

**CABINET**  
**13 JUNE 2017**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**12**

**TITLE OF REPORT: FUTURE SUPPORT AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS RE: CO-ORDINATION OF TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVES AND COMMUNITY EVENTS WITHIN BALDOCK**

REPORT OF THE REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR TONY HUNTER

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the reallocation of support funding previously assigned to the Baldock Town Centre Partnership to the newly formed Baldock Community Forum (BCF).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the funding previously allocated to Baldock Town Partnership be withdrawn as they have failed to provide appropriate accounts and information requested to support on-going provision of public money.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet provides funding to the newly formed Baldock Community Forum CIC on a contractual basis to assist the revival, coordination and delivery of future town centre initiatives within the Baldock and District area.
- 2.3 That Cabinet note that the Chairman of the newly formed BCF is currently a serving Councillor and that his action in making a personal deposit of £2,000 to help with start-up costs results in a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, in relation to which he has sought appropriate advice from the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.4 That Cabinet provide funding on the basis that it must all be used to support the community events and should the Chairman of BCF be seeking reimbursement of the personal deposit, it shall not be made from the Council's grant.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure that community events and initiatives within Baldock and the surrounding area are maintained and enhanced to help secure and sustain town centre vibrancy and community cohesion.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The alternative not to develop a new vehicle to undertake the future management of such initiatives was dismissed on the basis that it was perhaps more imperative for the

town, pending any future development in the area, to develop an inclusive body to help coordinate local community activity and annual events over the foreseeable years.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Elected Members from the Baldock and District Area Committee, who have played a proactive and critical role in emphasising the need for a new consolidated community driven approach regarding the future coordination of activities and events within the town.
- 5.2 Officers assisted Baldock Members in the facilitation of an open public awareness / consultation evening held at the Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre on March 13<sup>th</sup> 2017. The meeting was well attended and resulted in resounding support for Members and Officers to pursue the development of a new inclusive and representative body to oversee and manage future community events and initiatives for the future.

## **6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 When each of the district's town centre partnerships were first set up, it was agreed the Council would provide initial funding with the intention each agency would become financially self sustaining in the longer term.
- 7.2 Owing to the Council's Corporate Plan priority of "Town Centres" at the time, it was further agreed that funding for town centre partnerships should continue and be paid under a three yearly 'Memorandum of Understanding' agreement, similar to other annually funded groups and partner agencies.
- 7.3 In 2010, as part of the corporate business planning annual review of efficiencies / growth, a phased reduction in funding was proposed to Cabinet/Council, which reflected the fact that some of the former town centre partnerships were starting to take on different roles and structures with aims to become self sufficient via the Business Improvement District route.
- 7.4 In discussion with the then Portfolio Holder, Cllr Tricia Cowley, it was agreed that the attached schedule (**Appendix A**) would be adopted to ensure a gradual reduction of funding prior to complete withdrawal thus allowing each partnership / group sufficient time to secure alternative funding or income streams in the longer term. Appendix A shows that the original intention was that support for Baldock Town Centre Partnership would start to reduce from the 2017/18 financial year and cease in 2019/20.
- 7.5 With Member support and ongoing assistance from officers the Baldock Town Partnership Ltd (BTP) was formed in June 2007 and a Town Centre Manager was employed for Baldock.
- 7.6 For a number of years a programme of annual events and activities was developed by the BTP with significant officer support via the Community Development section, resulting in good attendances and a flourishing income return.

