

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

14 February 2023



Subject: Grant Funding Extension to The Active Wellbeing Society for Future Physical Activity Interventions

Report of: Mark Wiltshire – Interim Strategic Director, City Operations

Relevant Cabinet Member: Councillor Mariam Khan - Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care
Councillor Yvonne Mosquito - Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Relevant O & S Chair(s): Councillor Jack Deakin - Commonwealth Games Culture and Physical Activity
Councillor Akhlaq Ahmed - Resources

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 010749/2023		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Prior to 2017, in a time of funding stringency, there was a need to explore alternative organisational vehicles that could maximise the value of interventions aimed at enhancing opportunities for improving health through physical activity.
- 1.2 In December 2017 Cabinet approved the mutualisation of part of the Wellbeing Service to The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) to deliver a range of place-

based physical activity interventions and to provide strategic support to the Council in this area. The associated service and staff transferred from the Council on 9th July 2018.

- 1.3 Prior to the onset of Covid-19, TAWS role in increasing physical activity amongst citizens achieved a 54% growth in participation, however during the pandemic delivery was swiftly changed to deliver more focused services such as emergency food and supplies distribution and virtual wellbeing online activities.
- 1.4 In the post Covid-19 era the delivery model was modified again to build upon the work already undertaken by TAWS but including learning from the impact of the pandemic. A redefined specification was implemented in 2022/23 with new outputs based around supporting communities and working with them to find their way to increased activity and self-empowerment.
- 1.5 In line with the Council's commitment to deliver a bold legacy for Birmingham following the Commonwealth Games, the journey with communities, responding to their needs and working together to become more active and connected, is expected to continue for years to come. It is therefore proposed that the grant funding to TAWS be extended for a further 5 years, subject to annual consultation with the portfolio holder on the proposed model of delivery, under a variation to the existing funding agreement.
- 1.6 This report is being presented to Cabinet for a decision because the level of support sought exceeds delegated limits.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves a grant to The Active Wellbeing Society of up to maximum of £1.296m per annum and the variation and extension of the funding agreement, subject to annual consultation with the society and portfolio holder on the proposed financial settlement and model of delivery, for a further 5 years until 31st March 2028.
- 2.2 That Cabinet authorises the City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer (or their delegate) to agree and complete all necessary documents to give effect to the above recommendation.

3 Background

- 3.1 In 2012 the City Council was facing unprecedented financial challenges in the years ahead, and a contributing factor to this was significant overspends within its Sports Service and therefore, decisive, and urgent transformational change was required. In December 2013 Cabinet approved the proposed strategy for future leisure provision across the city which focused on the long-term viability of the leisure Service. The proposed outcome included a mixed economy for delivery, including asset transfer, management through external contractors, and the establishment of a Wellbeing Service.

- 3.2 In 2017, due to the ongoing pressures on the public purse and specifically on the Public Health and leisure budgets, it was identified that additional sources of funding would need to be identified to sustain the Wellbeing Service. An option to mutualise the service through a community benefit society came to the fore which would enable the drawdown of funding streams currently inaccessible to the Council, which were numerous within the wellbeing environment.
- 3.3 A report to cabinet in December 2017 approved A Sustainable Solution For The Future of The Wellbeing Service Outcomes, which would see the strategic arm of the Wellbeing Service and the outdoor offer transferred to a Community Benefit Society known as The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS). Principally TAWS would support the wellbeing of citizens and promote a physically and civically active lifestyle while removing barriers to participation, especially for those that are the most vulnerable or disadvantaged.
- 3.4 The services transferred to TAWS on 9th July 2018, underpinned by a 5-year funding agreement through to 31st March 2023, in the amount of circa £1.6m - £1.3m per annum. An additional £0.090m of funding was also provided to TAWS during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic for additional work.
- 3.5 TAWS have written a Birmingham Impact Report (2018-2022) which sets out the key impact of their work across the city since the current agreement commenced in 2018. Information and data from the report has been used to inform this Cabinet Report and a copy of the Birmingham Impact Report has been included as an appendix to this report.
- 3.6 Aligned to the Council Plan priorities of Birmingham being a great city to live in and citizens gaining maximum benefit from hosting the Commonwealth Games, TAWS have worked extensively with communities and partners to deliver meaningful engagement and interventions that disrupt and shift the balance of power so that communities have more of a say in their lives.
- 3.7 Between April 2018 and July 2022, TAWS have:
- Delivered 22,469 free physical and social activity sessions across the city in open green and grey spaces as well as community spaces.
 - Achieved 360,158 total attendances in activities including proportionately more of the City's most deprived citizens than average.
 - Offered more than a hundred different types of activities including led rides, walks and runs, Bikeability courses, Zumba, walking football, Active Street closures, gardening, litter picking, family multi-sports, and archery, to name a few.
 - Worked with communities to ensure their offer is holistic and inclusive to all.
 - Demonstrated that, prior to the onset of Covid-19, their role in increasing physical activity amongst citizens achieved a 54% growth in participation from 84,241 to 130,121 per annum.

