

Commissioning Partnership Board Report

Decision Maker: Commissioning Partnership Board

Date of Decision: 25th March 2021

Subject: Thriving Communities Programme Funding

Senior Responsible Officer: Rebekah Sutcliffe, Strategic Director of Communities & Reform

Report Author: Rachel Dyson, Thriving Communities Hub lead

Summary:

The purpose of the paper is to provide an update to Commissioning Partnership Board on the Thriving Communities transformation programme and confirm approval to continue with expenditure for 2021/22.

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

- A. To continue with the committed expenditure as previously approved by Commissioning Partnership Board and as described in this report.
- B. Cease funding Thriving Communities activity, giving notice on contracts and grant agreements with immediate effect to minimise payment of funds.

Recommendation(s):

To continue with the committed expenditure as previously approved by Commissioning Partnership Board and as described in this report.

Implications:

What are the **financial** implications?

This report is seeking approval to continue with the Thriving Communities Programme into 2021/22.

Thriving Communities is a three-year project running from 1st April 2018 until 31st March 2021 and has been predominantly funded via the Transformation Funding from the CCG.

However, some of the projects, namely Social Action Fund (SAF), didn't commence delivery until 2019/20 and are due to run until 2021/22 (£247k) and even 2022/23 (£70k). If the projects were to cease earlier than agreed within the contract, three months' notice is required for these providers. The total cost outstanding on SAF is £317k

Due to the impact of COVID19, the three members of staff who usually work on Thriving Communities have been re-assigned to support Community Engagement. As a result, the staffing costs have been recharged to the external COVID grant accordingly. The slippage on the staffing costs is being requested to be brought into 2021/22 financial year. The cost of this is approx. £41k

Part of the Thriving Communities project was to complete an evaluation to determine the impact the project has had on the Communities. The bulk of the evaluation work is due to take place in 2021/22. The cost of this is approx. £52k

Permission is now being sought to continue with the Thriving Communities delivery into the 2021/22 financial year with the guarantee that funding is available. The total funding required is £410k.

(Jenny Howarth Senior Accountant/Nicola Harrop Finance Manager/Amanda Fox Assistant Chief Finance Officer OCCG)

What are the **procurement** implications?

As this report relates to the funding arrangements, there are no Procurement implications. (Steve Boyd)

*What are the **legal** implications?*

The Council has entered into contractual arrangements with providers for the forthcoming year which are dependent upon external funding. If such funding is not forthcoming, the Council will have to terminate the contracts on notice to comply with its legal obligations with the consequential financial implications for the Council. (Elizabeth Cunningham Doyle)

*What are the **Human Resources** implications?*

Approval of the funding would require an extension to the fixed term contracts for the Thriving Communities Hub Lead, Project Manager and Project Support Officer up to the end of March 2022.

Extending the existing contracts of employment to the end of March 2022 means that each employee has in excess of 2 years continuous service with the Council and therefore will acquire full employment rights.

Emma Gilmartin, Strategic HR Business Partner

***Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment** attached or not required because (please give reason)*

If funding is not secured to continue the Social Action Fund projects this has the potential to impact disproportionately on some of our most disadvantaged communities who are accessing those funded activities, and on our BAME communities who are being supported by the BAME Connect project.

Risks:

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution/CCG's Standing Orders?

Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the S.75 budget?

Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council/CCG?

No

There are no background papers for this report

Report Author Sign-off:	
	Rachel Dyson
Date:	22 nd March

Please list any appendices: -

Appendix number or letter	Description
1.	N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2018 £2.69m was agreed to fund the Thriving Communities programme from the Greater Manchester Transformation Fund as part of the GM Health and Social Care transformation fund to support devolution. The aim was to accelerate the Thriving Communities element of the Oldham Model and deliver the common objectives of our health and social care integration.

