

**South Area Council – Procurement and Financial Update**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide a financial and procurement update and recommendations for consideration for:
- Wombwell Post office update
  - Private Sector Housing Officer Service Level Agreement (SLA)

**2. Recommendations**

**Post Office update**

- 2.1 That Members note the update on the Wombwell Post Office monies of £1414 previously allocated and note that the £1414 is now available to reallocate to other priorities.

**Private Sector Housing Service Level Agreement (SLA)**

- 2.2 That Members approve the recommendation that the Private Sector Housing SLA is extended for a further year until September 2022 at a cost of £33,528.

**3. Wombwell Post Office update**

- 3.1 At the South Area Council meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021 a request was made for funding to extend the opening hours of the Post Office which, at the time, was located in Wombwell library. The South Area Council approved £1414 to extend the opening times on a Wednesday.
- 3.2 Following the approval of the funding the Post Office was able to relocate back on to a High Street location at the building previously occupied by Yorkshire bank. The service will be offering two counter serving positions and opening hours more consistent with their typical core hours which will now be 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 12:30 Saturday. The South Area Council funding is therefore no longer required.

**4. South Area Council Finances**

- 4.1 The South Area Council currently have a commissioning budget of £24,800 which is unallocated. £33,528 has been ringfenced as a rolling budget each year for a Private sector housing service level agreement. If a further year for a Private sector housing service level agreement is not approved the ringfenced budget will be added to the unallocated commissioning budget for further consideration and alternative spending options.

**5. Private Sector Housing Service Level Agreement (SLA)**

- 5.1 The South Area Council currently fund a Private Sector Housing Officer through a SLA with BMBCs Community Safety team. The annual costs for this service are £33,528 per year. The current SLA finishes at the end of the September 2021. It is recommended that this agreement is extended for a further year until September 2022.
- 5.2 The officer works in partnership with residents, letting agents and landlords across the South Area Council communities to improve the quality of tenants

lives and tackle poor quality rented housing stock. The post works proactively supporting landlords and tenants carrying out property inspections and signposts vulnerable tenants to appropriate support, encouraging tenants and landlords to take responsibility for the areas they live. No referrals are needed to work with the officer and they do have the powers to issue formal notices where needed. The officer has delivered a number of environmental projects in partnership with agencies and partners where issues have been identified locally.

5.3 This SLA delivers helps to address the following South Area Council priorities:



5.4 The service has adapted its delivery to target people in need throughout the Pandemic and changing Government guidance. The service had to be adapted to ensure social distancing and lockdown rules were being followed. The officer, however continued to play a fundamental role in helping to identify vulnerable people and properties throughout the pandemic. The local knowledge, contacts in the area, relationships with partners, Elected members, tenants, agencies and landlords meant the officer was able to act as eyes and ears to help the communities within the South Area Council. The support has included ensuring support services were targeted in the areas of need, helping with licensed premise visits, delivering Covid 19 contact centre information to properties across our area and supporting the community responder scheme when we have been unable to make contact with people and urgent welfare checks have been needed.

5.5 In the last 12 months the Private Sector Housing officer has:

- Made contact with 243 people.
- Supported 60 vulnerable households.
- Carried out 68 interventions in Hoyland Milton, 68 in Darfield, 2 in Rockingham and 81 in Wombwell.

- Improved 12 properties and a further 25 informal requests for action made to landlords for work to be carried out.
- Helped 3 people make positive changes to their lives.
- Reported 3 cases of fly tipping which was acted on.
- Made 14 internal housing inspections.
- Supported 72 properties that were having problems with their waste disposal and was having an impact on the area.
- 45 people were supported to identify and access other services for help.
- 2 written formal notices issued.
- 7 targeted publicity campaigns carried out in identified hot spot areas.
- Worked alongside other South Area Council commissioned services to help deliver activity boxes, wellbeing packs, healthy holidays activities, food boxes and winter wellbeing support.
- Worked with the following partners: Citizens Advice Barnsley, Age UK Barnsley, Berneslai Homes, IDAS, Social Care and Housing Options team, Aids and Adaptations, DIAL, SY Police and Public Health.
- Represented the South Area Council and residents at Polices and Communities Together Meetings, Tidy Team steering group and HGousing team meetings.
- Attended training in order to better support people in the South area on the following areas: Child criminal exploitation, migration, environmental enforcement and community protection notices.

5.6 During the Pandemic the Coronavirus Act 2020 increased the amount of notice period landlords needed to provide to their tenants when seeking possession of the property. This additional legislation meant landlords needed to give tenants 6 months' notice before starting possession proceedings. Changes to the legislation mean that from the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 notice period will now be at least 4 months and from 1<sup>st</sup> August reduced to 2 months. Throughout the pandemic BMBC have continued to offer support and advice for people experiencing financial difficulties due to the pandemic including rent arrears. The Private Sector Housing Officer has promoted the support and signposted people to the help available. The officer will continue to prioritise support to people at risk of eviction and /or homelessness and will monitor the number of cases and people affected.

5.7 Based on the performance of the SLA, funding availability and continued need for the service the recommendation is Option A to extend the SLA for a further 12 months until September 2022.

- **Option a)** To extend the SLA for a further year until September 2022 at a cost of £33,528.
- **Option b)** SLA to be terminated on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021, all support provided as part of this SLA would cease from this date and Members would be able to consider alternative priorities and use of the commissioning budget.

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