

The Balsam Centre – Allocation of Healthy Living Centre Funding for 2017/18 (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

To update members on the position at the Balsam Centre and to consider the allocation of funding ring-fenced for Healthy Living Centres.

Public Interest

Supporting and helping the Balsam Centre to improve the work of voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across Area East.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members:

- 1) Note the report
- 2) Award the £10,000 ring fenced for Healthy Living Centres to the Balsam Centre for the delivery of the work programme

Background

The Balsam Centre was established in 1998, with the purchase of the former memorial hospital in the centre of Wincanton. The project was established to specifically meet the needs of Wincanton and the surrounding area (this includes some 40 settlements with a population of 30,000) due to an identified gap in services in the area, particularly in mental health services. Extensive refurbishment of the building and the setting up of services was enabled through a Lottery grant and support from a range of funders, including SSDC.

The Balsam Centre delivers a range of integrated health and wellbeing projects and initiatives, most of which directly link with physical activity, healthy eating and mental health support alongside participation in community based activities, supported social engagement and learning.

SSDC has supported the Balsam Centre through both core funding and project grants, since it began. In the past, core funding has been allocated through the Healthy Living Pooled Fund; a budget set up jointly by SSDC, NHS Somerset and SCC and reported annually to the South Somerset Health and Wellbeing Partnership (SSH&WP).

Members will recall that this budget was originally established to support Healthy Living Centres across the whole of the District but, as the only eligible organisation is based in Area East, the budget was transferred and subject to local monitoring by AEC.

The Balsam Centre – Hub for Service Delivery

The Balsam Centre's strong partnership approach has been built up over many years with Health & Social Care, Schools, Children's Centres and local charities, local authorities, housing associations as

well as their own projects, such as the Growing Space (on site social and therapeutic horticulture) and the 'Men's Shed' initiative.

The presence of other key services helps to provide integrated, seamless services that make people using the Centre feel safe, welcome and supported. The CAB runs a weekly outreach session on a drop-in basis, to offer help with a range of issues including welfare benefits and debt management advice. The Centre has exceptionally strong links with the local health visitors' team and works closely with Children's Social Care, local schools, pre-schools and other partners supporting families. The Centre is also the operational base for South Somerset Community Accessible Transport, which helps to ensure that transport solutions are built in to all service delivery.

The Balsam Centre continues to focus on reducing health and social inequalities, in particular working with individuals and families who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and have little other support. The project is particularly successful at working closely with people to improve their own and their families' life chances. This work has been particularly effective in developing a strong relationship between the new Health Coaches, based at Wincanton Health Centre and staff at the Balsam Centre.

Like Minds

There has always been a strong focus on mental health and this has been reinforced through securing the 'Like Minds' project, a successful Big Lottery application (Reaching Communities). The SSDC contribution is used as match funding to help secure the Lottery funding for Like Minds.

The Like Minds project started on 1st October 2015. Like Minds works with people experiencing mild to moderate mental health conditions, whether diagnosed or not. To date the project has worked with around 320 people.

The project provides one-to-one counselling as well as facilitated and peer support groups. It is available to anyone living within the area of benefit, for whom there is currently limited, or no other support. Within this broad spectrum of potential beneficiaries there are 2 target groups: young people, especially those who are self-harming and older people, who are isolated or lonely.

To date 3607 contact sessions have been provided, of these around 940 have been one-to-one counselling.

A second counsellor (one counsellor already being in place from the previous Wellbeing programme) was appointed in November 2015 on a 2-day a week contract. The two project workers recruited in April 2016, together now with a third part time counsellor, are working with young people and older people to meet specific identified needs.

The current situation is that all three counsellors have full take up and between them are providing up to 45 counselling sessions a week. The project workers are running 9 groups between them, including a Youth Drop-In and a Dementia support group.

The project has continued to develop relevant partnerships, with Yarlinton committing 25% of the required match funding for Year 2. There are improved relationships with the secondary schools, the NHS locally, including the Health Centre and Health Coaches, Verrington Hospital and the Alzheimer's Society.

Deanesly Way

The Balsam Centre has been awarded £20,000 from the Armed Forces Community Covenant to employ a part-time Community Development worker to support the integration of military families living on the Kingwell Rise estate with the wider community. One successful outcome already is the setting up of 2 new 'Women's Shed' groups.

Friends of The Balsam Centre – Local Giving

Concerns about reliance on short-term funding for the work at the Centre led to the development of a 'Friends of' group, which has evolved to attract significant funds from local benefactors. The income generated by this group is underpinning a lot of the mental health work being done, which helps to reduce the pressure on grant aid, which is becoming harder to secure. Since November 2016 a Patrons group has also been set up and is growing.

The Balsam Centre – Community Building

The Centre continues to generate income from use of the building and marketing the building is an ongoing priority. The weekly 'Loose Ends' café continues to make a big difference and has increased footfall and increases local understanding of the Centre and the services available. Total weekly 'uses' of the Centre exceed 1,000 with a range of community groups meeting and running classes/activities, which include Painting and Drawing, Health Walks, Pilates, Textiles, Job Club, Beginners' IT and Patchwork & Quilting. There is a strong Volunteering project with around 80 active volunteers.

Conkers Nursery

Conkers Nursery was established by The Balsam Centre to continue to deliver some of the high quality services developed by the staff of the Children's Centre. The original business plan showed that the nursery could be self-funding within 3 years however, a number of factors have had a negative impact on the plan, which has led to changes to the delivery model. A restructuring is currently taking place, which will address the deficit and provide a stable basis for the future.

Financial Implications

There is £10,000 transferred to Area East from what was the Healthy Living Pooled fund for allocation in 2017/18. If Members agree the above recommendation this will all be allocated for this year. If the recommendation is not agreed, the money is likely to be returned to corporate balances.

Council Plan Implications

Focus Four: Health & Communities: encouraging communities to be healthy, self-reliant and with individuals who are willing to help each other.

Supporting the development of Balsam Centre services in response to local needs is a key priority in the Area Development Plan 17/18.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

None as a direct result of the report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The loss of services designed to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in target communities is likely to have a significant effect over time.

Background Papers

N/a
