

SOUTH WHITEHAVEN NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Cath Giel, Portfolio Holder
LEAD OFFICER: Julie Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy
REPORT AUTHOR:

Summary and Recommendation:

The Executive are requested to agree to the carry forward of underspend from the South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative, currently predicted at a maximum of £74,450, from 2009/10 into 2010/11 to be spent by end of August 2010. Executive are asked to delegate the agreement of the final figure for carry forward to the Head of Finance and MIS and the Head of Development Strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative (SWNMI) has received Working Neighbourhood Fund resources over the past two years, 2008-2010. There have been previous annual reports to the Executive outlining progress and annual outputs and outcomes from the initiative.
- 1.2 SWNMI have been undertaking a forward planning exercise and have yet to complete this exercise which is looking at a community led arrangement to continue to enable the community to work together on its locality plans and links and influence with local service providers.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 The SWNMI are currently, at the end of month 8 looking at a projected underspend at the end of the financial year of £74,450. This figure will be finalised during March 2010 once all commitments are known. The SWNMI Board have reported on the need to look to carry forward this underspend into the first six months of 2010/11 to enable the SWNMI to:
 - a) complete their commitments on the current programme of activity and provide final reports and outturns on existing funding arrangements; and
 - b) provide continued resource to the SWNMI to enable continued local engagement whilst the forward planning into a revised governance arrangement, new development plan and relevant

fundraising is completed.

- 2.2 The Council are investigating the option to second a council officer during this six month period to enable the SWNMI to complete its current programme and financial and document management tasks whilst enabling focus on its future planning.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The Executive have three clear options:
- a) to enable the early decision on carry forward to be provided in January 2010 to assist the SWNMI to forward plan; or
 - b) to request the SWNMI to wait to the end of the year and make the carry forward request once the final budget spend is known leaving the project with no workers from the 1st April 2010; or
 - c) not support the request and leave the council to undertake the final completion without project workers knowledge available.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is option A. In particular the council has three key commitments; i) as accountable body for the initiative to enable the project to be fully completed and ensure all relevant records and final statements of expenditure and activity are effectively provided; ii) to assist the project effectively forward plan to sustain impact and local delivery and iii) to use any available resource to complete the current activity exploring options to progress community ownership and influence structures to maximise funding opportunities. The council through this option is providing re-assurance to the SWNMI on its ability to use 2009/10 underspend for these key purposes to effectively project manage its completion in its current form and take time to effectively forward plan to maintain the positive learning, local service delivery and community engagement.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 This extension of six months is a maximum. All financial commitments will be finalised within three months, ie by 30 June 2010, and all expenditure spent by 31 August 2010 to enable the final paperwork to be completed by the end of September 2010. The exact detail of the carry forward will be finalised following month 11 management accounts and the draft budget at appendix a sets out the expected carry forward requirement.
- 5.2 There is an opportunity for a secondment of a Copeland Borough Council officer to assist with the completion of the accounts and project closure. Any such arrangement will be agreed with the SWNMI by the end of

March 2010. The Council has a responsibility for the accounts and paperwork to be properly closed and files stored in line with external funding conditions.

- 5.2 The council will need to extend the two current workers contract for a further six months only at a cost of £35,000 from carry forward. This includes eligible redundancy costs.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The project worker will continue to manage and any Council secondee will assist in reducing the risk of completing project finances effectively. The Head of Finance and Management Information Systems and the Head of Development Strategy will oversee the extension to ensure effective completion.
- 6.2 As highlighted in Appendix B, the initiative's Draft Forward Plan, a further report will be brought to Executive in July 2009 on the progress of the forward plan.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative has played a significant role in improving the quality of life for South Whitehaven residents over its period of operation.
- 7.2 A local improvement adviser is currently looking at the learning and good practice from the initiative and how these can continue to influence and shape the delivery of council services in neighbourhoods. This will report in March 2010.

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Draft Budget April to September 2010 to complete project and use 2009/10 underspend
Appendix B - SWNMI Draft Forward Plan (produced by independent consultant)

List of Background Documents:

List of Consultees: Corporate Team, Cllr Cath Giel, Cllr Elaine Woodburn, Cllr Allan Holiday, Ruth Willis

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Supports through the effective forward
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	planning mainstreaming arrangements
Impact on Sustainability	The extension offers opportunities for the initiative to sustain good practice.
Impact on Rural Proofing	Not applicable
Health and Safety Implications	Not applicable
Project and Risk Management	The project has no further funding in place at this point and this extension is a controlled risk approach to both formally completing existing funding commitments and assisting forward plans in the neighbourhood area.
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Supports.
Children and Young Persons Implications	Supports.
Human Rights Act Implications	Supports
Monitoring Officer Comments	No further comments
Section 151 Officer Comments	The forecast underspending is preliminary at this stage – as it depends on a number of grant commitments being realized before the year end. If not, and they are realized next year, and if so, this would be included in the earmarking for spend in 2010/11. The allocation of the earmarked balance would be closely managed by the Head of Development Strategy and Head of Finance and MIS as it is important that the current programme is effectively closed.

