where to go should they need help, relationships and choosing healthy friendships, discussing the importance of consequences and the impact of sound decision making. The providers use buddy training and/or peer support models to build resilient networks and improve outcomes.

The Area Council Manager also stressed that it has taken the providers considerable time to build positive working relationships with schools, particularly during the pandemic and subsequent recovery period.

This grant commitment will be reviewed with the help of scrutiny from Education, Early Start and Prevention colleagues.

NOTE: A decision on if this grant funding stream continues will be required in January 2024.

5.7. Connecting Communities Grant

This grant was devised to help support the communities of the North Area to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic by reducing isolation and encouraging social interaction. Designed to facilitate the building of strong, resilient, and cohesive communities so that the health impacts associated with being lonely and less mobile during the pandemic can be addressed through positive engagement at in neighbourhood settings.

This funding provision is delivered by three providers currently. It delivers some very valuable soft outcomes for local residents. Often supporting people who do not meet the threshold for statutory support but are still in need of social connection and enriching activities; whilst managing a on a tight budget. This grant programme comes to an end at the end of March 2024. Age UK's provision will come to an end at the end of December 2023. Due to the delayed start at the beginning of the programme Reds in the Community will continue to deliver until the end of June 2024.

NOTE: The Connecting Communities Grant Panel met for a review workshop on the 31st August 2023. Please refer to section 3.3 for a brief update and Item 7 for today's agenda for a comprehensive update. In summary it was recommended that agreed that a commitment of £75,000 per annum is agreed to allow for a further 12 months of intervention by the two providers.

6. Risks

- 6.1. The proposed budget would take the Area Council approximately £51,883 over budget per annum for 2023/24. However taking into account the current under spend, the investment profiled in Appendix 1 has been feasible.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1. Ensure that the Area Manager is alerted to any proposed commissioning profile variations so that feasibility considerations can be made at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.2. At the time of writing the priority working group for Young People are due to meet with the North Area Manger and Project Officer on the 7th November for a preliminary meeting prior to a review of the Youth Resilience Grant programmes.

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Date:
2nd November 2023

Appendix 1: North Area Council - Proposed expenditure April 2022-March 2025

Project / Service	2023/24	2024/25
Anti- Poverty – Community Outreach <i>Retender Anti- Poverty - Waiver in place Sept 2021 - June 2023 (9 Months)</i>	104,720.00	106,750.00
Environmental Contract	100,803.00	105,850.00
Environmental Contingency	21,160.00	21,170.00
Housing and Cohesion Officer – Grade 6 (+laptop and phone)	40,000.00	42,500.00
Stronger Communities Grant Reduced to £20,000 in 2022/23	-	-
Youth Resilience Fund (November 2022 - October 2024 - YMCA & Ad Astra)	90,000.00	45,000.00
Connecting Communities Social Isolation Grant (£100,000 pa for 2 years)	82,500.00	100,000.00
Sports Van 2023	2,700.00	
Cost of Living - Communal Eating	10,000.00	
Devolved funding to Ward Alliances (<i>where March 2019 balance is less than £10,000</i>)		-
TOTAL	451,883.00	421,270.00