

Three Rivers District Council

# Leisure Environment and Community Committee Report

Date 15 March 2023

## LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 15 MARCH 2023

### PART I - DELEGATED

#### 6. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA) EXTENSION (EHoS)

##### 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of community based services, provided to vulnerable residents within the district under Service Level Agreements, for which the Council contributes funding.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to approve the proposed extensions of the identified Service Level Agreements for a further 3 years together with the associated expenditure. The expenditure is accounted for within existing Community and Leisure budgets.
- 1.3 The Committee is asked to approve the continuation of support for the Community Support Service and Domestic Abuse Caseworker Service, the expenditure for which is accounted for within existing Community and Leisure budgets.
- 1.4 The Committee is asked to approve the proposed expenditure and extension of the existing Service Level Agreement with Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR).

##### 2 Details

- 2.1 Within existing revenue allocations, the following is allocated as part of the approved existing Service budgets within the MTFP:
  - Leisure and Community funding budget of £80,000 per annum for Community Service Level Agreements;
  - CASTR is allocated £259,290 per annum from Council Revenue budgets
- 2.2 Officers currently manage Service Level Agreements (SLA) with the following services with the identified organisations, within existing approved revenue budgets:

##### Roundabout Transport

- 2.3 A Local charity tackling social isolation across the district and its surrounds. The charity employs two members of staff, who manage and maintain a fleet of disabled accessible minibuses, which can be hired, through the SLA, at a subsidised rate to local organisations and groups. This provides transport to their service users who might otherwise be unable to engage and experiencing social isolation. This is primarily used by elderly or disabled groups, but is also accessed by youth groups and community groups.
- 2.4 The service has been utilised by 11,536 people in the last financial year.

##### Homestart Watford, Three Rivers & Hertsmere

- 2.5 Homestart provide support through volunteers for young families experiencing difficulties or are inexperienced at parenting. Homestart supports clients on issues such as, social isolation, financial hardship, mental health and lone parenting. During the pandemic the organisation expanded its offer in the district to include group play sessions in order to reduce social isolation, at no additional cost to the Council.
- 2.6 A total of 80 families within Three Rivers received home visit support during the last financial year with 57 families engaged in the group play sessions.

#### **Abbots Langley Youth Project – via Services for Young People**

- 2.7 Services for Young People deliver a weekly youth project in Abbots Langley for young people aged 11-18. The project focusses on different themes throughout the year, including healthy relationships, sexual health, work and education and mental wellbeing.
- 2.8 Over the last year, 31 sessions were held with attendance averaging 18 young people per session. A total of 89 young people engaged with the project over the 12 month period.

#### **Community Support Service (Provided by Herts Mind Network)**

- 2.9 The Community Support Service provides advice, information and holistic outreach support to people who are experiencing mental ill-health or need help with their mental wellbeing. It works alongside individuals to develop an individually tailored package of support that meets their needs, working with them to find the solutions that are right for them.
- 2.10 A total of 177 referrals were received last year, with 235 individuals supported during the year.

#### **Domestic Abuse Service (Provided by Herts Mind Network)**

- 2.11 Individually tailored support for standard to medium risk victims of domestic abuse. The service supports residents to access legal support, address the impact of trauma and support them to identify next steps in order to achieve healthy and safe relationships. This service is open to anyone over the age of 18, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.
- 2.12 The service dealt with 182 referrals last year with a total of 248 people supported.

#### **Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR)**

- 2.13 The Council has an SLA with the CASTR which covers funding in the sum of £259,290 per annum.
- 2.14 The CASTR provides advice and representation to residents across almost all advice areas including benefits, consumer, debt, education, employment, finance, health, housing, immigration, legal, relationships and family, travel and utilities.
- 2.15 The CASTR manage 3 local offices located in South Oxhey, Abbots Langley, and Rickmansworth. In addition, an Outreach service is offered in the community and currently provides a fortnightly advice service at the South Oxhey Foodbank, a weekly advice service at the Mill End Foodbank and a monthly advice service at the Emmanuel Church Foodbank.

