



## Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Executive	10 September 2020	All

Delete as appropriate:	Exempt	Non-exempt

## **SUBJECT: Arrangements for youth work delivered from Lift, Platform and Rose Bowl between April and October 2021**

### **1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 Islington currently secures parts of its offer of youth work for young people aged 13 and upwards through services which are delivered from Lift (Barnsbury ward: 45 White Lion Street), Platform (Finsbury Park ward: Tiltman Place, off Hornsey Road) and Rose Bowl (Canonbury ward: St Paul's Park, off St Paul's Road).

There are currently two contracts in place, one for Lift and Platform, one for Rose Bowl. Both contracts expire on 31 March 2021. Both contracts are currently held by one provider.

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the council has not been able to complete the engagement and scoping work required to ensure that it can procure new contracts which are financially sustainable and viable. It is also important that any new contract is able to deliver youth work which effectively engages and supports local and vulnerable young people.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To agree the proposed continuation of arrangements with the current service provider of youth work services at Lift, Platform and Rose Bowl until 31 October 2021.

- 2.2 To agree to the proposal for the council to undertake a process of engagement with young people, local ward members, children's services professionals and other stakeholders in order to agree and test different approaches to the youth work delivery in the borough.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Islington currently secures an extensive offer of universal, or 'open for all' youth work for young people aged 13 and up (8 and upwards for Rose Bowl). This is delivered borough wide, across the year and includes:
- two integrated youth service hubs, Lift and Platform. These are borough wide provisions which provide a range of services and opportunities in high quality, aspirational spaces, including a 30-station gym, a commercial kitchen, an 80 seat theatre, 2 dance studios, recording and production spaces, a cafe and a roof terrace. A range of services are available to young people including careers guidance, sexual health and counselling. In 2019-20, 1,997 young people accessed Lift and 963 accessed Platform.
  - three youth centres, the Zone, Rose Bowl and Soapbox. These centres offer different opportunities depending on their facilities. The Zone is managed by the council's Targeted Youth Support Service (TYS) and is outside the scope of this report, as is Soapbox where a new contract has been procured which commenced in April 2020. In 2019-20, 128 children (aged up to 12) and 217 young people (aged 13+) accessed Rose Bowl and 706 accessed Soapbox.
  - a range of community based youth work and leisure opportunities delivered at Mary's Youth Club (St Mary's ward), Copenhagen Youth Project (Caledonian ward), Whittington Park Community Association (Junction ward) and Highbury Roundhouse (Highbury East ward).
  - Islington also supports a large range of other community provision working with young people through particular programmes and some small grants, including Islington Sports Academy, Islington & Finsbury Boxing Club, Access to Sports, Freightliners Farm, All Change Arts Inspire programme for young parents and pregnant young women and Prospex.
  - a comprehensive summer offer of engaging and exciting opportunities for those aged 13 and upwards ('Summerversity') and those aged 16 and upwards ('Launchpad'), which are delivered over the school summer holiday period.
- 3.2 This paper sets out a proposal to continue the current contractual arrangements with the current provider of Lift, Platform and Rose Bowl between April and October 2021. This is in order to allow the council to
- complete significant engagement work with young people and stakeholders to ensure that the youth offer/s procured for the borough meets the needs of local and vulnerable young people and is financially sustainable and viable.
- 3.3 Planned stakeholder work had to be postponed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The intention is to ensure that services for young people at these three venues are delivered without a break. Other arrangements will be made with regard to the other services set out in paragraph 3.1. The contract to operate and manage services from Soapbox was retendered in 2019. This contract was awarded to Dragon Hall Covent Garden Trust for a period of up to 15 years from 1 April 2020.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth spaces in Islington are currently only available to smaller groups of young people within current government guidance. Lift, Platform and Rose Bowl buildings were maintained effectively during the lockdown and safe re-mobilisation of in-person services took place gradually after 4 July 2020. A virtual offer for young people has been established which is engaging with new young people as well as those who previously attended in person at one of the services.

