

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Deputy Leader
2.	Date:	14th October, 2013
3.	Title:	Food in Crisis Project
4.	Directorate:	Environment and Development Services

5. **Summary:**

There are a number of existing organisations in Rotherham providing support for people in crisis for food; these are mainly faith based organisations, most of these are reliant on good will and donations and are now struggling to meet the increasing demand for food. Some of these organisations have been providing this support over a number of years but have over the last 12 months seen a rapid increase in people accessing their food in crisis support services.

This report focuses on a proposal to work with some of these organisations and others who have formed a Community Food Member (CFM) partnership. The report outlines a proposal (in partnership with FareShare Yorkshire) for the development of a 'Rotherham Centre' for the centralised distribution of food to CFM organisations. This will enable a more regular and sustainable approach to the provision of food for people in food poverty. It is anticipated that through the collection and sharing of information, that a greater understanding of why people find themselves in food crisis can be gained to avoid recurrent crisis situations.

The proposal is that RMBC awards the contract to FareShare Yorkshire (FSY) to supply food to organisations working with people in crisis in Rotherham through the development of a hub and spoke model. FSY are a charity, affiliated to the national FareShare organisation. FSY currently operate across Yorkshire and have contracts with major supermarkets and food retailers for the redistribution of their surplus food. Given that FSY have this arrangement, and have access to regular amounts of surplus food from a number of major food retailers, they are the obvious choice to deliver this service. Currently, there are no other known organisations that can deliver the same level of service operating in the area, therefore the proposal is that this service is not tendered and the contract is awarded to FareShare Yorkshire from 1st October 2013 until 31st October, 2014.

5. **Recommendations**

The Deputy Leader is recommended to:

- 6.1 exempt the Food in Crisis Service from Standing order 47 (contracts valued at less than 50,000 should be commissioned) in line with standing order 38 (exemptions).**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

As with many parts of the country, there has been a growing awareness of food poverty as an issue facing an increasing number of individuals and families living in Rotherham. From research, the main cause of crisis among people seeking food relates to benefit issues such as delays or changes.

We have around 10 organisations dealing with people in crisis that have expressed an interest to form a Community Food Member (CFM) partnership. The organisations in the CFM partnership range from some faith based organisations that are part of an existing Food in Crisis partnership as well as some emerging organisations that deal directly with people in crisis. Demand for food is increasing and it is estimated that organisations in the Food In Crisis Partnership have been distributing around 600 food parcels and preparing around 2,200 cooked meals each month. Demand is proving unsustainable, in that the organisations can not keep a regular supply of the right food at the right time, thereby providing inconsistency across the piece, it has also proved difficult in the past based on current information collected on why the person has got to a crisis situation and what support is in place to move them into a more resilient situation.

Clients seeking food, range from those with short term financial difficulties to those with longer term issues, such as mental health problems or drug and alcohol dependency. In the majority of cases, the causes of a crisis relate to delays or changes to welfare benefits and debt.

7.2 Purpose of the Food in Crisis Project

RMBC and partners are committed to ensuring people in crisis receive timely, holistic support to address their immediate needs and trying to prevent problems from reoccurring. The *fund for change*, RMBC's local welfare provision scheme, provides interest free loans (via Laser Credit) or grants to those needing urgent financial assistance.

To respond to the growing issue of food poverty in Rotherham, work has been undertaken to identify a reliable source for existing and additional food for CFM organisations at no or limited cost to those organisations.

There are a number of elements relating to people in 'food crisis' that RMBC would want to address:-

- A regular supply of food (of the type required) for CFM organisations that does not create unsustainable demand or unintentionally provide support to those not in real crisis.
- A better understanding of the underlying issues facing people in food related poverty based on appropriate data/info collection and sharing.
- Appropriate support to people in crisis to minimise/prevent 'repeats' and to increase resilience
- Where possible, earlier identification of those most at risk and the provision of appropriate prevention and early intervention services (including supporting better financial capability and budgeting skills)

- Promoting healthy eating and cooking and growing of food within local communities.

