

Mayoral Cost of Living Emergency Fund

Date: 24/07/2023

Report of: Chief Officer Community Hubs Welfare and Business Support

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report seeks permission to accept funding from the West Yorkshire Mayor's Cost of Living Emergency Fund of £647,900 and to determine how this will be allocated between July 2023 and May 2024.

The report outlines that the funding which must be wholly passed on to the Voluntary and Community Social Enterprise sector within Leeds, will be used in accordance with the Fund criteria in the following ways;

- Additional funding for the Leeds Advice Contract. £550,000 will be allocated to address the inflationary pressures that the agencies are facing and secondly to offer an enhanced provision across the agencies targeting areas of concern due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Continuation of the Warm/ Welcoming Spaces network over the winter months. A total of £97,900 will be managed by Voluntary Action Leeds to support charities and third sector organisations maintain warm/ welcome spaces for those most in need.

Recommendations

The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is recommended to;

- a) Accept the allocation of £647,900 from West Yorkshire Combined Authorities (WYCA), Mayor's Cost of Living Emergency Fund- Tranche 2 to be used between July 2023 and May 2024.
- b) Accept any further extension of funding from WYCA for the Mayor's Cost of Living Emergency Fund.
- c) Accept the proposals outlined in this report in line with the Fund conditions to provide additional funding to the Leeds Advice Contract and to Voluntary Action Leeds to support the Warm/ Welcoming Spaces network.
- d) Agree that the Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support will be responsible for the implementation.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report is to gain approval to accept £647,900 from WYCA's Mayor's Cost of Living Emergency Fund Tranche 2 and any further funding from WYCA for this purpose.
- 2 The Fund is part of a regional package of targeted measures agreed by West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority in response to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3 Tranche 2 of the funding is to provide emergency local services and support during the cost-of-living crisis. All funding must be used to fund the local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.
- 4 The Fund is to be allocated for the period July 2023 to May 2024, and must be targeted to support workless households and those experiencing in-work poverty. Monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by WYCA.
- 5 The report also seeks to gain approval for the funding to be allocated as follows;
 - a) Additional Funding to the Leeds Advice Contract managed by Citizens Advice Leeds. A total of £550,000 of the funding will be used to address the inflationary pressures that the agencies are facing and secondly to offer an enhanced provision across the agencies targeting areas of concern due to the cost-of-living crisis.

The Leeds Advice Contract is a consortium arrangement made up of Leeds Citizens Advice Bureau, Better Leeds Communities, and Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau. Current provision encompasses the following areas:

- Drop in services
- Email and web chat
- Telephone advice
- Mental health outreach
- Primary care outreach
- Childrens Centre outreach
- General outreach currently from 17 locations
- Welfare & Benefits casework
- Immigration casework
- Housing Casework

The increasing and worsening levels of poverty in the city have been exacerbated by austerity, the Covid pandemic and most recently the cost-of-living crisis. Over the past year there has been an increasing demand for advice services, whilst advice agencies have been impacted by severe inflationary pressures.

In addition to maintaining the existing provision the funding will be used to enhance advice provision within the city which will help to support more people through both generalist and specialist services. This will offer residents an enhanced level of service during the cost-of-living crisis, through increasing both access to advice and the specialist advice areas of Housing, Benefits and Debt, and Immigration advice.

- b) Continuation of funding of the Warm/ Welcoming Spaces network which was successfully rolled out in the city through winter 2022/23. A total of £97,900 will be managed by Voluntary Action Leeds to support charities and third sector organisations maintain warm/ welcome spaces for those most in need over the winter months.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 6 There is a national Cost of Living crisis which is having a prolonged and major impact on many Leeds residents. Many who were already struggling financially, are in an even worse position. And many who have never struggled financially before now, are beginning to.
- 7 Providing additional funding for advice services is vital. This will not only protect existing advice provision in Leeds but will also plug gaps in provision where demand is now extremely high. The additional funding will enable providers to deal with more calls and contacts and significantly improve access to advice for local residents. The additional specialist advice will enable an enhanced service both in volume and helping more clients to achieve a full resolution to their problems.
- 8 The funding for the Warm/ Welcoming spaces network will enable organisations across all wards in the city to be able to offer a welcoming, warm, safe and supportive space to residents over the winter months. These spaces particularly support vulnerable people and households impacted most severely by the cost-of-living crisis, including older people, people who are isolated and disabled people.
- 9 The proposed funding use will have a city-wide impact supporting communities across Leeds.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 10 Tackling poverty and inequality is central to the city's Best City Ambition. The WYCA Mayor's Cost of Living Emergency Fund is focussed on supporting households on the lowest incomes and those which are most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 11 All relevant Executive Members have been briefed on the guidance and remit of the funding and proposed spending allocations.

What are the resource implications?

- 12 None, the grant funding must be wholly passed on to the VCSE sector.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 13 Leeds City Council will ensure that the provision of support undertaken meets the objectives and criteria set out by WYCA. This includes working closely with WYCA, Advice Contract partners and Voluntary Action Leeds to ensure services are delivered efficiently and to a high quality.

What are the legal implications?

- 14 A variation to the Leeds Advice contract will be required. A further report will be brought forward detailing this change.
- 15 A grant agreement will be required with between the Council and Voluntary Action Leeds.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

16 None

How will success be measured?

17 The Leeds Advice Contract has existing quarterly monitoring meetings during which performance against set targets and KPI's are detailed. These will be adapted to capture any new areas of work.

18 WYCA will also undertake their own external evaluation.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

19 Implementation will be immediate. The Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support will be responsible for the implementation.

Appendices

- None

Background papers

- None