NOT FOR PUBLICATION: Appendix B and D to this report contains information considered to be exempt under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended

Agenda Item No. 6

REPORT TO: Overview & Scrutiny Commission
(Report to Cabinet Member for Housing & Safer Communities on 9th July 2019)
DATE: 5th August 2019
SERVICE AREA: Safer Communities
REPORTING OFFICER: Community Safety Officer
(Helen Richardson)
SUBJECT: Street Aid: A Proposal to Address the Issue of Begging and Street Sleepers in the Harrogate Area
WARD/S AFFECTED: All District
FORWARD PLAN REF: N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval and provide information to the Cabinet Member for Housing & Safer Communities of the proposal to introduce a pilot scheme initiative 'Harrogate Street Aid' to the Harrogate District. The initiative aims to address the current begging and street sleeper issue in the Harrogate district.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Cabinet Member for Housing & Safer Communities:

2.1 approves the Harrogate District Community Safety pilot scheme of the 'Harrogate Street Aid' initiative for a period of 12 months

2.2 approves the Harrogate Street Aid Framework (Appendix A)

2.3 approves the draft agreement with Two Ridings Community Foundation (TRCF) to administer the fund for a 12 month period and delegates to the Head of Safer Communities authority to enter into the agreement on behalf of the Council. TRCF is already a partner of Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) via THE LOCAL FUND. (Appendix B - EXEMPT)

2.4 endorses the proposal for HBC to act as a sponsor for the tap terminal (contactless donations) and be invoiced directly by LibertyPay. (Appendix C)
2.5 accepts the grant in the sum of £4,305.56 from the Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) for the set up costs for Harrogate Street Aid and delegates to the Head of Safer Communities authority to enter into the grant agreement.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASONS FOR DECISION/S

3.1 Visible begging and street sleeping in the Harrogate district is on the increase. Research has shown that whilst the public have empathy and donate to street sleepers/beggars, linked anti-social behaviour is increasing, and residents and businesses are increasingly concerned.

3.2 Introducing ‘Harrogate Street Aid’ will raise valuable funds to support beggars and street sleepers in the area to help them get off, and stay off, the streets. It will also help inform all regarding street sleepers and begging.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

4.1 Alternative options considered were:
  - to ask the public to donate directly to homeless services.
  - to follow other councils and publicise ‘true facts’ via press, social media.
  - carry on as we are.
It is recommended that these options are rejected – they have been tried before and have not been successful.

5.0 BACKGROUND

5.1 A Working Group, made up of professionals including HBC Community Safety, Housing, Partnership & Engagement, Communications and Elected Member, North Yorkshire Police and Harrogate Homeless Project, was set up to research the issue of the increase in begging and street sleepers in the Harrogate town centre area: who they are, their residential status, locations used and the impact on the local community and businesses. They found:
  - The numbers of beggars in Harrogate Town Centre has been increasing.
  - The number of street sleepers visible has been increasing.
  - Public and residents are increasingly concerned.
  - Businesses are increasingly concerned and in some cases they feel it has begun to impact on their income and livelihood.
  - Begging can be seen to be very lucrative in the area.
  - There is much evidence to suggest there is a great deal of public sympathy for people who are perceived to be sleeping rough. Action by the authorities is often misunderstood. Professional beggars play on this and are known to misrepresent their situations.

5.2 The number of reported incidents of begging and street sleepers is low compared to larger cities. Currently there are approximately 7 rough sleepers (homeless) and 13 beggars, 2 of whom are truly homeless. There has been increased incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and complaints from the public and businesses.
5.3 North Yorkshire Police use a range of powers to enforce incidents of anti-social and drunken behaviour linked to begging and street sleepers. When they use their enforcement powers they receive negative responses from the public.

5.4 Having identified the issue of street sleepers and beggars, the Working Group were tasked to prepare and deliver an initiative to help identify a way forward. Various models and means to tackle the issue of street begging and homelessness were researched and evaluated from other local authority areas across the country including York, Nottingham, London and Cambridge.

5.5 The Working Group received information regarding Cambridge Street Aid. The ‘Street Aid’ model utilises an online and a tap terminal (contactless) scheme which offers a donation platform for the area. It also educates the public about the true picture of begging/street sleepers in the area and the organisations already providing support. The Working Group endorsed the proposal to adopt a similar ‘Street Aid’ model for Harrogate.

6.0 THE PROPOSAL

6.1 The key aims of the initiative are to:
- work towards addressing the issue of begging and street sleepers
- educate the public regarding the issue of begging and street sleepers
- raise funds centrally to disseminate to individuals via organisations involved with beggars and homeless/street sleepers

6.2 The Working Group has identified an initiative ‘Harrogate Street Aid’ - a contactless tap terminal and ‘on-line’ donation scheme tailored for the Harrogate district working in partnership to create positive change. The scheme recognises the work achieved in Cambridge where online giving created most donations coupled with a ‘tap terminal’ in shops/council premises for people to donate a set amount via tapping a terminal – contactless payment – the proposal is a minimum set amount of £3.

6.3 Geography: the pilot will focus on one terminal in Harrogate Town Centre, with the funds being available to street sleepers in the Harrogate district. This will be reviewed after 12 months. If the pilot scheme is successful, it may in the future be rolled out in other areas across the Harrogate District. Cambridge started with one terminal and 2 years later have 6 terminals with plans for a further 10 in the coming year.

6.4 The Working Group has already started to make links with local businesses and the Business Improvement District (BID). A meeting with the Chamber of Trade is scheduled for July 8th to discuss the initiative further.

