

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Central Area Council Meeting:
21st September 2022
Finance & Procurement Report
Appendix 3**

**Report of Area Council Managers,
Lisa Phelan & Sarah Blunkett**

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 Central Area.**

2.3. **That the preferred option be developed in more detail at an Area Council workshop on 19th October 2022**

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. Central Area currently has Grant agreements in place with CAB and DIAL as follows:

- CAB to 31st March 2023
- DIAL to 31st December 2022

The BMBC Core provision, North Area Council and South Area Council commissions run to June 2023.

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. 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 Central Area on an independent cycle, based on local need, in line with the Central Area Council's 'Supporting Vulnerable People' priority within the context of a national cost of living crisis.
- 7.3. Align commissioning cycles and procure provision for multiple areas in one process, using different *lots* for individual area councils i.e. beginning 1st July 2023 as per item 3.5 above. If this is the preferred option, the Area Council should consider extending CAB and/or DIAL until 30th June 2023 to avoid a gap in provision.

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.

Proposed date Wednesday 19th October at 13.30.

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Date:

6th September 2022
6th September 2022