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision YES

Appendix A: Draft Budget April to September 2010 to complete project and use 2009/10 underspend

<i>Item</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Total £</i>
Project Staff	Completion	35,000
Office Costs	Completion	4,000
Community Engagement	Resident involvement	3,000
Consultancy Support	Forward Planning	10,000
Additional Assistance	Completion	5,000
Projects CCTV	contractual	3,500
TOTAL		62,500

Appendix B:

Draft Forward Plan of South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative

“Neighbourhood Management is like an Anchor” (Community Rep).

Overview: Whitehaven Community Representatives (supported by the wider Partnership Board) seek continuation of South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management and a carry forward of its current under spend for a 3-6 month period after the Projects current end date of April 1st 2010. This is in order to give time to work to ensure continuation of a valued Project.

Background: The funding for South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative is due to end at the beginning of April 2010.

The initiative has brought improvement to the quality of life and helped to empower the community that it serves. In particular Neighbourhood Warden’s and increased out of hours bus service are valued as well as support given to individual projects.

Local community representatives met on the 17th of November in St Peter’s Hall in Whitehaven in order to consider the achievements of the initiative and whether or not to seek continuation in one form or another. A further meeting was held on the 10th of December in order to begin to scope a strategy, which would both meet local objectives and align with the regional and national regeneration agenda. The course of the initiative has enabled community representatives to improve their skill level’s, in fund raising, in project management and in project delivery.

Those community representatives who represented a wide range of residents on the Area that met were in unanimous agreement that the South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative has been successful. There is also widespread support for exploring the options to constitute a new organisation comprised of community representatives and members of the current Board (e.g. voluntary organisation/charity, social enterprise). The meeting also considered the remit of the new organisation and the way in which it would like to see current services extended. An action plan has been developed in order take this agenda forward. This is as follows:

Immediate actions:

- Seek extension of the scheme for 3-6 months through Copeland Borough Council. (purpose of January 2010 Executive Report)
- Put a strategy in place to ensure continuation if key officers resign- specifically ensure that resources are allocated to enable continuation of

the community development/engagement functions of Neighbourhood Management:

- Explore the options for, decide upon and constitute an appropriate community organisation (as mentioned above).
- Carry out a community skills audit (completed)
- Carry out an evaluation of the scheme in partnership with the Local Improvement Adviser from NWIEP. This is in progress and being managed by the WCSCU.

Second Stage Actions:

- Consult with and ensure fit with the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan and Locality Working Agenda, by for example, ensuring participation and integration with any Locality Working Board that is set up.
- Discuss and if necessary redefine the geographical area/boundary for the Project.
- Develop a business plan that will include aims and objectives and outline community aspirations and the shape of the future Project. Some of this discussion has already take place and a business plan is currently being written.

Third Stage Actions:

Take a three pronged approach to funding and continuation that would work as follows:

- a) Identify and submit mainstream funding applications for the whole scheme via the new organisation and in partnership with the Council.
- b) Break elements of the scheme up, identify and submit several funding applications via the new organisation, again in partnership with the Council.
- c) Break elements of the scheme up with individual community groups 'adopting' them, identifying and seeking funding on behalf / in partnership with new organisation

Fourth Stage Action:

Refer back to Copeland Council in 3-6 months reporting upon progress and seek to either close the Project or transfer assets and staff to the new organisation. This would need to dovetail/complement the report back from the Local Improvement Adviser and any recommendations that they present. Copeland BC is represented on the Steering Group set up to oversee this piece of work.

Conclusion:

This is a crucial time for the South Whitehaven Management Initiative as inevitably its future lies in the balance. It is a matter of good management to put mechanisms to ensure effective winding down in place and it is extremely difficult to simultaneously work to ensure survival. However this is and has been a successful Project and the fact that Community representatives are so committed, experienced and skilled is a testament to all involved in the Project delivery to date. Copeland Council already have one green flag Project recognised by the Audit Commission's Area Assessment of the County (*Burrow - in - Furness*) and if all stakeholders commit to ensuring continuation of the South Whitehaven Neighbourhood Management Initiative then there is no reason that there shouldn't be another.

Wendy Erlick Associates LLP.