6.5 Organisations supporting the homeless will be able to apply for grants of up to £500 for individuals where other funding is not available. Cash will not be given directly to individuals nor will funding be available for anything that may encourage an individual to go back onto the streets e.g. sleeping bag, tent. Harrogate Street Aid will raise valuable funds to be used to help get people off, and keep them off, the streets. Appendix A shows the draft framework for Harrogate Street Aid and outlines the application process, criteria and timeframe for a grant from Harrogate Street Aid.
6.6 There are some key areas to be finalised prior to the launch. These include:
- The TRCF agreement – officers will work with Legal Services to finalise this agreement in readiness for the launch date.
- Agree the location for first tap terminal – discussions are in progress with retailers where begging often occurs.
- Hire the first tap terminal and install (LibertyPay) - the terminal will be rented and maintained by LibertyPay not requiring ICT support.
Application for grants will be available two months after the launch date in order to build up monies in the fund – see Framework Appendix A

7.0. COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

7.1 HBC Communications and Marketing team will assist significantly in the initiative. This will be a media led initiative focusing on educating the public, businesses and residents. The theme being ‘Small Change? Help Make Real Change’ and ‘Help Those on the Streets Turn a Corner’.

7.2 HBC Communications and Marketing team are currently designing a webpage for the HBC website to link with TRCF webpage. A specific email address will be created for correspondence StreetAid@harrogate.gov.uk

8.0 TIMESCALES

8.1 It is anticipated that the initiative will be launched in August 2019.

9.0 REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The following were considered: Financial Implications; Human Resources Implications; Legal Implications; ICT Implications; Strategic Property/Asset Management Considerations; Risk Assessment; Equality and Diversity (the Public Sector Equality Duty and impact upon people with protected characteristics). If applicable, the outcomes of consultations, assessments, considerations and implications considered necessary during preparation of this report are detailed below.

9.2 Financial Implications

9.2.1 An application was put into the Community Fund of the Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) who agreed to cover the cost of the pilot phase to the full sum of £4305.56 (see Appendix D - EXEMPT). These were estimated costs.

9.2.2 Two Ridings Community Foundation (TRCF) have forwarded their draft proposal with costs (Appendix B – EXEMPT) – some of these were included in the application to the OPFCC. There is already an agreement in place with TRCF via THE LOCAL FUND.

9.2.3 The breakdown of anticipated costs of the one year pilot of this initiative assuming 10,000 taps, 5,000 taps and 1,000 taps are found in Appendix D (EXEMPT)
The anticipated total costs for 10,000 taps will be: £6,605.56
The anticipated total costs for 5,000 taps will be: £4,655.56
The anticipated total costs for 1,000 taps will be: £3,095.56
These cost estimates assume no donations via other methods. Any additional grants received, and hence donations made, would result in increased costs.

9.2.4 Compared to the grant of £4,305.56 secured from the OPFCC, these costings illustrate that there could be a potential funding shortfall. HBC is negotiating with TRCF in respect of gift aid associated with donations being used to cover the shortfall but, if needed, any remaining shortfall will be met from the Community Safety Reserve.

9.2.5 In future years, if successful, the Working Group may invite businesses to contribute to the rental, use reclaimed gift aid and research grants available via TRCF to cover the costs. It is being made clear that every penny donated will be used in grants and not to meet costs.

9.2.6 Grants paid to individuals via organisations are subject to a contract with TRCF to ensure follow up. Good news stories will be shared via TRCF and HBC.

Finance were consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are reflected above.

9.3 HR Implications

The scheme will be administered and operated by TRCF there will be no impact on resources for the Safer Communities Service or the Community Safety Hub.

9.4 Legal Implications

Legal Services were consulted in relation to the preparation of this report.

9.5 Risk Assessment

A risk assessment has been completed to support this report (Appendix E). There is minimal risk associated with this initiative. It should be noted that this initiative will not remove street begging/street sleepers completely.

9.6 Equality and Diversity

An equality analysis has been completed to support this report (Appendix F). The initiative has a positive impact on many of those who fall within a protected characteristic and who may end up homeless, usually vulnerable individuals due to their circumstances.

10.0 CONCLUSION

10.1 The Working Group has undertaken research into identifying the best model to adopt regarding the issue of begging and street sleepers in the Harrogate district. This has also developed a clearer picture of the numbers and personal situations of beggars/street sleepers and highlighted public and business opinions/worries.

10.2 The Working Group identified an initiative tailored for the Harrogate district working in partnership to create positive change.
10.3 Introducing ‘Harrogate Street Aid’ will raise valuable funds for beggars and street sleepers in the area; it will also inform all regarding street sleepers and begging.

10.4 Providing a donation scheme that reduces giving small change to making real change and helping those on the streets turn a corner will benefit all.

10.5 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Housing & Safer Communities approves the Harrogate District Community Safety ‘Harrogate Street Aid’ pilot scheme initiative and the Harrogate Street Aid Framework.

10.6 The Cabinet Member will receive regular updates regarding progress of the Street Aid initiative.

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Helen Richardson, Community Safety Officer, if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at the Community Safety Team, Safer Communities, Civic Centre, St Luke’s Mount, Harrogate, HG1 2AE, telephone – 01423 500600 Ext 58131; e-mail – helen.richardson@harrogate.gov.uk

Appendix A – Harrogate Street Aid Framework
Appendix B – TRCF draft contract - Exempt
Appendix C – LibertyPay draft invoice
Appendix D – Costings and OPFCC fund contract - Exempt
Appendix E – Risk assessment
Appendix F - Equality Impact Assessment