

Report of the Director of Finance to the meeting of the Executive to be held on 2nd March 2021.

DR

Subject:

Proposed Investments utilising Covid Grant

Summary statement:

This report provides Members with a number of new recommended investments to help respond and recover from the Covid Pandemic. Funding for the new investments will derive from Government provided Covid related grants.

This report has not been included on the published Forward Plan as an issue for consideration owing to the need first to ensure approval of the Council's Budget as the overriding priority. Now that has been achieved attention can be given to consideration of how Covid 19 funding from Government can be allocated to meet needs in the District. Decisions need to be taken at this meeting to ensure that preparations for the spending can be made as soon as possible. As it is impractical to defer the decision until it has been included in the published Forward Plan the report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 11 of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The impact of Covid has had varying degrees of impact across the District. Equality implications have been considered as part of developing proposals which are designed to continue to support the District through Covid and into recovery.

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Portfolio:

Leader of the Council and Corporate

**Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Corporate**

Covid Investments

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Qtr 3 Finance Position Statement reported to the Executive on the 2nd of February 2021 detailed all of the Covid related expenditure and income losses being incurred by the Council in support of our communities, business and families. The report also detailed the additional Government monies that have been provided to support that much needed effort.
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Settlement, announced in December 2020 and confirmed in February 2021, and other financial funding announcements by MHCLG over the period provided additional Covid related funding for Local Government. These announcements also provided some certainty of continued funding into the early part of 2021/22. The relative priorities in supporting individuals and the District have been assessed to determine how best to utilise this grant funding.
- 1.3 As part of the Qtr 3 report, £9.5m of additional investment was approved into previously agreed priorities. This largely comprised of £2.4m for Raising Educational Attainment, £1m for Skills House, and £5.4m for Adult Social Care, which is struggling in part due to the tragically high number of deaths. These are in line with Government's expectations of how the money should be used.
- 1.4 As outlined in the Qtr 3 report, this currently leaves approximately £6m remaining of one-off Covid grant funding unallocated base on existing forecasts. The Executive proposes the further use of c£4m of this funding as below outlined below, with the remainder to be held for future Covid pressures given the continually changing situation.
- 1.5 A full update on the financial impact of Covid, and the overall financial position of the Council will be provided in the Qtr 4 Financial Position Statement reported to the Executive on the 6th April 2021.
- 1.6 It is proposed that this decision is exempt from 'call-in' on the grounds of urgency as any delay caused by the call-in process would prejudice the Council's ability to allocate funding to meet pressing needs. Any delay risks causing prejudice to those services, bodies and persons proposed to be recipients of this funding.

2.0. Priority investment in response to Covid 19.

Area	Total
Good Start, Great Schools	
No Child Cold in lockdown Supporting families with heating bills. The programme will be funded through a combination of COVID grant and charitable giving through individual and businesses. Fundraising will be promoted via the system partners and coordinated through Give Bradford, both for	£100,000

businesses and through an individual giving page.	
<p>School Food Parcels</p> <p>Enhancing the food parcels going out to children on Free School Meals during COVID. £15 per child.</p> <p>The weekly cost is forecast at £18,750 and may reduce with takeup of vouchers.</p> <p>The proposal would fund food parcels up to end March 2021.</p> <p><i>NB: Food for children and families in need at weekends and in the holidays is covered elsewhere from one-off monies provided by Government specifically for this purpose as follows:</i></p> <p><i>The government have finally announced the Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAF) to cover the holiday periods in 2021, which will follow the conclusion of the Winter Food Programme at the end of March 2021. Bradford's indicative funding allocation is £2,866,780.</i></p> <p><i>There will be a Steering Committee responsible for the direction of delivery for the HAF programme, to initiate planning for Summer and Christmas 2021. We will report back on this at a later date.</i></p> <p><i>Due to the shortness of time, the current 66 Voluntary Sector Organisations that have provided food support during Christmas and also for Feb Half Term will be commissioned to provide support over Easter. There will also be a central hub that will provide additional support to families needing food, or VCS organisations identifying families that need support. This will be promoted through schools and the VCS. Referrals will be made to the 01274 431000 telephone number and will allow effective food planning for delivery on the same day the request is received.</i></p> <p><i>HAF Allocation of £150,000 will be made to food banks to cover Sept, Oct, Nov and Dec 2021.</i></p>	£187,500
Better Health, Better Lives	
<p>Front line Social Care</p> <p>Caseloads have increased, leading to a net increase of 1000 open cases since June 2020; and an average 900 contacts a week, leading to Social Workers carrying an above expected average caseload. Funding will provide capacity and enhance resilience improving service delivery in this essential service and enabling focus on early help /prevention to continue; by appointing to 24 additional temporary posts and 4 practice supervisors predominantly at the front door.</p>	£1,329,628
<p>Fostering and adoption</p> <p>The need to respond to Covid demands has diverted focus on supporting private fostering. The proposal would invest in a lead practitioner within the service to lead on the development of PF annual report and ensure the associated actions are implemented, thereby meeting statutory requirements and ensuring CYP were</p>	£107,014