7.3 A Rotherham Centre managed by FareShare Yorkshire

FareShare Yorkshire is a national charity, who currently redistributes surplus 'fit for purpose' food to organisations working with disadvantaged communities. They have a regional base in Barnsley from where they currently supply groups across Yorkshire, including some organisations in Rotherham. FSY supply both non ambient food (chilled / frozen food requiring refrigeration / freezers) and ambient food i.e. tins, dry and packaged food items that do not require refrigeration and can be stored in cupboards.

The proposal is that FSY will utilise premises in Rotherham, which they would use as a distribution centre to store and stockpile food supplies, especially those of high demand. This would enable FSY to provide surplus food to around fifteen (depending on demand this could fluctuate) CFM organisations, providing a regular supply of food to those organisations. This new Rotherham distribution centre would initially operate for one day a week and function as a centralised base from which CFMs could come to collect / or have deliver of a range of ambient food items suited to individual needs. FSY would manage the arrangements with individual CFM organisations, maintaining regular communication around food orders and deliveries. The Rotherham storage and distribution centre would enable the storage of food items that could be provided on demand but also enable the stockpiling of high demand items. It is proposed that until a premises is secured as an interim arrangement (Phase 1) FareShare Yorkshire would directly deliver to up to 7 (determined as those in greatest need) registered CFM organisations. Once the centre has been secured and operational (Phase 2) would commence which would provide a supply of food for up to 15 or more organisations.

The model could evolve as appropriate, for example by providing other goods from the centre or enabling other goods/donations to be stored. The use and development of volunteers will be explored along with any potential training opportunities e.g. warehouse training and there is the potential to explore mutually beneficial partnerships e.g. by working with RCAT.

7.3 Contractual Arrangements with FareShare Yorkshire

It is believed that FareShare Yorkshire are the only organisation that have the experience and the appropriate suppliers and can currently provide on a regular basis this level of food supplies to this number of organisations. FareShare Yorkshire are currently working in the Yorkshire area and have arrangements with 10 other organisations in Rotherham, some for non ambient food supplies so they are the ideal organisation to deliver this proposed project and manage the Rotherham Centre.

Given the lack of providers in the market delivering similar services, any competitive tendering process would be an inappropriate use of resources (people and time), especially given the value of the contract. This food in crisis provision cannot be addressed under any other existing RMBC contract arrangement. Therefore, an exemption from the Council's standing orders for the requirement to undertake a tendering process is required.

In line with usual commissioning practice, there will be a contract between RMBC and FareShare Yorkshire which will include the service requirements. The usual contract review meetings will be held to monitor performance and determine the success of the project.

8. Finance

FareShare Yorkshire aim to deliver 100kg of food to each CFM per week until the centre has been established.

Phase one: up to £7,500 p.a. pro rata for the period of time it takes to secure and open a centre in Rotherham, to include coordination of the food supplies, collection of monitoring information and delivery to an agreed number of organisations. These costs will reduce once the centre has been established, given the direct delivery of food will no longer be required. It is estimated that Phase two of the project will bring in around 1500kg of food weekly.

Phase two: approx £25,000 per annum to include the project management, leadership, coordination of a food centre to be open 1 day per week, sourcing food for up to 16 organisations.

Unknowns at this stage: any potential cost of premises and utilities.

Allocated resource: local welfare provision (fund for change) year 1 allocation.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Not undertaking a competitive tendering process could result in some challenge from existing service providers about the decision to award the contract. This risk is felt to be low.

This food in crisis service relies on the contracts that FareShare Yorkshire have with the major supermarkets. This enables the regular supply of cost effective surplus food to be provide to CFM organisations, who in turn distribute food parcels to individuals in food crisis.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The provision of food in crisis relates to the community strategy priority around supporting those who are vulnerable in our community.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

None

Contact Name:
Carole Haywood, Partnerships and Policy Manager
Planning Regeneration and Cultural services
Environmental and Developmental Services