- 7.7 During the financial year 2015/16, it became clear that BTP were failing to comply with the terms of the grant award and in spite of numerous requests and assurances, did not provide the required accounts to support on-going payment of a grant. In these circumstances, the s.151 officer withheld the second half of the payment due in 2015/16 and no funding was paid in 2016/2017. The eighteen months worth of unpaid grant award together with the funds originally intended for release in 2017/18 to 2019/20 remains in council budgets and totals £27,310.
- 7.8 During that period, the former operational activities and internal workings within the BTP subsequently retrenched further, ultimately resulting in the discontinuation of a dedicated Town Centre Manager for the town.
- 7.9 Councillors Michael Weeks (the Council's representative on the former BTP) and Jim McNally had initial talks with officers to look at resolving matters constructively and positively move on. However, owing to the sensitive nature of the ongoing issues it was eventually deemed unlikely that any reparation could be achieved.
- 7.10 This led to the Councillors working with officers to look at forming a new company / body to take on the management and organisation of community events in Baldock. It was originally understood that the remaining Director of BTP would continue to operate events in the town until the new organization had formed and would then wind up that company. That has not, however, happened to date.
- 7.11 Towards the end of 2016, as it became clear that a new entity would need to be formed if previous activities were to continue, initial pump priming funding within the Communities Team main budget was utilised to assist the early stages of this process, helping with hall hire and registration costs for the new company.
- 7.12 Efforts were made to recruit a new Town Centre Manager, resulting in a local independent person with the relevant skills and abilities being identified, who in turn agreed to work without payment until a new organisation was formed and funding support resumed via the Authority and other funding sources.
- 7.13 The new voluntary coordinator at short notice undertook the operational running of the Baldock Christmas Fair in conjunction with BTP and subsequently ran the final associated event, the Baldock Half Marathon in February 2017.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

### **8.1 The Baldock Community Forum CIC**

Through regular developmental meetings with officers over the past six months, Members and the new Town Coordinator have started to lay down the foundations for a new representative and inclusive community driven body / group to take on the role of coordinating and managing events and town initiatives for the future.

The Baldock Community Forum, trading as Baldock Events Forum, was incorporated in January 2017 and the structure of the company is markedly different from the former BTP. The Community Forum has provided a Business Plan (appendix B) from which the following information has been gleaned.

The company is headed by five directors:-

- Chair
- Finance
- Events

- Fundraising
- Marketing.

Underneath the executive tier are in the region of 30 appointed Advisors, all of whom are representatives of local community organisations or have specific qualities to help the new forum succeed in achieving its stated objectives.

The registered office of the company is situated at the Baldock Community Centre, thus reinforcing the community links and roots of the Forum.

The company was formally launched at the open public meeting in March 2017, which was attended by over 100 people.

The Forum has support and advisors from a broad range of local organisations and businesses, as listed in the Business Plan.

## 8.2 **The Baldock Community Forum CIC Board**

**Chair** – Jim McNally

**Finance** – Carrie Dunne

**Marketing** – Paul Calver

**Events** – Vacant, currently recruiting

**Fundraising** – Vacant, currently recruiting

**Town Centre Manager** – Richard Sell

The Business Plan sets out the backgrounds of each of the four individuals who have so far been appointed to roles within BCF. Two of the Director positions are currently being recruited to. The people appointed to date provide a range of professional experience and local knowledge.

## 8.3 **Objectives of the Baldock Community Forum CIC**

- To strengthen the local community, empowering and enabling local groups through the development and, where appropriate, provision of a vibrant programme of events in the town.
- To engage our community through all appropriate means, by which we will accurately and effectively assess local need to ensure events are popular and well patronised.
- To enlist the support of capable and passionate people from our community to help in the provision of local sporting, cultural, social and arts events.
- To work with community members, and organisations to secure aid and assistance from the community in the planning, organisation and running of events.
- To secure funds from within the town and externally, in support of our aims.

### **Targets of the Baldock Community Forum CIC**

- Establishment of a Town Centre Manager.
- Successfully running their first event (The Big Lunch – 18 June 2017).
- Forward planning for other events in the 2017 programme (notably the Baldock Cycle Challenge in July).
- Obtaining startup funding for the new Community Interest Company.
- Establishing a high social media profile within Baldock.
- Developing and organising an effective and holistic Events Programme for the town of Baldock.
- Providing a central hub for Baldock community events, streamlining communication between organisations and the local authority.