<p>receiving the appropriate support.</p> <p>As is the national picture, there is an emerging backlog of cases in care proceedings due to lack of court time and also inability to conclude assessments or start introductions. The investment will dedicated resource to tackle backlog and provide dedicated focus to ensure that children are moved to their forever family home upon the conclusion of care proceedings.</p>	
<p>Children in Care participation and engagement</p> <p>Covid has meant participation and engagement with Children in Care has been unable to happen in the usual ways. We are keeping with our statutory obligations but there is a need to get plans in place for implementing the new Children in Care and Care Leavers strategy. This will mean additional resource and new ways of engagement to accelerate progress. The investment will enable a stronger sense of participation and engagement with the new strategy, building on what was started when the pandemic took over.</p>	<p>£53,507</p>
<p>Children's Homes</p> <p>There are an increasing number of staff with positive tests or needing to self-isolate. This proposal would earmark funding should the position become unsustainable enabling additional staff resourcing to be allocated.</p> <p>Due to the lockdown, children are becoming increasingly bored and this is a particular challenge within a group living environment for children and young people who have experienced trauma. Some of this funding will provide much needed resource to enrich the home life of the children and young people thus minimising incidents and preventing placement breakdown.</p>	<p>£64,000</p>
<p>Support & Response to Schools</p> <p>There is a significant increase in requests from schools for support and advice on logistics and education response to Covid related activity. Investment will allow more efficient and effective response to schools to support pupils. Enables schools to respond appropriately to guidance and infection control measures.</p>	<p>£50,000</p>
<p>Worth Connecting, Supporting Mental Health & Well-Being</p> <p>Continuing work originally led by Positive Minds which secured £500k investment into Bradford to deliver the project and support people in the district, this investment is now near the end but needs have never been greater, due to Covid-19. The proposal offers an intervention which supports older people to digitally connect, they work in partnership with other providers like Age UK and BTM. Worth Connecting is currently hosted by Carers Resource; they have a positive flexible approach to adapting the offer.</p> <p>Worth Connecting is helping to reduce isolation for older people who are either shielding or being cautious about leaving home. Not only has their face to face support network disappeared but also they are</p>	<p>£150,000</p>

<p>living with undiluted fear. Support is being delivered by telephone or video call. Worth Connecting is both delivering support directly or facilitating support from other organisations.</p> <p>£150, 000 could allow a flexed continuation of the offer until March 2022, recognising that this situation is highly likely to produce additional challenges and situations throughout 2021.</p>	
<p>Improving Access to Health & Care (through VCS)</p> <p>It is clear that vast amounts of Covid messaging, direct community engagement, challenging of misinformation and rumours and accessible means of communicating have already been done in the Bradford District. The proposal would build upon this and, as a partnership, support the further development of dissemination of accessible information in as wide a range of mediums as possible and give access to digital technology that can be utilised for the wider wellbeing of individuals and communities.</p> <p>The proposal will provide £60,000 for each Area Committee to invest in supporting Covid response activity, including potential engagement with community bodies/VCS. Alongside this £50,000 will be allocated to Stronger Communities for additional activity within the district.</p>	<p>£350,000</p>
<p>Suicide Prevention Support</p> <p>Suicide rates are increasing. A sub-group of the Bradford Suicide Prevention group have been meeting to formulate actions to support people to get help when they have had suicidal feelings. It was recognised in a past audit that often despite referrals to services, sometimes people who die by suicide do not attend the service even if they have been referred several times. The suicide prevention group includes all key partners and lived experience insight.</p> <p>Suicide is a complex issue influenced by many factors, life events are often the trigger that influences suicidal feelings, including relationship breakdown & debt, that sometimes people following crisis contact may feel that a mental health service cannot help them. The check in offer would reach out to people who have supplied their contact details and consent to receive a 'check IN' call. The offer would be made independently whether the person has agreed to see someone at setting or not.</p>	<p>£75,000</p>
<p>Increase Infection Control Capacity</p> <p>Creation of a temporary fixed term infection prevention practitioner post to work in a joint role across existing Infection Prevention Teams. The role would work across across Public Health and the acute sector, providing support to the existing infection prevention teams in their work on managing the response to COVID. This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing support and advice to the social care sector in the managing COVID outbreaks in care homes and other social care settings, • support for the acute sector response to COVID outbreaks in hospitals, • training of staff on safe use of PPE and other measures to 	<p>£43,000</p>

