BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

South Area Council Meeting: **16th June 2017**

Report of South Area Council Manager.

Tackling social isolation – an appraisal of the options available to the South Area Council working in partnership with its Ward Alliances

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   To seek approval for one of the options outlined in this paper, to give direction to the work being planned by the South Area Council and its Ward Alliances to tackle social isolation across the South Area.

2.   Recommendations

2.1 That members approve one of the options to take forward work around social isolation outlined in Section 4 of this report OR
2.2 That members discuss and approve an alternative approach to tackle social isolation across the South Area
2.3 If members are approving Option 3 in Section 4 of this report, that they approve the amount of funding to be allocated to Ward Alliances developing social isolation projects as outlined in Section 4.3.2 of this report
2.4 That members approve in principle the costs for one of the 'GRANTfinder' packages as outlined in Section 5.2 of this report, pending further investigation of the two packages by the South Area Council Manager
2.5 That members approve either:
1) A presentation by Idox of the GRANTfinder packages at the September 2017 meeting of the South Area Council as outlined in Section 5.5 of this report OR
2) A meeting between Idox and the Area Chair and South Area Council Manager to further investigate the GRANTfinder packages on the Area Council's behalf, as outlined in Section 5.5 of this report

3.   Background & progress to date

3.1   Over the past 12 months, the South Area Council and its three Ward Alliances have all been discussing the problem of social isolation across the Area. This has come both from available data around these issue, but also from real examples of isolated individuals coming into contact with local projects, ranging from Sloppy Slippers to Luncheon Clubs.

3.2   As a result of this, it was agreed that the Area Council would hold a workshop to look at the local issues after its meeting on 28th April 2017. This workshop was delivered by the South Area Council Manager and colleagues from Public Health. The notes from this workshop are attached at Appendix A.

3.3 The major points raised at this workshop included:

- Whilst there is quite a lot of national statistical information about isolation and loneliness, there is a paucity of more local information because many isolation client groups have so little contact with organisations
- That there is a difference between social isolation (which is a factual statement that someone does not have contact with people – which may be or may not be intentional or desired) and loneliness, which is a feeling which may or may not mean the person is actually isolated (for example, carers often report feeling lonely but often struggle to get time alone).
- That all age groups can feel isolated, but the statistics seem to say that very young people under 25 and people over 75 report the highest levels of feeling lonely.
- That it is vital to ensure that local people who may feel isolated to know about what is out there for for them, as suitable provision often already exists of which they are not aware.
- That any new projects developed must use existing groups (most particularly, but not exclusively) including the Ward Alliances
- That we must use the Ward Alliance Fund and Area Council budgets more cleverly, to lever in other external funding for our Alliances and community groups. It was felt that the 'GRANTfinder' software could help extensively with this, and that a licence which would allow community groups access would be worth investigating.
- That it may well be asking too much of volunteers on Ward Alliances and in other community groups to develop and run social isolation projects unaided. Because of this, the funding of a part time support/development worker by the South Area Council was also discussed.
- However, it would be vital for any person appointed to such a role to be working primarily at ward level, particularly with the Ward Alliances.

3.4 The actions agreed at the end of the workshop were:

- The South Area Council Manager and Public Health staff to work jointly on this options appraisal paper, to outline possible courses of action for the Area Council to take. This would include an investigation of low cost good practice developed elsewhere to inform the available options. These have been used to inform the options outlined in Section 4 of this report.
- The South Area Council Manager to investigate costs of the 'GRANTfinder' licence for inclusion in this report

4. Options available to the South Area Council to tackle social isolation:

4.1 The options which follow are based on the following working assumptions which came out of the workshop held in April 2017:

- That better promotion of provision must be at the heart of all of the options.
- That any worker appointed would be working with local volunteers and Alliances at ward level, to ensure that any activities developed have a local and accessible flavour.

- That any worker appointed would work alongside the South Area Team to help groups to maximise their external funding, using GRANTfinder if this is felt to be affordable.
- That the Area Council would need to steer any worker appointed to target particular groups (for example, older people) rather than attempting to spread their work too thin by focusing on too many difference target audiences at once.

4.2 The available options are (in order of ascending cost):

No	Cost to Area Council	Outline of approach	Pros	Cons
1	Free – officer & volunteer time only	❖ No new development of provision. ❖ Focus on identification of socially isolated people & putting them in touch with existing provision through Ward Alliances & community gps. ❖ Promotional campaigns to raise awareness of existing provision	❖ Low cost ❖ Makes better use of existing provision ❖ No duplicate provision ❖ Will promote good network between groups & organisations	❖ Assumes isolated people have confidence to attend ❖ Assumes that suitable provision exists for everyone ❖ May put extra strain on already overused provision ❖ Puts strain on capacity of Area Team
2	Free – officer & volunteer time only	❖ Encourage Ward Alliances to develop projects using existing Ward Alliance Funds, coordinated through working groups & champions	❖ Will encourage development of Ward Alliances ❖ Will ensure that delivery is very local & accessible	❖ Asking a lot of volunteers, many of whom are already over committed ❖ Puts strain on capacity of Area Team