- 2.16 The CASTR demonstrates value for money in the services that it provides for residents of Three Rivers in that for each £1 that TRDC provides to the CASTR, £9.30 is gained for the clients they support. This figure increases when written off debt is factored into calculations.
- 2.17 In 2021-2022, CASTRs performance can be summarised as follows:
- Total number of advice issues – 15,616 (up 18.40% from 2020/21)
  - Total number of clients with a new enquiry - 7040 (up 8.25%)
  - Money gained for clients in the past year - £2,417,660 (£2,769,991 in 20/21/ £1,194,305.00 in 19/20)
  - Total hours donated by volunteers – 34,944 (up 21.74% from 2020/21 and up 9% from pre COVID levels of 2019/2020)
  - Equivalent contribution of volunteers, if paid: £594,048 (at £17.00 gross per hour)
  - Total additional external Funding raised to run the Three Rivers CA service - £175,310, accounts still with auditors (income less grants/ donations for South Bucks, plus management fee for running South Bucks in 2021/22)
  - Number of volunteers supporting the work of CASTR - 84 (up 21.74%)
  - Total number of people attending financial awareness courses – due to recommence 2022/23

### **3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 Alternative options which have been considered are to:
- 3.1.1 Cease funding one, some, or all of the listed SLAs and/or
- 3.1.2 Reduce the timeframe, and thus the medium term financial commitment at this stage, of the proposed SLAs and extend the current arrangement for a single year only
- 3.2 Factors influencing these considerations have been:
- 3.2.1 All SLA delivery partners have reported a significant increase in demand for their services as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic and more recently as a consequence of the cost of living crisis. This coincides with challenges in relation to operational capacity with a loss of, and need to recruit new, volunteers and barriers (as a result of Covid19 lockdowns, cost of living and inflation) to securing resources through traditional fundraising channels.
- 3.2.2 Despite the above issues delivery partners are cognisant of the financial challenges which also face the council and, recognising that, have worked with the Community Partnerships Service to develop plans which will see services continue in the district without an increased financial ask of the Council.
- 3.2.3 Demand of the Councils directly delivered service including but not limited to Community Partnerships, Housing, Revenue and Benefits has

increased exponentially since the onset of the Covid19 pandemic. It is only through the support of partner agency that services have been able to adequately support residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. If the current SLAs are not renewed the demand for the services they deliver will in large part fall back upon already stretched Council services. In addition, the negative impacts that would result from gaps created by the loss of those community based services will inevitably result in increased demand for housing services as more people find themselves facing homelessness, increased ASB, increased victimisation of fraud and scams and increased arrears in relation to council tax.

- 3.2.4 The need for to rebuild stability and service resilience post pandemic would not be supported by a reduction in the term of the Service Level Agreement and it is not considered that demand for the proposed services will decrease in the coming year(s). A 3 year commitment would provide partners with security when they need it most and support planning consistent service delivery as well as ensure that partners could retain experienced local staff through provision of job security.
- 3.2.5 SLA funding from the Council can be used to lever in additional support from other grant making bodies and national schemes which could further support the services provided to our residents
- 3.3 In light of the above considerations the options to withdraw financial support, either completely or through a reduction in funding term, to the successful and established services covered by the SLAs is not considered a practical option. It is, however, considered prudent, given the Councils financial position, to retain the current funding level for the length of the new SLA period.

#### 4 Policy Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council’s agreed policy and MTFP budgets.
- 4.2 We will work towards reducing inequalities, prevent homelessness and encourage healthy lifestyles
- 4.3 The recommendations in this report relate directly to the achievement of the following performance indicators

**Table A**

Ref	Indicator	Target for 2022/23
<b>CP27</b>	Number of clients supported by CASTR	7,000
<b>CP28a</b>	Full Benefits: Number of clients helped to receive the full benefits they are entitled to following CASTR intervention and the amount of benefit gained	500/Q; 2000 annual
<b>CP28b</b>	Full Benefits: CP28b, The Amount of benefits gained, after support from CASTR	£200,000/annual £50,000/ Qtr
<b>CP29a</b>	Client Debts: Number of clients assisted with debt, the amount of debt written off and the average amount per client of any debts written off.	200/Q; 800 annual
<b>CP29b</b>	Client Debts: Number of clients assisted with debt, the amount of debt written off and the average amount per client of any debts written off.	£250,000 /4 per qtr = 62,000

<b>CP29c</b>	Client Debts: Number of clients assisted with debt, the amount of debt written off and the average amount per client of any debts written off.	£10,000 – 50% tolerance
<b>CP30</b>	Number of clients helped with housing and debt issues that could threaten them with eviction	400 / 4 = 100 per qtr

## 5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The contribution to the SLA partners has remained constant since 2018 and financial contributions are proposed to be provided without uplift for the term of the new SLA.
- 5.2 The following financial payments, subject to the terms of the SLAs, are indicatively proposed for each Service Provider and are contained within the existing MTFP:

**Table B**

SLA delivery Partner	2023-24 (£k)	2024-25 (£k)	2025-26 (£k)	Total Commitment in MTFP (£k)
Roundabout Transport	6	6	6	18
Services for Young People	2	2	2	6
Homestart Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere	4.8	4.8	4.8	14.4
CASTR	259.29	259.29	259.29	777.87
Community Support Service (Herts Mind Network)	8.7	8.7	8.7	26.1
Domestic Abuse Caseworker (Herts Mind Network)	5	5	5	15

## 6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council is not obliged to provide the services proposed within this report and the identified SLAs, however, by virtue of section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, it is able to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area. This includes the incurring of expenditure, giving financial assistance to any person (or organisation) and entering into arrangements or agreements with any person.
- 6.2 The extension to the SLAs for 2023 – 2026 is proposed to be on the same terms and conditions as the existing SLA which has been reviewed by the appropriate Council Legal officer.