3.8 TAWS have delivered numerous projects and activities over the years that have been wide-ranging, supporting people of all ages from all backgrounds to stay active, connected and lead happier, healthier lives. Projects of note include Active Travel, Active Parks (and ParkLives), Active Streets, Listen and Connect, and Community Food and Sharing. Some of the key achievements and impacts to date include:

- Over 7,500 free bikes distributed to citizens across Birmingham from the most deprived areas.
- 44,000 participations at Bikeability courses and 7,800 at learn to ride sessions, teaching thousands of children and adults to cycle.
- Over 10,500 participations in walk sessions, equivalent to 26,000 miles (based on average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour).
- 125,200 participations supporting people to stay active and connected to others and their local green spaces.
- 125 different open green spaces and parks utilised for the benefit of local communities.
- 240 active street and car park closures across the city.
- 6,915 listen and connect calls made to participants, resulting in 1,860 hours of telephone support.
- 100 individuals supported through a pathway from phone to in-person social and physical activity sessions.
- 35 tonnes of surplus food cooked into 62,019 nutritious hot meals and served at TAWS community cafes and Big Feed van at sit-down or takeaway meals, helping to reduce food waste.
- 1,163 items borrowed from TAWS two Share Shack sites and numerous pop-up Share Shacks in the community (since September 2021), including sports equipment, DIY gardening tools, games, saucepans, sewing machines, and books, and encouraging people to reduce consumption and waste.

3.9 The Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted on the ability of TAWS to deliver outdoor leisure/wellbeing activities with repeated lockdowns and ongoing social distancing rules halting most services. In response to the crisis, TAWS swiftly designed a revised service offering with the support of the Council and secured additional funding totalling £0.090m. Collectively branded as #BrumTogether, this consisted of 4 main pillars: Emergency food and supplies distribution, Virtual Wellbeing online activities, Telephone Befriending Service, and Positive Stories. Some of the key achievements and impacts delivered by TAWS throughout the period of the pandemic, as part of their core grant agreement, included:

- 84,874 food parcels packed and delivered to 48,629 households

- 42,107 hot meals cooked and delivered to households or distributed at community cafes.
- A total of 1,053 tonnes food sorted and redistributed throughout the city.
- 1,203 online video sessions designed and delivered live providing 968 hours of content
- 6,038 residents supported through a telephone befriending service.

3.10 In the post Covid-19 era Council officers worked with TAWS to vary the delivery model again to build upon the work already undertaken by TAWS but including learning from the impact of the pandemic. A redefined specification was developed and implemented in April 2022 based on new outputs that better support communities and enable TAWS to work with them to find their way to increased activity and self-empowerment. Over the course of 2022/23 TAWS are expected to deliver more than 900 physical activity interventions aimed at some of the most deprived citizens of Birmingham. Some of the key delivery projects will include Big Birmingham Bikes / Bikeability, Active Parks, Active Streets, Walking & Running (formally Run Birmingham), This Girl Can, and further online virtual activities.

3.11 Over the past 4½ years, TAWS have also grown and expanded their workforce to support a wide range of projects. While initially 19 staff TUPE transferred from the Council as part of a team of 30 employees back in July 2018, TAWS now employ over 140 individual staff, providing the full-time equivalent of 103 staff. TAWS are an important employer in the Birmingham region with 73% of staff who live in Birmingham residing in IMD quintiles 1 and 2 areas. Since 2018 TAWS have also worked with around 1,500 individual volunteers, developing their skills to support their communities, with many going on to find employment either with TAWS or elsewhere.

