

<h1>BRIEFING</h1>	TO:	Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive
	DATE:	22 nd September 2021
	LEAD OFFICER:	Steve Eling Policy & Equalities Manager Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate Steve.eling@rotherham.gov.uk
	TITLE:	Food resilience development

1. Background

- 1.1** As part of the Council's budget setting process for 2021/22, approval was given to a £100,000 investment allocation to develop further approaches to supporting people in crisis and tackling food poverty.
- 1.2** Strategically, the food resilience development model and actions build on the experience to date to broaden the outcomes to helping people move out of crisis, and crisis prevention. To this is end, whilst food remains at the centre of the model, sustainable outcomes for people will be attained through approaches that engage them over time rather than one off help, and link to a range of advice and support services.
- 1.3** Taking forward food resilience builds on a number of principles covering:
- The social supermarket model is a development in tackling food poverty, not a replacement for existing functions, but it would seek to reduce reliance on the crisis provision, especially where some people regularly need help.
 - The model is be based on a contribution principle or ethos so that people feel they've contributed something whether that be a nominal monetary payment or payment in kind through time, skills etc.
 - The proposals build on what already exists but also looks to broaden the reach across Rotherham and the offer.
 - There will be key links to the prevention agenda, developing a model that enables people using the social supermarket to gain access to wider advice, guidance and job coaching/ support.
 - The model will be taken forward through the existing Food for People in Crisis Partnership, crisis support networks, but develop better links to training and employment schemes and opportunities.
- 1.4** Within the broader strategy, the investment allocation has a principal focus on developing social supermarkets. It will develop them beyond the stage that would have been achievable through current Food in Crisis Partnership plans.
- 1.5** The Food in Crisis Partnership and existing VCS foodbanks provide coverage for the whole of Rotherham. Many provide a range of other functions and services in the community and make referrals to other providers including advice. The development of social supermarkets, as part of the Partnership's approach, to date, includes Rotherham three social supermarkets with other VCS organisations having potential to develop.

1.6	The proposed development approach will seek to enhance and build on the work of the existing Partnership approach with VCS foodbanks. This will incorporate the new models with a specific focus of invitations to bid for support for social supermarkets developments. The whole of Rotherham approach that has been taken to crisis support will be continues, developing social supermarkets serving north, central and south parts of Rotherham.
1.7	The budget allocation originally proposed support for two sets of activity, building on experience gained during the COVID 19 emergency, and delivered through the Council's partnership working with crisis support partners.
1.8	The first proposal was to extend the provision of non-food stock to be included with crisis food parcels. The provision of food continues as part of the current SLA. Non-food stock (personal hygiene; sanitary products etc) has proved invaluable as part of the COVID 19 response.
1.9	The second proposal was to support activity in community organisations to evolve the "social supermarket" and similar models, sometimes referred to as "food pantries". This model is about working to prevent people facing food poverty and reduce the number of people having to turn to crisis support. Funding for this approach is likely to attract leverage of external funding targeted at innovative work.
1.10	The funding profile for the £100,000 allocation was proposed to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-food stock - £40,000. • Social Supermarket and similar models - £60,000.
1.11	Since the headline proposals for the budget allocation were drafted, the use of COVID related grant funding has enabled the purchase of a significant stock of non-food items, which will probably be sufficient to meet the needs for the year ahead. Consequently, the co-design has focussed the total allocation for use in developing social supermarkets and other food related interventions that would form a food resilience model. Finance have confirmed that this adjustment is acceptable.

2. Key Issues

2.1	Since the abolition of the Discretionary Social Fund in 2013 and the expectation that councils would support local welfare provision, the Council has developed a track record of working in partnership to assist people who experience crisis through the provision of food and loans.
2.2	The development of partnership working now provides a three-year service level agreement (SLA) with the key partners of Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), FareShare Yorkshire and LASER Credit Union. VAR facilitate a "Food for people in crisis partnership" of local organisations who receive food from FareShare and provide support to local residents. LASER take referrals and applications for crisis loans, diverting people from resorting to high-cost lending and loan sharks. The current SLA commenced in April 2020 and runs until March 2023.
2.3	The funding in the Crisis Support SLA involves £10,000 p.a. to VAR to support and facilitate the Food in Crisis Partnership and collect the data on demand and supply of crisis food. The Food in Crisis Partnership brings together a range of organisations, not just foodbanks, including advice sector and Department of Work and Pensions.
2.4	£30,000 is provided to FareShare Yorkshire. This supports infrastructure costs for the supply of food to local foodbanks. There is no cost for the food items. There are

currently sixteen operational foodbanks in Rotherham. Three are part of the Council, one in Adults and two in CYPS. FareShare supply food to all but one of the sixteen, with Rotherham Foodbank being part of Trussell Trust.