## 7 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 The proposals and recommendations of the report have been assessed as having a positive impact on delivery of the council's equalities objectives for 2023-26.

## **8 Sustainability Implications**

- 8.1 The provision of the services as set out in the SLAs supports the council's community leadership role in the delivery of sustainable communities. Specifically, the proposals in this report would contribute towards the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 ( Zero Hunger), SDG 3: (Good health and wellbeing), SDG 10: (Reduced inequalities), SDG 11: (Sustainable Communities), SDG 17: (Partnership).
- 8.2 A Sustainability Impact Assessment of the proposals has been undertaken resulting in a score of 3 - Some positive impact for sustainability. Recommendation to further enhance this aspect where possible and proceed.

## **9 Community Safety Implications**

- 9.1 Community safety would be negatively impacted should the services covered by the proposed SLAs not be commissioned. The services provide essential mental health, community cohesion, connection and youth support without which Three Rivers would be expected to experience an increase in anti-social behaviour and serious youth violence. This in turn would result in increased demand for and pressures upon the local Police and a number of services directly delivered by the Council including but not limited to Community Partnerships, Housing, Revenue and Benefits and the Customer Service Centre.

## **10 Public Health implications**

- 10.1 Many of the services supported by the SLAs are those which directly provide public health interventions. Responsive services are provided, within the communities that need them most, resulting in improved mental and physical health outcomes, prevention of crime and antisocial behaviour, reductions in and avoidance of social isolation. The loss of these referral pathways would result in increased health inequalities within the district.

## **11 Staffing and Customer Services Centre Implications**

- 11.1 As outlined above, the implications of not renewing the SLAs would be expected to result in increased demand for council services in particular Community Partnerships, Housing, Leisure and Customer Service Centre with an increase in calls to the Customer Services Centre due to the resultant decrease in referral pathways external to the council that would be available for support.

## **12 Communications and Website Implications**

- 12.1 A decrease or cessation of the funding to the services delivered by community and charitable groups through the SLAs has the potential to cause reputational damage to the Council which would result in a need for proactive and reactive communications. This would include the need to provide additional communications and online information as residents would increasingly turn to the council for services currently provided by the third sector.

### **Risk and Health & Safety Implications**

- 12.2 There is no obligation for the council to provide the funding outlined in this report beyond the end of the current financial year. The negative impact on community infrastructure and vulnerable residents would, however, be considerable if this funding channel was withdrawn. This would negatively impact on the Council's role and reputation as a community leader. The Council has also consistently identified this work as a priority in its corporate framework.

- 12.3 The main risks that may impact upon the successful implementation of the decisions should the recommendations to continue the SLAs be approved would be an inability of the funded organisations to carry out the services or activities for which funding had been awarded. Performance monitoring is undertaken on a quarterly basis for each SLA in addition to the day to day partnership working that the Council maintains. Officers from the Community Partnerships service have and will continue to work with SLA delivery partners to secure additional, external, grant funds to further support these services in the District to accommodate any inflationary increases and the anticipated increases in demand during the SLA period.
- 12.4 It is considered that the risk mitigation measures in place to manage and support the proposed SLAs would reduce and/or remove the likelihood of the main risks from materialising

### **13 Recommendations**

- 13.1 The Committee is requested to agree to the extension of the existing SLAs for a further 3 years (2023-2026) and agree, subject to the terms of the SLAs and future years Council annual budget approval, associated expenditure for the services as outlined in this report to:
- 13.1.1 Roundabout Transport at a cost to the Council of £6,000 per annum
  - 13.1.2 Services for Young People at a cost to the Council of £2,000 per annum.
  - 13.1.3 Homestart Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere at a cost to the Council of £4,800 per annum.
  - 13.1.4 Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers at a cost to the Council of £259,290 per annum.
- 13.2 The Committee is requested to agree, subject to the terms of the SLAs and future years Council annual budget approval, to commit to the continuation of match funding contributions for a further 3 years (2023-2026) to provide:
- 13.2.1 The Community Support Service at a cost to the Council of £8,700 per annum.
  - 13.2.2 The Domestic Abuse Caseworker Service at a cost to the Council of £5,000 per annum

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#### **Data Quality**

Data checked by: Performance and Projects Manager

Data rating: Sufficient

**Background Papers: None**

**APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS: None**