The programme was a 3-year programme which focused on;

- building upon our strengths and supporting groups in the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector
- supporting people earlier in the care pathway
- driving the shift to increasing earlier intervention and prevention

- 1.2 Although some of activity set out in the Thriving Communities Business Case has been delivered during the initial three-year programme period (2018-2021) there remains some grant funded and contracted activity still to be delivered in the financial year 2021-22. The Social Action Fund grants and the Social Prescribing Innovation Partnership contract began three years of funded activity agreed in the Thriving Communities business case in 2019, meaning activity will continue during the financial year 2021-22. An evaluation of Thriving Communities has also been commissioned to take place alongside the final year of funded activity.

- 1.3 The Thriving Communities programme team have also been supporting Covid19 response. Since October 2020 this has specifically included the implementation and management of doorstep engagement teams and the development and implementation of the MHCLG Community Champions Programme. The costs of this support have been covered by government Covid19 funding therefore it was agreed that Thriving Communities work would pause during this time with a view to programme budget funds being used to reactivate work which was paused or not undertaken once possible in 2021-22. This released six months salary costs for the programme team within the Thriving Communities programme budget for 2020-21. This will be specifically to support the continued integration of Social Prescribing within the wider system.

- 1.4 Thriving Communities is at the heart of the ambition to build on community strengths set out in the Locality Plan, with social prescribing a key part of a whole system early intervention and prevention model building on community assets. The team will continue work around building capacity and sustainability of the VCFSE and building the sustainability case for the extension of the Social Prescribing Innovation Partnership alongside continued Covid19 response responsibilities which are funded for part of the next financial year. Work is ongoing to further develop Oldham's system wide approach to early intervention and prevention and describe the role of the VCSFE and of Social Prescribing within this, with a view to bringing forward proposals to seek secure recurrent funding beyond March 2022.

- 1.5 All of the funding to support the above activity with initially agreed as part of the Thriving Communities business case for the GM Transformation Fund. The award of the Social Prescribing contract was agreed by Commissioning Partnership Board in February 2019, and the award of the five Social Action Fund Grants in April 2019. Commissioning Partnership Board approved the recommendation to appoint an external provider to evaluate the programme in October 2019 with an agreed budget of £100k, although in fact the final contracted value is only £52k. It is understood that committed funding from the GM

Transformation Fund still remains at risk therefore it is necessary to secure funding for these committed elements of the programme.

- 1.6 This paper seeks confirmation from Commissioning Partnership Board that the approved schemes should continue into 2021/22, with an expected spend of **£410k**, noting that the overall programme will still be delivered within the originally approved financial envelope.

2. Funding Requirement

- 2.1 **Social Prescribing** – The Social Prescribing Innovation Partnership was commissioned on a 3+1+1+1 contract ending in March 2025, with the initial 3 years ending in March 2022. The total contract value is £1,078k over 3 years. It was agreed at the outset that £375k of the contract sum would be funded by Council reserves ear-marked to support the Thriving Communities with the balance to be funded from the GM Transformation Fund. The remaining £318k committed to the contract for 2021/22 will be covered by Council reserves so there is no further draw on the GM Transformation Fund. Further work is underway to scope options to secure funding to extend beyond this initial period, and to design these options as part of a wider approach to whole system early intervention and prevention.
- 2.2 **Social Action Fund** - The five projects are almost two years into delivery of three-year VCFSE led projects tackling loneliness and social isolation which were awarded by Commissioning Partnership Board in April 2019. The projects have had to adapt their models during the pandemic and are increasingly delivering virtual and resource pack based activities, as well as supporting the humanitarian aid response for Oldham.
- i. BAME consortium – BAME Connect programme of activities e.g. Yoga & Connect, Cook & Connect plus a befriending offer
 - ii. Wellbeing leisure – community based physical activity, working with community partners to deliver exercise opportunities and train volunteers, 350 attendances in last quarter
 - iii. Oldham Play Action Group – intergeneration activities and cooking – virtual activity programmes e.g. families in pre-xmas 'bake off' challenge
 - iv. Groundwork consortium – focusing on food and growing
 - v. Street Angels - twice weekly drop-in for food and clothing (outside), providing 394 hot meals to takeaway in the last quarter
- 2.3 The projects are all subject to signed grant agreements with the Council for the project period, the majority are three-year agreements with funding commitment through to the end of 2021/22. The intention of the Social Action Fund was to build community capacity which was sustainable beyond the lifetime of the projects, achieving this has already been made more challenging by the circumstances of the pandemic, if projects were to be cut short at this point it would not be possible. Likewise, the fund was focussed on projects tackling social isolation and loneliness which is likely to be all the more prevalent and an increasing priority in the early stages of recovery over the coming year. The projects have all made a significant contribution to pandemic response in particular through humanitarian aid over the past year, as well as adapting their proposals to operate within current restrictions. If funding were to be reduced or withdrawn this would require 3 months written notice from the Council, and therefore payment in advance is at risk whilst there remains uncertainty around this funding. A reduction to or withdrawal of this funding at short notice would significantly impact on projects' ability to deliver and in many cases on the long-term sustainability of the organisations involved.
- 2.4 The remainder of funding for each project is shown below, the total funding commitment remaining is **£317k**.