3.12 Aligned with Council objectives, TAWS also deliver an annual youth employment programme that offers young people aged 16-24 the opportunity to support community projects through paid work experience. To date TAWS has employed and developed 259 young people and provided permanent and stable employment to 21 young people.

3.13 As well as providing practical interventions, TAWS also provide research, insight, and evidence to inform Council strategy and decisions including delivering on commissions with Birmingham Public Health. TAWS provide strategic support on Community Sport and Physical Activity for the Council and represent the authority on key projects including:

- Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Community Legacy Fund.
- Sport England Commonwealth Active Communities Fund.
- Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Sustainability Working Group.

- Representation for the City in the LGA Members Academy for Sport and Physical Activity.
 - Other various strategic support and consultancy.
- 3.14 TAWS also works with the Council's department for Public Health to ensure that the strategy for an active city aligns with the work being undertaken across the system on the Local Delivery Pilot and Commonwealth Games. This includes best practice work around Proportionate Universalism and the wider determinants of health. TAWS also ensure that learning from the Local Delivery Pilot around active environments is woven into other Public Health considerations around the synergy between the Council resources (like sites) and the wider city green infrastructure i.e. bikes/parks/canals near to Wellbeing Centres.
- 3.15 TAWS have also provided the Council with continuous IT support for its Wellbeing Centres and Hubs, particularly regarding LeisureFlex management and maintenance, customer services support, leisure sites training and advising, data inputting, and providing performance and insight reporting. This will change in the future when the Council implements a new IT system, and this will be reflected in a revised funding agreement with TAWS.
- 3.16 As the Council's accountable body for the Sport England funded Local Delivery Pilot programme, TAWS has also secured further funding for it in two further rounds which the Council are hopeful will now extend beyond 2025.
- 3.17 TAWS have also collaboratively secured an additional £5 million of funding for partners in the city from a range of other sources including health, Department for Transport, Department for Education, Food for Life, DEFRA, NLCF, Direct Line, Cycling UK, and NHSE.D. Utilising their expertise TAWS will be looking to lead more consortia bids in the future that will bring additional funding to TAWS and/or to the Council.
- 3.18 The work undertaken by TAWS during the first 4½ years of the funding agreement supports how working with citizens to get them more active significantly contributes to tackling health inequalities and improves both overall life expectancy as well as life lived in health. Simply put, more physically active citizens are more efficient in terms of health, social care, and employability.
- 3.19 Building on the Council's partnership with TAWS to date, it is now proposed to extend the grant funding agreement for a further 5 years, subject to annual consultation with the portfolio holder on the proposed model of delivery, until 31st March 2028. The grant funding would amount to no more than £1.296m per annum, made up from a contribution of £0.996m from the Sports Service, and up to £0.300m from Public Health subject to the satisfactory achievement of annual Key Performance Indicators and targeting expectations.
- 3.20 If an extension to the grant funding is approved, then a variation to funding agreement would be developed with TAWS in conjunction with Public Health and the Sports Service. This would use the existing delivery model as a base but utilise the body of evidence that has been established to date to inform further

changes that will meet the ongoing delivery requirements within the available grant funding envelope. A revised set of Key Performance Indicators and targeting expectations would also be incorporated that better demonstrate the impact that the physical activity interventions are having on inactivity across the city. In turn, these would be used to inform any required changes over the term of the agreement, including outcomes arising from the future Sports and Physical Activity Strategy.