No	Cost to Area Council	Outline of approach	Pros	Cons
3	Low – medium	❖ Area Council to devolve monies to Ward Alliances wishing to develop social isolation projects, using working groups as above ❖ Money available to be decided by Area Council	❖ Will encourage development of Ward Alliances ❖ Will ensure that delivery is very local & accessible	❖ Asks even more of volunteers than option 2 ❖ Puts strain on capacity of Area Team
4	Approx £14,250 per annum including oncosts	❖ Area Council to commission a partner organisation to employ a part time worker to support Alliances and groups to set up and deliver social isolation activities across South Area ❖ This cost is based on cost of worker from Age UK commissioned by Penistone Area Council (£18,800) pro rata'd at 3 days per week	❖ Groups would feel more supported & able to develop faster ❖ Worker could be based with Area Team to tap into local knowledge ❖ Worker could also help groups to draw down external funding, offering more specialist support than Area Team can offer (including the use of the partner organisation's expertise)	❖ More expensive than options 1-3 & may require Area Council to reconsider some of its existing commissions in order to fund ❖ Would this approach be sustainable or would groups become dependent on their worker? ❖ What would happen to the work developed if Area Council funding finished?

No	Cost to Area Council	Outline of approach	Pros	Cons
5	Approx £23,750 per annum including oncosts	❖ Area Council to commission a partner organisation to employ a full time worker to support Alliances and groups to set up and deliver social isolation activities across South Area ❖ This cost is based on cost of worker from Age UK commissioned by Penistone Area Council at 5 days per week (£18,800 plus oncosts)	❖ Groups would feel more supported & able to develop faster ❖ Worker could be based with Area Team to tap into local knowledge ❖ Worker could also help groups to draw down external funding, offering more specialist support than Area Team (including use of the partner organisation's expertise)	❖ More expensive than options 1-4 & would require extensive review of existing commissions in order to fund ❖ May make dependence of groups on worker even more likely? ❖ Even more difficult to sustain if Area Council funding finishes or reduces

4.3 Next Steps:

4.3.1 If options 1 or 2 are chosen, Ward Alliances will continue to work with the South Area Team and partners to develop social isolation projects and promotional campaigns for existing local and boroughwide provision.

4.3.2 If option 3 is chosen, the South Area Council will need to decide how much of its budget it wishes to set aside to provide extra funding to Ward Alliances wishing to develop social isolation projects.

4.3.3 If options 4 or 5 are approved in principle by the South Area Council on 16th June 2017, the South Area Council Manager will draft up a full tender specification for approval at the next meeting to be held on 1st September 2017. This could then go out to tender immediately afterwards, meaning that a worker should be in post in the New Year 2018.

5. Funding Grantfinder to support Ward Alliances and community groups to access external funding opportunities

5.1 It was agreed at the Area Council social isolation workshop held on 28th April 2017 that it would also be worth exploring the costs of buying a licence or number of licences for 'Grantfinder', a piece of easy-to-use software produced by Idox which identifies possible sources of grant or trust funding for activities undertaken by community groups and organisations, which could include the Area Council and the three Ward Alliances.

5.2 The South Area Council Manager has now investigated these costs; details of which are outlined in the table below. Idox offer two main packages which could be suitable for the needs of the Area Council, Ward Alliances and their associated community groups. In addition to the information below, additional information from the company is attached at Appendixes B and C of this report.

Package	Functions	Users	Costs
Open 4 Community	❖ Portal based solution with enables host organisation [BMBC] to provide a search tool via their own website whilst allowing groups to search for funding themselves whilst providing intelligence on that activity back to the host. ❖ Funding covered is the same as for GRANTfinder but only covers those open to voluntary & community sector organisations	❖ Used by VCS users themselves or by council or partner employees on their behalf ❖ Host organisation can provide a standard search platform or build their own content modules at extra costs ❖ Multiple users – can be used across the council, so could split costs with other Area Councils	Dependent on if standard search platform used or if additional content is added. ❖ Approx £6,950 for 1 year plus one-off build cost of £3,000 ❖ Add on modules cost £1,000 per module per year ❖ Discounts are available for multiple year contracts (all figures exclude VAT, which councils do not pay)

Package	Functions	Users	Costs
GRANTfinder for Local Authorities	❖ Identifies funding from EC, National, Regional & Local government, Corporates, Lottery funding, & others	❖ Used by council employees to find funding for their own activities, partner & Voluntary or Community groups ❖ Multiple users – can be used across the council, so could split costs with other Area Councils	❖ 1 year £6,950 ❖ 2 years £13,205 ❖ 3 years £18,765 (all figures exclude VAT, which councils do not pay)

5.3 As can be seen above, the GRANTfinder package is significantly cheaper, but means that searches can really only be done by council employees on behalf of other users. The Open 4 Community package costs more, but offers not only the chance for multiple users from a range of organisations and groups, but also the chance to monitor that usage and to build local content. Monitoring usage could be extremely useful in terms of gauging the impact of the package in terms of the funding drawn down by local organisations and groups.

5.4 Examples of Open 4 Community sites run by Leeds City Council and Support Cambridgeshire can be found at the sites below. The Leeds site has 3 additional modules (local support, local news and CMS) whilst the Cambridgeshire site is a standard platform with no additional modules:

http://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/lcc
http://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/supportcambs

5.5 Idox has offered to visit Barnsley to demonstrate the various packages. They could potentially be invited to the meeting of the South Area Council on 1st September 2017. Alternatively, the Area Chair and South Area Council Manager (plus any other interested Area Council members) could meet with Idox on the Area Council's behalf.

Appendix A: Notes from Social Isolation workshop held 28th April 2017
Appendix B: Details of GRANTfinder package
Appendix C: Details of Open 4 Community package

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