Project	Total Awarded	Paid to end of March '21	Remainder	Project End Date
Oldham Play Action Group	£88,762.00	£50,041.25	£38,720.75	Jun-22
Wellbeing Leisure	£272,957.89	£169,452.19	£103,505.69	Jun-22
Groundwork	£100,000.00	£97,412.00	£2,589.00	Jun-21
BAME Consortium	£263,500.00	£135,424.50	£128,075.50	Sep-22
Street Angels	£129,315.00	£85,570.00	£43,745.00	Mar-22
Total	£854,534.89	£537,899.94	£316,635.94	

- 2.5 **Evaluation** - The provider Human Engine has been appointed to undertake the Thriving Communities evaluation according to the scope agreed at Commissioning Partnership Board in October 2019. Provision to do this was included in the original Thriving Communities budget as the evaluation findings will be key in making the case for further investment in social prescribing and community activity. This will include evaluating the three core programme elements (Social Prescribing, Social Action Fund and Fast Grants) to understand the impact in terms of outcomes delivered as well as fiscal, social and economic impact. Human Engine have begun initial baseline data gathering and will begin stakeholder engagement in the next couple of weeks. Evaluation will be undertaken in parallel with the final year of the programme. An initial baseline report will be provided in April 2021, with findings and gap analysis from this informing detailed evaluation going forward. Further interim reports are due August and December 2021, with a final report in March 2022. This contract is subject to the standard Council contract Terms & Conditions. The full cost requirement for the evaluation is **£52k** (significantly lower than originally accounted for in the business case.)
- 2.6 **Programme Staffing** - The Thriving Communities programme team have also been supporting Covid19 response. Since October 2020 this has specifically included the implementation and management of doorstep engagement teams and the development and implementation of the MHCLG Community Champions Programme. The costs of this support have been covered by government Covid19 funding therefore it was agreed that Thriving Communities work would pause during this time with a view to programme budget funds being used to reactivate work which was paused or not undertaken once possible in 2021-22. This released six months salary costs for the programme team within the Thriving Communities programme budget for 2020-21. Covid19 response responsibilities will continue into 2021-22 and will fund the programme team for the majority of the next financial year however half of the released Thriving Communities programme budget (3 months salary costs) would need to be carried forward into 2021/22 in order to maintain the programme resource until the end of March 2022. The funding requirement would be **£41k**.

3. Future Sustainability

- 3.1 As funding from the GM Transformation Fund is non-recurrent, consideration is now being given to the sustainability of social prescribing and wider sustainability of the community offer which supports it. This is being done drawing on the findings of the evaluation and in the context of our overall preventative model for health and care and the wider transformation programme. A further piece of work has been commissioned to describe and develop the overall early intervention and prevention model and associated budgets so this can be understood on a system wide basis. A further paper will be brought to Commissioning Partnership Board to present findings and recommendations on the basis of this.