

30 September 2014

Agenda Item:4

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR ACCESS AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

COMMUNITY SAFETY BUDGET UPDATE – REQUEST FOR FUNDING

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for committing funds from the Community Safety Budget for 2014/2015 to fund:
 - a) Project work to protect vulnerable Nottinghamshire residents from becoming repeat victims of mass marketing scams (up to £20,000).
 - b) Activities across Nottinghamshire which encourage residents to take a positive stance towards ensuring that integration occurs within their own communities (£7,000).

Information and Advice

Community Safety Budget

- 2 Each year, a proportion of the Community Safety Budget is allocated to initiatives across the County that are designed to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour, reduce the fear of crime, and increase levels of community safety within our communities. Initiatives are targeted at vulnerable communities, and are designed to tackle the issues that are causing the most harm to communities and individuals.
- 3 Funding proposals approved to date from the “initiatives” element of the Community Safety Budget for 2014-15 are summarised in the following table:

Total Community Safety “Initiatives” budget for 2014/15:	£262,379
Total committed so far:	
Contribution to the work of the Safer Nottinghamshire Board (SNB)	£140,000
Victims Support’s Young Witness Service	£7,500
Vehicle Nuisance at Junction 27 – Preparing for injunctive action	£3,500
Gating Orders contingency	£2,000
“In our Hands” (Holocaust education)	£15,000
“I Pledge to Keep on Track” (Youth Crime Prevention Programme)	£25,000

Contribution to Crime-stoppers Cannabis Awareness campaign	£2,000
Rural Crime project	£3,300
Equalities Work (expansion of Show Racism the Red Card etc)	£6,000
Fly Grazing	£1,500
Domestic Homicide Reviews	£5,000
Remaining balance for other initiatives	£51,579

National Scams Hub List: Joint work with Nottinghamshire Police

- 4 Nationally mass marketing scams cause around £3.5 billion of detriment annually to consumers. Vulnerable and disadvantaged residents are deliberately and repeatedly targeted causing significant harm to their health, well-being and independence. The financial detriment involved is often great, with two Nottinghamshire victims having lost £250,000 and £300,000 respectively to scams.
- 5 As part of joint working with the National Scams Hub the Community Safety team received a list of Nottinghamshire residents whose names were on a scam mailing list raided from a mailing house in the London area. The Community Safety team have to date been in contact with 50 of the 300 names.
- 6 Our initial work has indicated that multi-agency resources are needed to tackle this complex problem. The Community Safety team need to make contact with the vulnerable residents on the list to assess their detriment to date and the level of intervention needed to protect them from future scams. An additional benefit would be the opportunity to refer the resident if needed for assistance from other agencies via the "First Contact" signposting scheme.
- 7 This proposal is to use Community Safety initiatives funding to fund the temporary transfer of a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) post (salary and related costs) to work jointly with Trading Standards Officers to tackle this problem. The transferee would be for a period of three to six months, as is required as the project progresses. The PCSO would carry out the initial visits to the vulnerable residents and also work with Trading Standards Officers to establish the systems and provide the training necessary for future referrals for police support to assist scam victims. This project aims to connect this scams prevention work into the PCSOs' valuable knowledge of and regular intervention with vulnerable local residents in their area.

Telephone Scams: Call blockers

- 8 Funding is requested to support a project to encourage vulnerable Nottinghamshire residents, who have been receiving large numbers of unwanted telephone calls, to try out call blocking devices to reduce the risk of being a victim of a cold calling sales scam. Residents with mobility problems are also at an increased risk of slips, trips and falls from answering these calls and these devices help with that issue too.

- 9 The funding would be used to fund the purchase of a number of call blocker devices to loan out to vulnerable residents on a “try before you buy” basis. The loan period aims to prove the value of the technology to encourage the residents or their relatives/carers to purchase their own unit for future use. There are two main brands of call blocker on the market that range in price from around £40 to £140 depending on the different levels of functionality needed for the user’s needs and vulnerability.
- 10 A mini-pilot project involving four vulnerable Nottinghamshire residents has proven that the units are successful in reducing unwanted calls, blocking on average over 75% of nuisance calls and in one case 92% of the resident’s nuisance calls. Over 600 nuisance calls blocked in the three month period monitored have included calls from Pakistan, Egypt, Switzerland and USA.
- 11 The results echo the results of extensive call blocker pilots conducted by three different Scottish authorities. Angus Council’s results showed that 40% of calls received by older and vulnerable residents were nuisance calls and that the call blockers were successful in blocking over 95% of the nuisance calls.

Promoting Community Cohesion

- 12 The County Council has a duty to promote community cohesion across Nottinghamshire and is committed to supporting communities and the voluntary sector to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration, which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another to promote equal participation in wider society. Through the Community and Voluntary Sector Team, the Council’s role in fostering integration as an element of a cohesive community is a priority. To help support this priority, it is recommended that £7,000 is ring-fenced from the Community Safety initiatives budget to support activities across Nottinghamshire which encourage residents to take a positive stance towards ensuring that integration occurs within their own communities.
13. It is recommended that activities are encouraged and supported which promote integrated and cohesive communities and which enable people from different backgrounds to have similar life opportunities and to know and understand their rights and responsibilities alongside trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly. Activities will aim to promote:
 - A shared future vision and sense of belonging
 - A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
 - Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

Other Options Considered

8. Trading Standards Officers could work through the scams hub list without the additional police resource but the work would take months longer due to the competing demands on officer time within the Service. The resulting risk would be that vulnerable residents on the list continued to lose large sums of money to mass marketing scams in the intervening period. There would also not be the additional benefits of the local knowledge and continuing contact with local vulnerable residents that Police Community Support Officers could provide.
9. If no funding were available, call blockers could be promoted without the “try before you buy” loan scheme being available but the take up of the devices by vulnerable residents is predicted to be much reduced.
10. Nottinghamshire is attracting people from different backgrounds to work and live in the County. If no funding were available, tensions and resentments within communities may develop and grow.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

9. The projects to tackle scams aim to prevent hundreds of vulnerable Nottinghamshire residents from losing large proportions of their life savings to mass marketing scams and to help them to live safely and independently in their own homes.
10. Promoting community cohesion is vital in supporting communities to build strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds. Funding community activities will support this.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, , human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Human Resources Implications

11. The post of Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) has been established by the Police to support the National Scams Hub List: Joint work with Nottinghamshire Police and will be transferred to the team with the post funded by NCC. A secondment agreement will be arranged so that the terms of employment are clear.

RECOMMENDATION/S

12. It is recommended that Members approve the following proposed contributions from the initiatives element of the Community Safety Budget for 2014/2015:

- i) Up to £20,000 to support joint work with Nottinghamshire Police to protect vulnerable Nottinghamshire residents on the Scams Hub List and to fund the call blocker loan scheme.
- ii) Up to £7,000 to support activities which promote community cohesion.

PAUL MCKAY

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SG 22/09/2014)

13. The proposals in this report fall within the remit of this Community Safety Committee.

Financial Comments

14. The financial implications will be reported to the meeting.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All.