



REPORT TO:	BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE (BTAC)
DATE:	20 TH MAY 2021
SUBJECT:	EMPOWERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME, BTAC FUNDING ALLOCATION
REPORT AUTHOR:	MICHELLE HOWARD (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, HOUSING & WELLBEING) NICHOLA HOLDERNESS (EMPOWERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME COORDINATOR)
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

Boston Borough Council is delivering a significant Health & Wellbeing Programme (Empowering Healthy Communities) funded by the MHCLG Community Champions Programme. As part of the programme, £20,000 has been allocated to BTAC for committee members to allocate to meet local need. This funding allocation can be spent to support local communities, provided this spend is in line with the grant conditions (set out within the report).

Two options are presented to members for consideration:

- An evidence based proposal is included for consideration by BTAC members linked to digital literacy and language support. BTAC may wish to progress this proposal, or, may wish to agree an alternative approach
- BTAC may prefer to add the grant funding to an existing TAC small grants scheme, to enable a health and wellbeing focussed grant allocation opportunity

It is recommended that the work to deliver the preferred approach commences within the next four to six weeks and that BTAC receives regular reports on progress and impact. The outcomes achieved through this funding would also be reported to the Empowering Healthy Communities Programme Board and to MHCLG. Officers are able to support BTAC members to consider and agree their preferred approach to allocate the funding, ensuring that proposals are in line with the MHCLG grant conditions and to enable delivery and outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that BTAC Members:

1. Consider proposals set out at section 4 of this report to allocate £20,000 Empowering Healthy Communities grant funding provided to BTAC to support residents in the BTAC area

2. Delegate to the Assistant Director, Housing and Wellbeing, authority to commission and implement the agreed approach to allocate the funding; in consultation with the BTAC Chair and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To support local residents and communities through and beyond the pandemic in line with the associated grant conditions and Memorandum of Understanding between Boston Borough Council and MHCLG. The funding should enhance and accelerate efforts to improve health and wellbeing across the BTAC area and can be used to address local need.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Not allocate the funding or delay allocation of the funding: This option is not recommended. The funding has been committed and added to the BTAC budget to support the local community. Officers are required to demonstrate to MHCLG that all funded projects are in delivery by 30th June to avoid any risk of returning any unspent monies.

REPORT

1. Boston Borough Council was one of sixty local authorities across the country that was invited to apply for funding through the MHCLG Community Champions Programme. This funding programme is to help local areas to diversify, enhance and accelerate community engagement opportunities to best support communities identified as being disproportionately at risk from Covid-19
 - 1.1. The national programme seeks to enable local areas to accelerate, enhance and target community engagement opportunities to increase trust and confidence in public health messaging, improve engagement and take up of messaging and initiatives, to develop and build community insight and relationships and to develop a vital feedback mechanism to understand what works, what doesn't and what can be done differently at a local and national level
 - 1.2. It aims to support a range of interventions to build upon, increase or improve existing activities to work with residents who are most at risk of Covid-19 - helping to build trust and empower at risk groups to protect themselves and their families. The broader aim is to reduce the impact of the virus on all communities, beyond just the target areas that we will work with through this scheme.
2. Boston Borough Council is delivering a significant Health & Wellbeing Programme (Empowering Healthy Communities) funded by the MHCLG Community Champions: Local Authority Fund
 - 2.1. £494,800 has been allocated to Boston Borough Council to deliver the Empowering Healthy Communities Programme
 - 2.2. Further details about the wider programme can be found at Appendix A
 - 2.3. A previous Cabinet Report on the Empowering healthy Communities Programme can be found [here](#)

3. It is recognised that BTAC has a key role in supporting local communities and is well placed to deliver a strand of the programme.

3.1. As part of the programme £20,000 has been allocated to BTAC. This funding has already been added to the BTAC budget.

3.2. This funding allocation can be spent to support local communities, provided this spend is in line with the grant conditions / Memorandum of Understanding between Boston Borough Council & MHCLG (Appendix B)

3.3. MHCLG require that funded activities will have 'begun a reasonable level of implementation' by 30th June 2021

3.4. Funded activities / projects are expected to:

- Build residents' confidence to integrate and engage more widely in their local communities and mix with people from different backgrounds
- Adopt approaches to engagement that supports social connection to the local area and builds confidence to use local amenities and services
- Provide practical solutions to overcome barriers, such as supporting those experiencing digital exclusion
- Be targeted using the best available national and local sources of evidence of need
- Exhibit good governance and the collection of robust evidence to enable measurement of progress in achieving the Funds aims
- Deliver genuine value for money with robust programme management

3.5. Funded activities / projects within the programme should enable the overall programme to achieve the following outcomes:

