

# **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **EXECUTIVE**

**8 SEPTEMBER 2020**

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**Title:**

**Service Level Agreements, 2020-2021**  
**Variation in Funding to Some Partner Organisations**

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**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr David Beaman, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Culture

**Head of Service:** Andrew Smith, Head of Strategic Housing and Communities

**Key decision:** Yes

**Access:** Part Exempt

The Annexe to this report contains exempt information by virtue of which the public is likely to be excluded during the item to which the report relates, as specified in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

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### **1. Purpose and summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the possible variation of Service Level Agreement (SLA) funding to some of the 12 funded voluntary sector partner organisations supported under this arrangement. This is for the second half of the final year of their 3-year funding arrangements, 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021, as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on their operations.

### **2. Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Executive notes the impact of COVID-19 on the funded organisations and approves the proposed changes in funding for the final half of this year, 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021, as set out in the Exempt Annexe.

### **3. Reason for the recommendation**

All 12 voluntary sector organisations funded through a 3-year SLA arrangement have been impacted by COVID-19 in varying ways since the middle of March. Whilst the council has continued to fund all 12 organisations in full, there is currently some disparity in their operations as a result of the pandemic and it is felt appropriate to review funding allocations for the remaining 6 months of the funding year in the interest of fairness and transparency.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 Twelve voluntary sector organisations are funded through a 3 year SLA arrangement from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021 to deliver high priority services in partnership with the council. The funding agreement sets out the council's service requirements to be delivered with the funding and the monitoring information that organisations must provide. It is important to note that the council does not fully fund these organisations and therefore cannot regulate how they should be run. The arrangement is not solely financial, it enables a partnership approach with officers providing regular information and support to these organisations.
- 4.2 The pandemic has hit these organisations hard as most support our older population over the age of 70, vulnerable people and rely on often older volunteers to enable them to operate. This has meant most, if not all, have clients who have been shielding. The pandemic has continued to impact on the organisations' abilities to draw in an income from client contributions/charges and to hold fundraising events both of which are a vital source of income in addition to their SLA funding and other grant funding. With social distancing measures and the vulnerability of clients that use these services, the future beyond lockdown remains uncertain. Whilst some clients are expressing a desire to access these services again, some continue to shield or feel nervous about going out. In addition, some volunteers that many of these organisations rely on to deliver their services, will continue to shield. The new normal will have a significant impact on these organisations for the foreseeable future.
- 4.3 This report summarises the impact the pandemic has had on each of the funded organisations and offers funding options for the remaining six month's of this year, 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

#### **The Impact of COVID-19 on SLA funded Organisations**

- 4.4 Officers have remained in regular contact with all 12 funded organisations, some more than others depending on the services they have been providing and how much support they may have needed.
- 4.5 Some organisations have continued to operate throughout the pandemic in some way, some have adapted to deliver different services and some have either chosen to or had to close under legislation. The council has continued to fund all organisations for the first half of the final year of their SLA arrangement, 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020.
- 4.6 Whatever the circumstances for each organisation, it continues to be an extremely difficult time for them all. The majority of these organisations deliver practical services to clients and it has been difficult to carry on doing this for some. Many are small charities with dedicated staff and volunteers who all care passionately for their clients. Many have found this an upsetting time and are worried about their clients, particularly those who are older and are feeling extremely socially isolated. Trustees are worried about the future of their organisations, particularly given that they rely on fundraising events which cannot take place and income from clients.

4.7 Annexe 1 sets out funding proposals for 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021 and the key reasons for these proposals.

## **5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan**

Funded organisations were identified as providing high priority services in line with the council's corporate priorities and the service delivery requirements within the SLAs reflect these. Outcome 3 of the Housing Delivery and Communities Service Plan 2020-23 is 'the organisations funded through Service Level Agreements are delivering the agreed outcomes' and the impact of the pandemic has, and continues to affect those outcomes for some organisations.

## **6. Implications of decision**

### **6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)**

The financial implications are contained within the report and proposals are within current approved budgets. Adjustments to proposed grants are with the aim of achieving value for money for the council tax payer, and ensuring financial support of organisations actively supporting the community during the Covid-19 period.

### **6.2 Risk management**

The position our partner organisations find themselves in could never have been predicted. However, the need for the council to review its funding arrangements cannot be avoided given that some organisations are continuing to deliver services and incur costs, whilst some remain closed or have significantly reduced their services. Indeed, some partners have expressed frustration that they are working hard to deliver reshaped services and adapt to the changing climate to meet the new normal and are often "giving things a go" when certain organisations are continuing to receive their full grant when not operating at all or not working to adapt to the changing climate. The risks associated with any changes to the amounts that the council funds towards each organisation need to be thoroughly considered.

### **6.3 Legal**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report. The Service Legal Agreements are reviewed during each 3-year cycle by the Legal Services team in order to ensure their fitness-for-purpose and robustness.

### **6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion**

There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications in this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out when necessary across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

### **6.5 Climate emergency declaration**

Consideration of the Council's environmental and sustainability objectives will need to be made when making decisions on levels of funding.

## **7. Consultation and engagement**

- 7.1 Following discussions with the organisations, the Head of Housing and Communities wrote to all 12 at the end of April advising them that the council needed to consider its position regarding grant payments from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021. This was necessary in light of the council's response to the pandemic and the resulting financial impact and that even during these difficult times, the Council has a duty to ensure that the services it funds are being delivered. Organisations have been sympathetic to this and understood that the funding for each organisation would need to be reviewed on an individual basis in light of closure periods and which services some organisations are continuing to deliver, complementing other Council priorities.
- 7.2 As part of the 2019/20 SLA annual review meetings held between May and June, officers discussed what services organisations were delivering during lockdown, the impact of the pandemic and what the future may hold for them. This information has helped inform the proposed revised funding arrangements for the final half of this year.
- 7.3 Officers have continued to work closely with statutory partners from Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership Guildford and Waverley Locality, North East Hants and Farnham Clinical Commissioning Group and Surrey County Council throughout the pandemic. These organisations have established their own COVID recovery programmes but are working together as part of this. Data on the impact of COVID is identifying that older people have been significantly affected, particularly over 75s, older carers, older people with respiratory and cardiovascular disease and those people living on their own. This information has also helped inform the proposals for SLA funding for the remainder of this year.

## **8. Other options considered**

To continue funding organisations for the remaining six months of their 3 year SLA arrangement without a review does not address the impact COVID-19 has had on individual organisations. The SLAs are a formal arrangement whereby organisations are required to deliver certain services with public money. These services have changed dramatically in some cases since mid-March and will continue to do so for the remainder of the funding term.

## **9. Governance journey**

Executive Briefing – Tuesday 18 August 2020

Community Wellbeing O&S – Meeting to be arranged with Chair and Vice- Chair as this report is not on the Forward Programme

Executive – Tuesday 8 September 2020

## **Annexes:**

Exempt Annexe 1 – Service Level Agreement Proposals for Second Tranche of Funding, 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021

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## **Background Papers**

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

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