

REPORT TO CABINET

19 September 2018

Subject:	Award of Contract for Provision of Local Welfare Provision
Presenting Cabinet Member:	Councillor Steve Trow - Cabinet Member for Culture and Core Council Services
Director:	Executive Director – Resources – Darren Carter
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Key Decision:	Yes
Forward Plan (28 day notice) Reference:	SMBC02/08/2018
Cabinet Member Approval and Date:	30 August 2018
Director Approval:	24 July 2018
Reason for Urgency:	None urgent item
Exempt Information Ref:	Exemption provisions do not apply
Ward Councillor (s) Consulted (if applicable):	This is a boroughwide initiative
Scrutiny Consultation Considered?	Scrutiny have not been consulted
Contact Officer(s):	Ian Dunn, Revenues and Benefits Service Manager: ian_dunn@sandwell.gov.uk Carl Jones, Revenues and Benefits Senior Operations Manager: carl_jones@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the award of a contract to Loaves N Fishes for the period 1st October 2018 to the 30th September 2022 for the provision of white goods and household items to support delivery of the Council's Local Welfare Provision scheme.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Local Welfare Provision was introduced in April 2013, from this date Sandwell has piloted working with the voluntary sector/charitable organisations for the provision of white goods and household items.
- 1.2 This approach has proved very successfully and Sandwell now needs to formalise the arrangement with a contract.
- 1.3 Following a procurement process this report is seeking approval to award the contract to Loaves N Fishes.

2 IMPLICATION FOR THE COUNCIL'S AMBITIONS

- 2.1 Sandwell's Local Welfare Provision scheme has been co-designed with the voluntary sector/charitable organisations. It provides crucial support by way of food parcels, fuel, white goods and essential household items to Sandwell's most vulnerable residents who are faced with a crisis. It therefore supports a number of the Council's ambitions.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Local Welfare Provision scheme was introduced in April 2013.
- 3.2 It replaced the Social Fund and Crisis Loan elements of the social fund scheme previously administered by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).
- 3.3 The DWP provided funding for the first 2 years. Since 2015 our Local Welfare Provision scheme has been funded by the Council.
- 3.4 Sandwell's Local Welfare Provision scheme provides crucial support by way of food parcels, fuel, white goods and essential household items to Sandwell's most vulnerable residents who are faced with a crisis/emergency and are suffering financial hardship.
- 3.5 Sandwell Council's decision to continue to fund a Local Welfare Provision scheme demonstrates commitment to support our most vulnerable residents. A number of our neighbouring authorities no longer provide a Local Welfare Provision scheme or have in place alternative arrangements where residents in acute need have to take out loans.
- 3.6 Since the introduction of the scheme Sandwell has worked in partnership with the voluntary sector/charitable organisations for the provision of food, white goods and household items.

- 3.7 Sandwell Council supports the main foodbanks in the borough with grant funding and residents who present to us requiring food are referred to a foodbank for a food parcel.
- 3.8 Residents requiring assistance with fuel are given a voucher. This voucher is issued via Paypoint.
- 3.9 For the provision of household items and white goods, Sandwell has piloted partnership working with Community Transport and Loaves N Fishes. This has proved to be very successful in terms of the service provided to people in need and has also allowed the voluntary organisations to grow and become more sustainable.
- 3.10 The number of residents provided with white goods and/or household items in the past 3 years is as follows:
- 2015/16: £547,296 and 1192 residents supported.
 - 2016/17: £289,928 and 889 residents supported.
 - 2017/18: £211,893 and 629 residents supported.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 At present the Council works with two local organisations - Loaves N Fishes and Community Transport - to provide household furniture and white goods. To date this has been an ad-hoc arrangement without a formal contract.
- 4.2 The Council have now undertaken a procurement exercise to enter into a formal contract for the provision of these goods and services. This procurement process has now concluded and Loaves N Fishes have been successful.
- 4.3 This contract will be awarded on the basis of a Framework Agreement which allows for variable levels of business and although an estimated annual spend of £200,000 is anticipated, the contract does not commit to a fixed level of provision in any one year.
- 4.4 The contract will commence on 1st October 2018 and will last for a period of 4 years until 30th September 2022.
- 4.5 The selected supplier operates within Sandwell and is a registered charity. Loaves N Fishes meet important social value indicators and as such are committed to the social and professional integration of disabled or disadvantaged persons.

- 4.6 Loaves N Fishes will provide added value by supplying customers with additional items free of charge, such as cleaning materials and cooking utensils to customers moving home. They also provide a number of voluntary opportunities within the community which give hands on training and support to develop and grow employability skills, with the majority of volunteers being ex-service recipients. They also work closely with local foodbanks, the Citizens Advice Bureau and churches.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 None.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 If a contract is not in place to provide white goods and household items to Sandwell's most vulnerable customers there is a risk that families would suffer poverty and their basic needs would not be met.
- 6.2 The approach to working with voluntary/charitable organisations rather than the private sector brings added social value to the residents and communities of Sandwell.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Local Welfare Provision scheme is at present fully funded by the Council and therefore amounts of around £200,000 per annum must be put aside to administer the scheme.
- 7.2 The spend for 2018/19 may increase due to the introduction of Universal Credit in Sandwell from November 2018.
- 7.3 The LWP scheme is administered by the Revenues and Benefits Service which is part of Resources Directorate.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has previously been carried out on Sandwell's Local Welfare Provision scheme. A separate assessment is therefore not required.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 Information regarding persons requiring assistance through the LWP scheme will be shared by the Council and Loaves N Fishes. The passage of data will be protected in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 None.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 It is likely that future budget pressures will mean it may not be feasible for the Council to continue to fully fund a Local Welfare Provision scheme in the longer term.
- 12.2 There is no minimum value to this contract and therefore Sandwell is not committed to an annual expenditure should the budget position change.
- 12.3 The award of a four year contract will however give the Council and voluntary sector partners the opportunity to explore additional or alternative ways to sustain such provision in coming years.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 Sandwell's Local Welfare Provision scheme has a direct impact upon the health and wellbeing of the residents it supports.
- 13.2 Loaves N Fishes can have up to 50 volunteers working for them in a week. The majority of the volunteers have also received support from Loaves N Fishes in the past and are local people. The volunteers will be provided with training and support to develop and grow valuable new employability skills.

13.3 Loaves N Fishes also work with local Children's Centres, schools, Social Services, Job Centres, Housing, health centres, local foodbanks, churches and Citizens Advice Bureau in receiving referrals and providing support.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND.

14.1 None

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 Until now there has been an ad-hoc arrangement in place with voluntary sector/charitable organisations for the provision of white goods and household items. As Sandwell is committed to providing a Local Welfare Provision scheme this arrangement should now be formalised.

15.2 The contract period of four years will provide an opportunity to explore further partnership working and lower cost alternatives for the provision of these services.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.

17 APPENDICES:

None.

Darren Carter
Executive Director – Resources