- 8.4 Further details regarding outputs to date, marketing and monitoring plans, as well as the management plans for the future, are referenced in **Appendix B** – Business Plan Baldock Community Forum.
- 8.5 It is unusual that the Chairman of the organisation applying for grant support is also a local District Councillor and appropriate advice has been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer regarding declaration of interests and code of conduct matters. Cllr McNally has been advised and has acknowledged that the fact that he, as Chairman, has made a personal deposit of £2,000 into the Forum's bank account constitutes a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest under the relevant regulations meaning that he must not take part in any debates or votes relating to BCF, cannot address the Committee and in accordance with the Council Code of Conduct must not be present in the room when the item is considered.
- 8.6 From the outset Members' intentions have always focused on initiating activity for the overall benefit and prosperity of the town and local community. It is understood that their longer term intention is to gradually withdraw such personal involvement once the Forum has reached a fully operational stage and achieving some level of self sustainability for the future.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Council's Constitution sets out that Cabinet's terms of reference include at paragraph 5.6.3 "to take decisions on resources and priorities, together with other stakeholders in the local community, to deliver and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council"; 5.6.19 "to oversee the Authority's overall policy on the voluntary and community sector" and 5.6.24 "to promote and develop external partnerships to meet strategic objectives".
- 9.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything:-
- An individual may generally do
  - Anywhere in the UK or elsewhere
  - For a commercial purpose or otherwise, for a charge or without a charge
  - Without the need to demonstrate that it will benefit the authority, its area or person's resident or present in its area.
- 9.3 Section 137 Local Government Act 1972 provides specific authority for the Council to incur expenditure on anything which is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to its area. This includes a charity or other body operating for public service.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 It is proposed that the unreleased accumulated support funding of £27,310 previously assigned to the former BTP through to March 2020 (**Appendix A**) be withdrawn, realigned and allocated to the new Baldock Community Forum as indicated in 10.4 with a proposed annual funding profile to 2021/22.
- 10.2 This arrangement will be administered on a contractual basis similar to those agreements the Authority has recently enacted with other community based / partner organisations in receipt of support funding though to 2020/21 which are to be overseen and formally reviewed periodically throughout the length of the funding term by the Communities Team Manager.

- 10.3 An overarching objective for the next 3 years will require officers within the Communities Team to assist and direct all bodies and organisations receiving annual awards to have greater self reliance and a sound and sustainable base re future service delivery.
- 10.4 Proposed level of support funding to the Baldock Community Forum for the next four years:-  
2017/18 - £13,650  
2018/19 - £6,785  
2019/20 - £4,583  
2020/21 - £2,292  
2021/22 - £0

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Covalent, the Council's performance and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues and should ensure that appropriate liability insurance cover is in place.
- 11.2 There is a reputational risk that a member of the public might consider that the Council is providing funding to a serving Councillor who is also the Chairman of the group. That risk is mitigated by the other non-Councillor members of the Community Interest Company and the company's objectives and targets.
- 11.3 There is a risk that the Council funds might be used to repay the personal deposit made to the Company by the Councillor and that risk is mitigated by recommendation 2.4 above which makes it a condition of funding that Council funds will not be used for such purposes.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.3 Projects / groups which are assigned support funding from the Authority are assessed to ensure that they do not negatively impact on any part of the local community. The only deviation to this is where a minority or marginalised group may specifically receive funding or resources to address a particular area of need in provision.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this report.

## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 There are no human resource implications.

## **15. APPENDICES**

- 15.1 Appendix A - Phased Funding Reductions to Town Centre Partnerships – March 2011.
- 15.2 Appendix B - Business Plan Baldock Community Forum CIC - May 2017.

## **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **17.1 INFORMATION NOTE TO AREA COMMITTEES JUNE 2016 THE FUNDING OF TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS/BID COMPANIES**