- 3.21 Utilisation of the annual £0.300m Public Health grant contribution is dependent upon maintenance of the grant and may be subject to reductions in line with changes to the grant allocation over the term of the TAWS agreement. Therefore, a revised set of Key Performance Indicators and targeting expectations would be used to benchmark TAWS performance and to determine the level of Public Health grant support allocated each year, up to a maximum of £0.300m per annum.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 **To do nothing and stop all further funding** – This option was discounted as it would severely impact some of the key physical activity interventions that support the Council's statutory duties for public health, including the improvement of the local population's health by contributing to healthier lifestyles and mental wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, obesity rates and physical inactivity. Furthermore, stopping the provision would adversely impact areas of the City where health inequalities are highest, and the needs are the greatest.
- 4.2 **To procure an alternative provider** – This option was discounted as TAWS was established in 2017 for the very purpose of transferring existing staff and services to deliver a range of outcomes on behalf of the Council, with the benefit of increased autonomy via a participative community benefit structure. As a result, TAWS have the systems, capability, skills, and flexibility to deliver the required outcomes and represent the best value for money when compared to the market.
- 4.3 **To bring the services back in-house** – This option was discounted as the in-house preferred test was undertaken and demonstrated that this service is not suitable for delivery in-house. The Council no longer has the systems, capability, skills, and flexibility to deliver the required outcomes within the timescales, quality, and demand requirements.
- 4.4 Recommended Proposal – **To extend grant funding to The Active Wellbeing Society of up to £1.296m per annum for a further 5 years** – this is the recommended option based on value for money and TAWS being the Council's delivery partner with the appropriate governance, structure, and ability to deliver the required physical activity interventions that will serve to improve the local population's health by contributing to healthier lifestyles and mental wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, obesity rates and physical inactivity.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Public Health have been fully engaged in the preparation of this report.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 Extending the grant funding to TAWS will ensure that the Council remains in a strong position to deliver physical activity intervention in support of the statutory duties for public health, while also continuing to support the development and promotion of a physically and civically active lifestyle for citizens, by removing barriers to participation for those that are the most vulnerable or disadvantaged.

7 Compliance Issues:

- 7.1 **How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**

- 7.2 **Council Plan Outcome 4 – Birmingham is a Great City to Live in:** Through its Sports Service Birmingham City Council strives to raise the quality of life and health of its citizens and to enhance its reputation as one of the UK's leading sporting cities. The city wants to work with organisations that support its vision for an excellent leisure service, by increasing participation, succeeding economically, and improving the health and wellbeing of the local communities that it serves.

- 7.3 **Council Plan Outcome 5 – Birmingham residents gain the maximum benefit from hosting the Commonwealth Games:** Through its Sports Service Birmingham City Council encourages citizens of all abilities and ages to engage in physical activity and improve their health and wellbeing. The city delivers high-quality sporting facilities for the benefit of our citizens.

- 7.4 **Delivering a bold legacy for Birmingham – An Aspirational City:** Through its Sports Service Birmingham City Council will use the Games as a catalyst for engaging young people in physical activity and ensuring children in care and care leavers are given the very best opportunities to partake in sporting and wellbeing opportunities.

- 7.5 **Delivering a bold legacy for Birmingham – A Healthy City:** Through its Sports Service Birmingham City Council will inspire and enable Birmingham citizens to improve and sustain their levels of physical activity and improve access to leisure and community infrastructure to increase physical activity opportunities for local communities.

- 7.6 **Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility (BBC4SR) –** Some of the elements of social value delivered by the agreement are listed in 3.8 above and within the appended Birmingham Impact Report (2018-2022). As part of the new grant conditions TAWS will be required to set out their social value commitments in a BBC4SR action plan.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Under Section 19 of the Local Government Act (Miscellaneous Provisions) 1976 the Council has the power to provide such recreational facilities as it thinks fit in its area and under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council may do anything which is incidental to the discharge of its functions

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The report seeks to approve a grant of up to £1.296m per annum to The Active Wellbeing Society for 5 years until 31st March 2028. Funding of the grant comprises two elements - £0.996m within the existing Sports Service Budget and £0.300m of Public Health Grant. The public health element is subject to delivery of specific key performance indicators in line with grant conditions. The level of grant provided could reduce within the 5-year period by way of 3 months' notice and a further cabinet decision.

10 Procurement Implications (if required)

- 10.1 There are no procurement implications from the recommendations in this report as TAWS will be funded by way of a grant.
- 10.2 **Performance Management** – The performance of TAWS against the standards set within the funding agreement will continue to be managed by the Sports Service Contracts Team.

11 Human Resources Implications (if required)

- 11.1 There are no Human Resources implications by extending the grant funding agreement.

12 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 12.1 There are not considered to be any adverse impacts associated with the recommendations in this report, as extension of the grant funding is not expected to have any material impact on the services already delivered.

13 Environment & Sustainability Assessment

- 13.1 An ESA has not been deemed necessary as this is a financial report with no sustainability/environmental implications.

14 Background Documents

- 14.1

List of appendices accompanying this report:

Appendix 1 - The Active Wellbeing Society's Birmingham Impact Report (2018-2022)

Appendix 2 - EIA