

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member Decision Paper

Date of Meeting: 11 July 2017

Report of: Fiona Reynolds, Director of Public Health

Subject/Title: Social Franchise Model Pilot Offer Award – Connected Community Centres

Portfolio Holder: Paul Bates – Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. As part of our Connected Communities Strategy, Cheshire East Council is leading a programme of work along with our partners, to develop vibrant and sustainable community venues across the borough. By piloting a social franchise model it has allowed us to work in collaboration with key stakeholders in neighbourhoods, delivering services at a range of key buildings in the heart of communities. Working with our local partners who own or manage community assets is key to service delivery and tackling local priorities, providing the right services in the right place, at the right times. They can be the flagship venues for delivery points in our communities for Cheshire East Council, partners and commissioned services. The pilot social franchise model has been a key element of our ambitious programme to empower our communities, providing information and access to help for residents, tackling the causes rather than the symptoms. They are centres that deliver for those in need, with a wide range of outreach early intervention and prevention services, to protect our vulnerable residents.
- 1.2. The Cabinet Member for Communities approved the pilot social franchise model for Community Hubs back on 20th July 2015.
- 1.3. This report provides details for the two and final community venues that have been put forward to progress under the pilot social franchise model.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That under the pilot social franchise offer agreed in July 2015, it is recommended to award a franchise which will be reviewed annually to:
 - Audlem Public Hall Community Group, Audlem
 - Bridgend Centre, Bollington
- 2.2. To award each of the organisations a start up grant., to support and enable them to meet the franchise criteria. Each organisation is awarded up to a maximum of £2k which sum can be used to obtain the items set out in the application form (e.g. Broadband/ Wi-Fi enablement, CVS membership, insurances, IT equipment, phone lines, and other issues identified) .

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1. To withdraw the previous offer to organisations that have already begun to progress with the pilot social franchise criteria, this option could damage relations with the local community. The other option was to work with these asset owners to accept the new social franchise model, this option was considered but not progressed as the venues do not meet the new criteria set, which is to be located within one of the Connected Community identified priority locations.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. The pilot franchise model provides a robust framework to establish a recognised standard of governance and ensures consistent service standards across services and activities provided. This has been quality assured through the completion of a Community and Voluntary Sector quality mark.
- 4.2. The expressions of interests by Audlem Public Hall and Bridgend Centre were submitted prior to development of the new Connected Community Centre social franchise model.
- 4.3. Audlem Public Hall and Bridgend Centre are both committed to becoming active members of the Connected Community Networks. Both venues have adhered to the criteria set out in the pilot social franchise model.

5. Background/Chronology

- 5.1. The Cabinet Member for Communities approved a pilot social franchise model for Community Hubs on the 20th July 2015. A model was adopted and monitored for development and was offered to any community asset owner across the borough.
- 5.2. The pilot social franchise model provides a framework which ensures community venues:
 - Have local and effective governance arrangements in place, with quality assurance provided through a validated self-assessment process.
 - Share existing learning with local organisations.
 - Operate flexibly to meet their local context and circumstances.
 - Develop a strong network of organisations.
 - Work through genuine and mutually beneficial partnerships, under a common identity.
- 5.3. Applicants applying to the franchise status must demonstrate they meet the GRIPPP self-assessment assurance process, which is externally validated to demonstrate that the organisation has good governance in place including:

- Governance – look after the direction, development and legal responsibilities
- Resources – in place to enable them to get work done
- Information – on local area and how to get things done
- Projects – deliver tasks and activities
- People – connect, network and involve local community
- Premises – additional requirement for venues to ensure premises run effectively.

5.4. Applicants for membership must ensure meet the core offer outlined in Appendix 1.

5.5. Audlem is a rural location in Cheshire East with residents often living in isolation. The age profile is older than the Cheshire East average with nearly one in four residents being over the age of sixty five, the sixth highest proportion in Cheshire East. Consultation with this this age group highlighted an inability or struggle to travel for social, leisure and medical activities because of a lack of transport and / or irregular public transport. Audlem Medical Practice who are a key stakeholder in this locality report their patient population has a significantly higher incidence of long term health conditions compared with the England average. The Medical Practice has confirmed people suffering from long term conditions would benefit from additional local health facilities in accessible accommodation, including exercise opportunities and social activity. Audlem Public Hall sits in the heart of Audlem village and is well used by the local residents, and they have agreed to join the Community Network. Becoming a franchisee would further support the Hall to be more sustainable and will enable further development of activities and service provision to address local priorities.

5.6. Bollington is surrounded by rural areas, with 19% of the local residents being aged 65 and above, this coupled with 17% of people suffering with long term illness or disabilities increases the need for an ongoing presence to work with our communities in this area. Elderly and people suffering ill health often results in social isolation which has been identified by key stakeholders in the local area as a key priority to address. The Bridgend Centre is ideally located in Bollington and already provides many services that aim to social isolation and is a well respected local charity and venue in the heart of Bollington. The current usage is high for a range of purposes such as support for elderly and people with various disabilities and but they are keen for further services to be delivered from this venue, which more early intervention and preventative local priorities.

5.7. Both asset owners understand the benefit of partnership working and want to see more local issues being resolved by using their respective community buildings as those flagship venues for service delivery.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1. Audlem and Bollington Wards

7. Risk Management & Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Legal Implications

The Council has the power to award grants to organisations using its general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. In exercising the power the Council must satisfy its public law duties. In essence this means that in making the decision the Council must have taken into account only relevant considerations, followed procedural requirements, acted for proper motives and not acted unreasonably. An application process is a clear statement of the criteria that the Council is applying and is essential if the Council is to defend any challenge to its decision making process.

Cabinet approved a pilot scheme for the award of a social franchise. Franchises and start up grants are being awarded to defined organisations following an application process and against set criteria. By entering into a formal grant agreement with the Council the organisations can be monitored and required to report back to the Council upon their compliance with the franchise requirements and expenditure of the grant. The decision making process was delegated to the Portfolio Holder in order to ensure that decisions can be made expeditiously and at the appropriate level.

Grant funding to organisations based on the application of the Council's published scheme satisfies the Council's public law duties.

7.2. Financial Implications

The £2,000 grants for both franchisees will be funded from the Community hub reserves which were approved as part of the Connected Community Strategy by Cabinet on 8th November 2016. There is sufficient funding in this earmarked reserve for these two applications.

7.3. Equality Implications

Application has been open to all asset owners under the pilot social franchise offer

7.4. Rural Community Implications

Application has been open to all asset owners under the pilot social franchise offer

7.5. Public Health Implications

The awarding of social franchise status to Audlem Public Hall Community group and Bridgend Centre will provide an additional asset for public health commissioned services to be delivered from.

7.6. **Risk Management**

All risks will be mitigated through continuous monitoring and development of the franchise model.

8. **Access to Information**

8.1. Previous Social Franchise model application form that outlines offer and expectations (Appendix 1).

9. **Contact Information**

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

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