- Build strong links between Government and places where Covid 19 has impacted most significantly to develop resilience and improve and increase mechanisms for outreach, communication, engagement within the area
- Increase understanding by local authorities of local population needs and provision of practical tools to aid accessibility to improve social connection, digital inclusion, civic engagement and integration with the wider local area
- Increase capability to interact with and communicate information and guidance from Government and local authorities that is accessible to diverse communities, who may be harder to reach or receiving misinformation, facilitating the following of safer behaviours and making of informed choices
- Build stronger relationships and engagement between communities, groups and local authorities where there may be tensions, mistrust or negative connotations exacerbated by the pandemic

- Increased access to guidance and awareness of Government support mechanisms, for example Universal Credit, to increase access to employment, education and / or volunteering opportunities
- Increased access to guidance and awareness of Council and local support services through outreach and practical tools to improve access to economic support to alleviate hardship to support longer term positive economic impacts
- Increased access to guidance, vaccination programmes and public health services, through outreach and practical tools to improve health and wellbeing of residents, especially those from disproportionately impacted groups, and their families
- Increased coordination and dialogue with public health providers by local authorities to create more cohesive and trusted messaging
- Build open, transparent dialogue over any local testing or vaccine deployment programmes within communities to address any misconceptions about efficacy and safety, counter misinformation, fill real knowledge voids and provide clarity on vaccination roll-out to build support and promote take up
- Increased visibility of Community Champions, volunteers and community groups to encourage more mutual aid and volunteer provision able to support local authority delivery

4. Options for Consideration

- 4.1. **Option 1. Digital Access Proposal:** Further to feedback from the BTAC chair regarding barriers linked to digital literacy and English language skills, a proposal has been received from Lincs Digital for consideration by BTAC. This can be found at Appendix C.

The proposal is intended to provide an indication of the package that could be developed and would be flexible to meet local need. Lincs Digital have expressed a willingness to work alongside local translation services to develop a BTAC area programme that is responsive to the needs of the community. The basic premise of the proposal / offer can be summarised as:

- Access to / provision of tablets and where appropriate, internet access
- Access to virtual digital access support sessions
- Community based support sessions (as appropriate / required)
- Digital champion training / upskilling of local digital champions
- Link with translation and language support services to ensure that the offer is accessible across our diverse communities, through a relationship with PAB Translation (a partner within the overall Empowering Healthy Communities Programme)
- A branded and localised digital support programme.

- 4.2. **Option 2.** Members may wish to add the funding to an existing BTAC small grants scheme, enabling a health and wellbeing focussed grant allocation opportunity. Any grants funded in this way would need to demonstrate alignment with the Empowering Healthy Communities grant conditions and project outcomes.

- 4.3. BTAC members may wish to consider and agree an alternative approach to allocate the funding.

- 4.4. The Empowering Healthy Communities Programme Coordinator and other key officers are available to support BTAC to commission, deliver and monitor the BTAC funded programme strand
- 4.5. It is recommended that the work to deliver the preferred approach commences within the next four to six weeks and that BTAC receive regular reports on progress and impact.
- 4.6. The outcomes achieved through this funding would also be reported to the Empowering Healthy Communities Programme Board and MHCLG.

CONCLUSION

The Empowering Healthy Communities Programme provides a positive opportunity to support Boston communities through and beyond the pandemic. This is a positive and ambitious health and wellbeing programme for the Borough and has been identified as one that will be evaluated nationally.

It is recognised that BTAC has a key role in supporting local communities and is well placed to deliver a strand of the programme. £20,000 has been allocated to BTAC to enable this. This funding allocation can be spent to support local communities, provided this spend is in line with the grant conditions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Empowering Healthy Communities Programme is fully externally funded. All spend would be in line with the grant agreement between MHCLG and Boston Borough Council. As part of this programme, £20,000 has been allocated to the BTAC budget to enable the delivery of the agreed approach. This has already been added to the BTAC budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

In accordance with the provisions of the grant, the funding must be spent in line with the grant conditions

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

EQUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

The Community Champions Programme seeks to reduce inequalities by increasing insight and engagement and to maximise opportunities, accessibility and take up of public health messaging and initiatives (such as testing, vaccination, self-isolation) and support. Accessibility forms a key part of our strategy and we will review and respond to data, insights, feedback and public health messaging at all times – our approach will need to continually evolve to meet the needs of our communities.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This work forms an important part of our Covid19 response.

CONSULTATION

No formal consultation. However, initial engagement with community leaders has been well received, effective and will continue to shape our engagement strategy and activity plans to ensure the success of this programme

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

APPENDIX A	Empowering Healthy Communities Member Briefing Presentation (updated 26/02/21)
APPENDIX B	Memorandum of Understanding between MHCLG and Boston Borough Council
APPENDIX C	Digital Support Proposal

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body. However, Cabinet approved a report on the overall Empowering Healthy Communities Programme in February 2021. A link to this meeting can be found [here](#).

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	Michelle Howard Assistant Director, Housing & Wellbeing
Signed off by:	Michelle Sacks Deputy Chief Executive