

## **The Balsam Centre – Allocation of Healthy Living Centre Funding (Executive Decision)**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To update members on the position at the Balsam Centre and to consider the allocation of funding ring-fenced for Healthy Living Centres.

### **Public Interest**

Supporting and helping the Balsam Centre to improve the work of voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across Area East

### **Recommendations**

- 1) That members note the report
- 2) That members agree the recommendation to award the £10,000, ring fenced for Healthy Living Centres, to the Balsam Centre for the delivery of the work programme agreed and set out in Table 1 attached (with a particular focus on skills, jobs and employability).

### **Background**

The Balsam Centre was established in 1998, with the purchase of the former memorial hospital in the centre of Wincanton. Extensive refurbishment of the building and the setting up of the service was enabled through a Lottery grant and support from a range of funders, including SSDC. The project was established to specifically meet the needs of Wincanton and the surrounding area due to an identified gap in services in the area, particularly in mental health services.

The Balsam Centre delivers a range of integrated health and wellbeing projects and initiatives, most of which directly link with physical activity, healthy eating and mental health support alongside participation in community based activities, supported social engagement and learning. Detailed statistics for services and projects run from the centre can be found at Table 1.

The centre is also a Children's Centre contracted by Somerset County Council to deliver child and family health and social services, linked to skills and achievement. This has enabled the centre to deliver targeted and universal services to a wide range of families, with a clear focus on prevention. Many users of the Children's Centre now link in to other services offered at the Balsam Centre.

Current tenants are also considered to be on site partners and include The Balsam Nursery, Midwives, CAT Bus, Transition Vision Media Company, the Growing Space and Health

Visitors. The presence of other key services help to provide integrated, seamless services that make people using the Centre feel safe, welcome and supported. The C.A.B still runs a fortnightly outreach session on a drop in basis to offer help with a range of issues including welfare benefits and debt management advice. The Balsam Nursery can accommodate 62 children and is currently at 90% occupancy.

SSDC has supported the Balsam Centre through both core funding and project grants, since it began. In the past, core funding has been allocated through the Healthy Living Pooled Fund; a budget set up jointly by SSDC, NHS Somerset and SCC, and reported annually to the South Somerset Health and Wellbeing Partnership (SSH&WP).

Members will recall that this budget was originally established to support Health Living Centres across the whole of the District but as the only eligible organisation is based in Area East, the budget was transferred and subject to local monitoring by AEC.

### **Current programme & future work**

Most of the work of the Balsam Centre focuses on reducing health inequalities, in particular working with individuals and families who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and have little other support. The project is particularly successful at working closely with people to improve their own, and their families' life chances. There is still a strong focus on mental health and this has been reinforced with the recruitment of the 'Wellbeing worker'. The Wellbeing Worker provides support for people with low to moderate mental health conditions predominately depression and anxiety

Members will recall that The Balsam Centre successfully applied for funding from South West Foundation for a project to support those 'furthest from the labour market'. This has been match-funded by Area East and Wincanton Town Council to establish a part-time post to provide support and training for those experiencing difficulties gaining or maintaining employment.

The 'Job Done' project has been successful and links with the volunteering and wellbeing work very effectively to provide support to a very wide range of people with complicated needs. The projects funding is coming to an end but the centre still value its importance highly within their service. A review of the programme and how it can be integrated within a new refreshed approach is currently underway as part of the larger service review of operations at the Balsam Centre.

With 97 residents out of 3,100 residents between the working ages of 16-64yr olds currently unemployed (3.1% of population) in Wincanton, there is a need to focus attentions towards employability skills, training and jobs (data from 2011 Ward profile). The Balsam Centre has the experience and profile to target unemployment not only in the town but in the surrounding parishes and towns as their stretch of operations reaches further than just Wincanton. Within the current review of operational programmes there is an opportunity to evaluate past projects and to develop new multi-agency co-ordinated programmes to meet this local need.

The Balsam Centre's Sure Start role continues to include the management of the Castle Cary Children's Centre. Children's Centre provision in the County is facing significant challenges as funding reduces. It is therefore particularly important that the Healthy Living strands of work continue to develop and attract funding from a variety of sources.

The Centre are continuing to increase and develop their programme and have included new programmes such as the Touch wood well-being groups activities around forest school for

children and families as well as the expansion of the 'Men's Shed' project which is increasing in numbers and helping combat isolation and mental health.

The Centre continues to generate income from use of the building and marketing the building is an ongoing priority. The weekly 'Makers Market' and successful 'Loose Ends' café has made a big difference and has increased footfall and increases local understanding of the centre and the services available. Total weekly 'uses' of the centre exceed 1200 with a range of community groups meeting and running classes/activities which include Painting and Drawing, Health Walks, Pilates, Textiles, Knitting, Beginners' IT and ESOL.

### **Financial Implications**

There is £10,000 transferred to Area East from the Healthy Living Pooled fund for allocation in 2014/15. If members agree the above recommendation, this will all be allocated.

### **Council Plan Implications**

Focus Four: Health & Communities: encouraging communities to be healthy, self-reliant and with individuals who are willing to help each other.

### **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

None as a direct result of the report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

The loss of services designed to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in target communities is likely to have a significant effect over time.

### **Background Papers**

N/a

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