

Report to Cabinet

7 July 2021

Subject:	Black Country Community Renewal Fund 50 Plus Partnership
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Strong and Inclusive Economy, Councillor Iqbal Padda
Director:	Executive Director of Children’s Services, Lesley Hagger
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Kelly Thomas, Employment and Skills Services Manager E: kelly_thomas@sandwell.gov.uk M: 07977270823

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 Approval be given to allow Sandwell MBC to act as accountable body for the Black Country 50 Plus partnership:
- 1.2 That, in the event that the application is successful as set out in 1.1 above, the Executive Director of Children’s Service be authorised to enter into a contract with West Midlands Combined Authority for Community Renewal funding.
- 1.3 Authorise the Director of Law and Governance, Monitoring Officer to execute any documentation necessary to enable the above in 1.2.
- 1.4 In connection with 1.1 and 1.2 above, that the following action points identified within the financial appraisal of the funding application by Strategic Finance, be implemented to reduce any risk to the council:



- That funding agreements are issued and signed by delivery partners prior to the acceptance of funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Community Renewal Fund.
- That MHCLG's terms and conditions of funding are 'passported' to delivery partners in agreements with Sandwell MBC and include the following:
 - Procurement complies with Sandwell MBC's own procurement requirements
 - Agreed outputs for each delivery partner
 - Funding allocation for each delivery partner
 - Evidence required for grant claims
 - Grant claims to be paid to delivery partners following submission of claim and approval by MHCLG
 - Repayment of grant on non-delivery of outputs
 - Monitoring requirements
 - Responsibility for funding overspends on delivery of the project
 - All grant recipients to verify that they are eligible to receive grant funding under the Trade & Co-operation Agreement between the EU and UK.
- Review all estimated costs with delivery partners to ensure that the outputs of the project can be delivered within available funding.
- That consideration is given on how the project could be continued after the initial funding period.
- That VAT/tax advice is sought from the Council's Tax Accountant.
- That a full governance structure with roles and responsibilities for each delivery partner is produced to ensure the effective management, monitoring and submission of grant claims.
- That systems and processes be established for the management and monitoring of the project.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Sandwell MBC have applied to lead a Community Renewal fund (CRF) application for a Black Country 50 plus partnership with Public, Private and Voluntary sector partners. The model would be embedded in the local community and respond to local needs. Support is targeted at economically inactive, unemployed and employed 50 plus residents, aiming to move individuals closer to the labour market, to upskill and to retrain.
- 2.2 Strategic Finance have carried out an appraisal of the funding application, which has been evaluated against HM Treasury Green Book guidance. The appraisal process recorded a score of 70%, with some areas of risk identified. The full appraisal will be made available as Appendix 1. The appraisal has recommended action points to mitigate any risk to the council, these action points are detailed in Section 1.4.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>People live well and age well Employment has significant benefits for mental health and wellbeing and for residents to live longer healthier lives.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities The programme aims to improve resilience by increasing confidence, motivation and reducing social isolation.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy The programme will move individuals closer to the labour market and provide opportunities to upskill, retrain and become more employable.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.2 Funding would provide Navigators located in community settings to support individuals to engage with mainstream education, training and job searching activities. The funding would also provide innovation funding to trial new approaches to engagement, allowing for small pots of funding.



- 4.2 The community renewal fund (CRF) is £220 million of additional short-term funding with a focus on 100 priority areas. Sandwell and the Black Country boroughs are all on the priority list. CRF will lead into the wider Shared Prosperity fund due to replace funding for activities such as those currently funded by the European Social Fund.
- 4.3 The CRF funding should be used to test innovative models and should not duplicate existing/funded provision. Projects would be delivered over a duration of 6 months and all funds must be spent by March 2022.
- 4.4 There are four themed priorities for CRF including:
- Investment in Skills
 - Investment for local business
 - Investment in communities and place
 - Supporting people into employment
- 4.5 Unemployment rates in workers aged 50 and over has increased by a third since the start of the pandemic and evidence suggests that 50 plus workers who are made redundant are significantly more likely to experience long-term unemployment than other age groups. Furthermore, it is widely expected that when the furlough scheme ends on 30 September 2021, redundancies will increase. As nearly 30% of furloughed workers are in the 50 plus age group they are expected to be significantly affected.
- 4.6 Sustainability**
- 4.7 The funding is short term for a 6 months duration, provision is intended to be used as a pilot/test approach in order to provide evidence for future funding including the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 4.8 Timescales**
- 4.9 Applications were submitted in May 2021 and are due to be shortlisted by the West Midlands Combined Authority in June 2021 before being submitted to government. The outcome for applications is expected in July 2021.
- 1.10 The project is profiled to start in September 2021 and end in February 2022. All funds need to be spent by 31 March 2022.



1.11 Data protection

4.12 Data is held in accordance with the SMBC privacy policy. A Data Protection Impact Assessment has been produced and has been submitted to the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Alternative options were explored including an application for an all age employment service. This was not progressed since an all age service would duplicate existing funding streams in place.
- 5.2 The option for SMBC to not act as accountable body was explored however the other Local authorities preferred SMBC as lead due to the 50 Plus JCP planned programme in Sandwell. The other local authorities have also led applications which Sandwell MBC are included in.

6 Implications

Resources:	<p>The overall value of the application is £850,721.30</p> <p>The programme will predominantly be staffed by voluntary sector organisations utilising secondments and re-allocation of existing staff.</p> <p>Some staffing positions may be filled by temporary agencies due to the short-term nature of the funding. The funding will allow for room hire and the establishment of hub locations for front line delivery in community locations.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>If successful, the funding agreement with West Midlands Combined Authority will be shared with legal.</p> <p>A project steering group will be established with lead organisations from across the Black Country. Appropriate governance arrangements will be in place with the WMCA for management of the contract.</p>
Risk:	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with - to identify and assess any significant risks associated with this decision/project.</p>



	<p>This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks.</p> <p>There were no significant risks identified as part of the risk register. However, a series of medium risks have been identified including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of beneficiary engagement – mitigated by the development of an engagement strategy and marketing/publicity • Delivery partners not meeting performance targets – mitigated by performance management systems and robust contracts with partners • Programme not compliant to terms and conditions of funding – mitigated by programme monitoring, audit and robust contracts. • Ineligible programme expenditure – Audit and compliance systems, claim systems. • Partners not working together – Partnership management, working relationships already in place. • Further lockdown or return to government restrictions – mitigated by a return to virtual/ remote delivery via telephone or online
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>An equality impact assessment (EIA) screening has been carried out and a full EIA is not required for this proposal.</p> <p>The project has a specific age requirement for Black Country residents aged over 50. However, it has been assessed this is a positive impact due to the lack of provision for this age group and a large amount of provision available to individuals under 50.</p>
<p>Health and Wellbeing:</p>	<p>Older people are more vulnerable to experiencing poor mental health and some of the key factors that affect our mental health; relationships, participation in meaningful activity and poverty have all been impacted upon by the pandemic. Participants engaged in this project are likely to face additional barriers relating to mental health, social isolation and low confidence. The proposal offers personalised</p>



	wraparound support to provide participants with knowledge of the labour market and the new opportunities available in their area to increase motivation, confidence and generate health outcomes.
Social Value	The proposal is supporting individuals to move closer to the labour market and to upskill/retrain. Individuals benefitting from the programme will have access to employment opportunities including access routes to those brought about via social value.

7. Appendices

1. Financial Appraisal report

8. Background Papers