<p>prevent the spread of the virus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the COVID vaccination programme • developing and supporting the implementation of new guidance 	
<p>Environmental Health Officer</p> <p>There is a need for specialist support to manage unauthorised traveller encampments and the two fixed traveller sites (approx. 35 family units) and increase activity to support infection control. An officer with specialist knowledge of travellers/tenancy enforcement issues would ensure that critical policies and procedures are developed and implemented. This would enable day to day engagement with the site residents to provide clear guidance, encourage social distancing, limiting contact between families and encouraging the uptake of vaccines than the current arrangements that we have.</p>	£57,000
<p>Mental Health Covid Recovery</p> <p>Covid-19 has brought significant challenges to the mental health system with an expectation that, without a transformation of our current health and social care service offer, demand for services in the medium to long-term will not be able to be met. This sum will invest in subject matter experts and a small project team for 2 years and be matched by the NHS to realign the work of operational teams and commissioned services.</p>	£415,000
<p>Support local charities</p> <p>A small fund for local charities who support older or disabled people, who are strategically important to HWB, and who are struggling to manage financially beyond the end of Covid-19 because of fixed costs. Commissioners in HWB will operate an 'open book' policy and grant fund monies where appropriate. The fund will be monitored monthly and be reduced if no bids are forthcoming.</p>	£50,000
<p>Safe, Strong and Active Communities</p>	
<p>Youth Covid Ambassadors</p> <p>The YCA have evidenced strong outcomes not only in supporting outbreak control but also in wider outcomes such as reducing isolation; improving long term health; enhancing community engagement. Existing YCA are funded to Nov 21; the proposal would be to extend hours of existing ambassadors and recruit a further 30 to extend the provision and provide stronger links and engagement across the District.</p>	£300,000
<p>Right of Way – Paths</p> <p>During the national lockdowns due to Covid since March 2020, the Council's countryside sites, rights of way network, woodlands, parks and other open spaces have seen a significant increase in use, as the public are encouraged to exercise locally. It is evident that having such places close to where people live is key to physical and mental well-being and also contributes to the quality of life and local environment. This high level of use reflects that fact but, combined with recent particularly wet weather, has resulted in clear signs of damage and wear and tear to path networks, parking areas and so on. Rectifying these issues clearly impacts upon existing</p>	£250,000

<p>maintenance and investment budgets, and so additional funds are requested to address the worst of the damage across the Council's "green" assets and make them more resilient going forward where sustained high levels of use are expected.</p>	
An Enabling Council	
<p>Finance Service</p> <p>The additional audit/assurance, reporting, accounting and completion of returns regarding Covid, combined with tracking the impacts on current year budget and MTFs is placing strain on effective budget monitoring and resource planning.</p> <p>The funding would enable the engagement of temporary resource enabling the authority to maintain fulfil additional reporting requirements.</p>	£75,000
<p>Legal Services</p> <p>Covid is increasing the demand upon legal services both in reviewing and advising on legislation and in supporting services with the impact of demand pressures arising from Covid; for example adult social care increased requests for legal advice as a result of Covid, particularly with the constant changes in rules and guidance relating to care homes/services/visiting etc., additional property legal work in respect of licences for testing and vaccination centres, collaboration agreement with DHSC, legal advice on grant regimes/ subsidy control implications, and advice on Covid and Public Health (Control of Disease) Regulations and guidance (regular changes requiring briefing notes to senior leadership team) and increasing enforcement activity in respect of breaches of the legislation (prosecutions/notices/ warnings/advice).</p>	£50,000
<p>Committee Secretariat</p> <p>Additional support is needed to manage the additional workload caused through remote working and remote Committee meetings. By its nature this increases the workload of the officers and an additional officer would assist with managing the workload and also assist the wellbeing of the team.</p> <p>Additional support is required to support the school appeal process. The process this year has been further hampered by the Covid pandemic, leading to the relevant Regulations being amended because face to face appeals cannot presently take place. This has made the process much longer and more difficult to manage with appeals being undertaken remotely and a large number of appeals being done on paper only.</p>	£90,000
<p>HR Services</p> <p>Health & Wellbeing Services: Requirements for health and wellbeing of the workforce – WFH, in front line services, on site, with/out access to IT – loneliness, mental health, physical health, social/financial wellbeing, domestic abuse/grief and bereavement.</p> <p>Redeployment Support: Increased capacity required to ensure the</p>	£37,850

effective utilisation of staff from services that have been 'stood down' into frontline Covid support roles, or other roles within BMDC	£120,000
<p>Registrars</p> <p>There is a backlog of birth registrations of approximately 1200. This backlog has not changed/reduced since September when the number of deaths starting rising and the team had to concentrate on registering deaths. The team are registering some births so the backlog is not increasing but are unable to reduce the backlog with the current staffing.</p> <p>Future demand may increase further as weddings/civil partnerships ceremonies recommence, this will be assessed at that point in time.</p>	£45,000
Total	£4,000,519

3.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Financial risks of future known and uncertain liabilities are being addressed through contingencies and provisions and are outlined in the Quarterly Finance Position Statements reported to the Executive.

4.0 LEGAL APPRAISAL

This report is submitted to the Executive in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure rules. There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

None

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

8.1 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None

9.1 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

10.1 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None

11.0 TRADE UNION

None

12.0 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None

13.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

None

14.0 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None

15.0 NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

16.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive

- 16.1 Note the contents of this report
- 16.2 Approve the £4.0m of continued investment in priority areas as outlined in section 2 to be funded from available Covid related grant monies.
- 16.3 Resolve that this decision is exempt from 'call-in' on the grounds of urgency, for the reasons set out in paragraph 1.5 of this report.

17.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Qtr 3 Finance Position Statement 2020-21 – Executive 2nd February 2021