2.5 None of the VCS foodbanks receive any funding from the Council for foodbank activity.

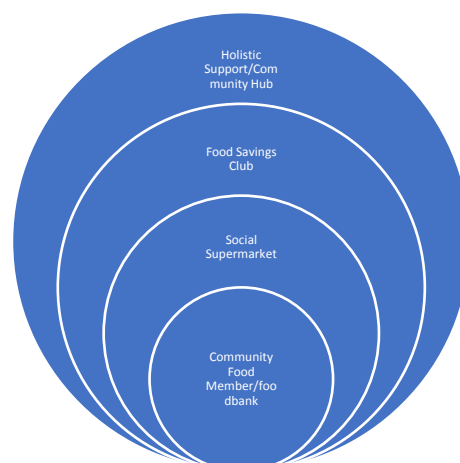
2.6 A developmental aspect included in the co-design of the current SLA is to explore and develop other food and support service models that would seek to divert people from experiencing crisis. This builds on the nature of provision by partner organisations, most of whom include a wide community support offer, not just food.

2.7 The solid partnership working, and the developmental approach served Rotherham well in responding to the COVID pandemic. Not only were there organisations ready to meet the additional demands, but also to take advantage of additional grant funding to improve their offer. New and innovative approaches were developed, some drawing on a small grants programme, to provide more comprehensive support to communities centred around food provision. This included the development of the first social supermarket in Rotherham.

2.8 This involves a dual focus on holistic, 'joined up' support and prevention work to cover will support the Food in Crisis Partnership and local VCS organisations to develop a whole sector broader support model, building on the work to date. This includes:

- Food Banks/Community Food Members
 - Providing emergency food to those who are struggling financially to afford food.
- Food savings clubs
 - Savings schemes to enable people to plan for the future and avoid future crisis situations.
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- Wrap around support/Community Hubs
 - Building on food provision and social supermarkets, by identifying further advice/ support and opportunities in order to prevent future food insecurity. This can include links to opportunities to employments and skills programmes. This could include a volunteering/peer support offer.

2.9 The diagram shows the inter-relationship between the four levels of activity, showing the role of social supermarkets in the context of the broader strategic approach:



2.10	<u>Areas for development work</u>
2.11	The allocation of additional resources in the 2021/22 budget has been taken forward to propose a co-designed model with partners aligning to the provisions of the current SLA. This involves evolution of the crisis support approach into one of food sustainability and crisis resilience.
2.12	There are currently two operational social supermarkets. Rotherham Timebuilders operate a range of wrap-around support. They were the first social supermarket in Rotherham and were assisted with set-up through a £5,000 small grant from a DEFRA funded source. Sunnyside Supplies is also operating a social supermarket which appears smaller scale and only offers membership for food at the moment.
2.13	The proposal takes forward the development through resources, good practice (building on what is operating well within Rotherham and further afield) and a designated development worker in post for a year.
2.14	To progress this approach, the Council will employ a Food Sustainability Development Officer for one year. The post will be located in the PPI Service, working with VCS partners through the Food in Crisis Partnership.
2.15	The whole of the £100,000 investment allocation will be used for a full year project profiled over two financial years, 2021/22 – 2022/23. The budget will cover the cost of the Development Officer post, circa £43,000. The remainder will be used to support the development of social supermarkets and related activity through a grants programme operated by the Council.
2.16	The work will include supporting VCS organisations to develop their capacity and business planning to be able to develop social supermarket models.
2.17	Grant support available would be provided through invitations to bid in accordance with the Council's standing orders. applications for grant support from any organisation would need to demonstrate the added value arising from the grant provided. This would apply to assisting social supermarkets already under development as well as new proposals. The aim is to ensure that the social supermarkets have robust establishments and business cases to ensure that they are sustainable. The grants will be development grants rather than ongoing revenue support, so the prospect of any duplication of funding, especially when the organisations concerned are not in receipt of direct grant support for their foodbank work, will be minimal.
2.18	Good practice and case studies will be completed as part of the one-year project approach to assist in future strategy development, including assisting partner organisations to develop their work.
2.19	<u>Budget considerations</u>
2.20	The investment funding allocation has been provided for one year only. Finance have indicated that any amount not spent at the end of March 2022 will be clawed back.
2.21	The proposals set out are based on a full year project from date of commencement of the development worker in post. This would be likely to incur no more than four months spend in 2021/22 with a likely £66,000 spend requirement in 2022/23.
2.22	The finance issue can be resolved by re-profiling of the spend over the two financial years 2021/22 – 22/23. Should this not be approved and the project proceed as planned, the 2022/23 spend requirement would fall as a pressure on the ACX Directorate budget.

3. Key Actions and Timelines

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| 3.1 | Once approved, the Food Sustainability Development Officer post will be recruited to. This is expected to be completed in the Autumn. |
| 3.2 | The detail of the project, as set out will run for one year from the date of appointment. |

4. Recommendations

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| 4.1 | That the budget of £100,000 be allocated to employment of a Food Sustainability Development Officer for one year and associated revenue funding focussing on the development of two to three sustainable social supermarkets and associated activity working with Food in Crisis Partnership and VCS partners. |
| 4.2 | Grant support available will be provided through invitations to bid in accordance with the Council's standing orders. applications for grant support from any organisation would need to demonstrate the added value arising from the grant provided. |