

REPORT OF: FINANCIAL SERVICES MANAGER

TO: SPECIAL BUDGET EXECUTIVE

DATES: 9th FEBRUARY 2016

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MATTERS REQUIRING FINANCIAL APPROVAL

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This regular report summarises two matters requiring consideration by the Executive under the Council's Financial and Contract Procedure Rules.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Executive is asked to consider the following proposals and determine its response:
 - (a) To commission further work and advisory support services from the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CVS at a cost of £10,000 for the period 1st December 2015 to 30th November 2016; and,
 - (b) to commission Building Bridges to provide cohesion activity as outlined in this report through to March 2017 at a cost to the Council of £10,000.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3. To seek approval from the Executive on two specific matters which have financial implications for the Council.

Contract with Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Council for Voluntary Service

4. Burnley Pendle and Rossendale Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) has received funding from the Borough Council since the demise of Pendle Community Network to deliver a programme to improve and expand the capacity and capability of the voluntary and community sector in Pendle.
5. The first contract ran from 1st June 2013 – March 2014 and was renewed for the period 1st December 2014 to 30th November 2015. Both contracts had a value of £15,000. The key aims were to:
 - increase the third sector capacity to access funding (particularly, Big Lottery, Heritage and Clinical Commissioning Group grants);

- to provide advice and support to resident and community groups, Town and Parish Councils in particular with governance, committee skills and marketing;
 - to advance sustainable volunteering across the Borough.
6. The aim was to build a collaborative approach by co-locating CVS staff within the Locality team of the Council. In addition to a range of CVS staff working in the Borough we have accommodated a CVS member within the locality team on one day per week and this has worked very well – identifying needs and addressing issues as they arise, augmenting the planned programme. They have helped us with failing residents groups and worked with a wide range of community / residents groups – outcomes and activity reported through quarterly reports. We were able to identify where Pendle groups were under represented in terms of seeking funding and take remedial action which improved take up. The service we receive from CVS is good value and considered essential if we are to maintain a healthy voluntary and community sector and a robust approach to volunteering particularly at a time of reducing resources.
 7. The Council has been requested to support a new service level contract but with a reduced amount, commensurate with reducing budgets, of £10,000 per annum. The first contract to cover the period from 1st December 2015 to 30th November 2016 and thereafter subject to review and extension by agreement.

Building Bridges Community Cohesion Initiative

8. In November 2014 the Executive agreed an allocation of £15,000 for the Pendle Community Safety Partnership to run a Cohesion project which aimed to tackle a lack of involvement of parents in the school life of their children with demand for the project coming from schools in Brierfield and Nelson (the Learning Family Project). Absence of parental support for the school was leading to under achievement, poor attendance and poor behaviour going unchallenged with wider impacts in the community. Despite clear evidence of the need for the scheme only one of the 3 schools involved in the project was able to implement the scheme effectively as a result of which there is a residual balance of £10,000 available for wider cohesion activity.
9. In the past dedicated Policy staff were assigned to help develop approaches to community cohesion and Government Funding was available to promote inter faith and community cohesion activity. Recently the impetus behind this kind of work has diminished as resources have reduced and staff changes made to policy and locality teams has meant limited resources have been available for this wider community cohesion activity.
10. At the same time the need to promote positive relationships and shared values has increased. The recent introduction of the Prevent Duty on local authorities has highlighted the need for an even greater understanding of our diverse communities and a need to promote dialogue, trust and understanding between all sections of the community in Pendle. With this in mind Building Bridges, who have a good track record in encouraging cross-cultural engagement in communities, have been working with council officers to develop a wider cohesion programme which includes:

Community Cohesion Action Network

11. This forum would consist of representatives from community groups across Pendle and would have a responsibility to maintain Cohesion as a priority local agenda.

Aims:

- To network and share knowledge / good practice on local initiatives promoting community cohesion;
- Capacity Building - To remain informed on local and national policy on Cohesion, Integration, and Interfaith and Prevent agenda;

- To discuss local cohesion matters and developed a structured 'partnership' approach towards tackling challenges in line with resources available.

The Pendle Forum of Faiths (PFF)

12. A forum which is representative of the Faith Communities in Pendle and brings together local faith leaders on one platform where they can engage in dialogue to better understand each other, develop friendships, work together on common social issues and Interfaith matters.

Aims:

- Find common ground over issues of mutual concern;
 - Demonstrate positive leadership across faith communities;
 - Use the richness of diversity to enable the forum to speak with one voice;
 - To present a united front against people who are intent on damaging good community relations in Pendle.
13. Both forums in the first year will be consultative but over years to come it is planned to steer development towards a reasonable balance between consultative dialogue (strategy and local priorities) and proactive action at a community level (community engagement based on resources available). Additionally, a mechanism will have been created ensuring a two-way system between organisations and communities.
 14. The monies will be spent 70% on dedicated staff to run the project 10% being ring-fenced towards costs of meetings and events and 20% contributing towards organisation running costs.
 15. Building Bridges Pendle has over the past few weeks pursued some options on the sustainability of this project and advise that the 'Bowland Trust' has agreed to match-fund this proposal with an additional £10,000, should the Council decide to divert its residual £10,000 cohesion funding to Building Bridges.
 16. It is recommended, therefore, that the uncommitted balance of funding for Community Cohesion is used to commission Building Bridges to provide cohesion activity through to March 2017 with the addition of matched funding from Bowland. The Localities team will receive regular monitoring information and reports on outcomes. Reports will be submitted to the Community Safety Partnership.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy

17. There are no new policy implications arising from the contents of this report.

Financial

18. There is no dedicated funding available to meet the £10,000 cost of supporting the CVS proposal outlined in this report. Subject to approval by the Executive, this could be met from a supplementary revenue estimate funded from the projected underspend on this year's revenue budget. A report elsewhere on this agenda highlights a forecast underspend on the revised budget of £139k. Any extension of the arrangement with CVS would be subject to a fresh decision. Funding for the £10,000 one-off grant to Building Bridges would come from the uncommitted balance of funding previously allocated by the Executive for Community Cohesion.

Legal

19. There are no legal implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

Risk Management

20. There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

Health and Safety

21. There are no health and safety implications arising from the contents of this report.

Climate Change

22. There are no climate change implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

Community Safety

23. There are no community safety issues arising from the contents of this report.

Equality and Diversity

24. The Building Bridges initiative is intended to enhance and promote equality and diversity considerations within the Borough.

APPENDICES

None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None