### 3.4 Estimated value

The core council investment for the elements of the youth offer in the scope of this proposal is up to £791,000 per annum for 2021-22. This equates to £461,500 for the period of the 7 month contract. This total includes resource applied to specific elements beyond youth work from the three spaces, namely, the delivery of the council's summer youth work offers, Summerversity and Launchpad and the employment, management and support of 3 Emotional Wellbeing Workers which are part of the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) pathway, funded by the CCG.

This core council investment in the Rose Bowl contract of £50k is supplemented by a further £50k which is raised by a group of local fundraisers in the Canonbury area, Friends of the Rose Bowl.

It is proposed to continue arrangements with the current provider of these two contracts in order to provide the time to complete stakeholder engagement which has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The specifics of the continued arrangements are set out in the legal implications section of this report.

The proposed continuation will be from 1 April 2021 to 31 October 2021.

The intention is that stakeholder engagement will focus on the offer for young people across the borough and the results of this work will inform procurement arrangements for (a) contract/s to commence on 1 November 2021.

The further intention is for the council to procure (a) contract/s for youth work and other services to be delivered from Lift and/or Rose Bowl from 1 November 2021 in due course.

An appraisal has been completed in consultation with key stakeholders, including Friends of the Rose Bowl, on the options for securing the services at these three venues given the impacts of COVID-19 on the stakeholder engagement which was previously planned.

The options to procure (a) new contract/s to commence on 1 April 2021 have been considered, however additional work is required in order to be able to agree a service

specification. Stakeholder engagement suggests that there is an appetite to ensure that relevant insights from this work are gathered ahead of any future procurement.

### 3.5 Key Considerations

The council intends to undertake a process of engagement with young people, local ward members, children's services professionals, Local youth providing VCS organisations and other stakeholders in order to identify, agree and test different approaches and models for the youth work delivery. For example, a number of very vulnerable young people who live in the neighbourhood do not engage with the current offer at Platform and this needs to be addressed and resolved via the new model. Additionally, 150 young people who live in the Finsbury Park ward attended Platform in 2019-20 which does not match the level of need.

Feedback from members indicates that they would like a stronger employment offer in Finsbury Park and for there to be a stronger, deeper and more consistent offer of neighbourhood based, detached youthwork in key areas of need, including on the Andover, Elthorne & New Orleans, Bemerton and Mayville estates, which would complement and enhance the existing TYS offer.

There is wider thinking emerging as to the longer-term future of Platform specifically. Whilst it is acknowledged that the significant capacity of Lift is likely to be able to be re-mobilised relatively quickly following COVID-19, there is concern that this may not be the case for Platform. The assessment is that the operating model for meeting the needs of young people in Finsbury Park may need to be different in the future.

The intention is that stakeholder engagement work is undertaken in two main streams:

1. The offer of youth work and opportunities for young people – what should this look like across the borough and specifically in the hotspot areas?
2. Platform - how can its value be maximised for the benefit of young people, including the most vulnerable, in the post-COVID-19 world?

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications:**

The current budget for this provision is £791k per annum which will allow the financing of the proposals set out in this report for April to October 2021.

### **4.2 Legal Implications:**

The council's existing contracts for provision of youth services at Rosebowl and Lift / Platform expires on 31 March 2021. There is no provision in either contract for any further extension and such extension is outside the modifications permitted by regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Accordingly, any extension would amount in law to a new contract for which a fresh procurement exercise would need to be undertaken

The value of the proposed 7 month extension falls below the financial threshold for 'light touch' services and therefore is out with the provisions of the 2015 regulations. However, in order to comply with EU principles of transparency and non discrimination competitive

tendering would normally be required. The council's Procurement Rules would require four competitive tenders to be sought. This requirement may be waived for good operational reasons. The reasons set out in the report would reasonably justify waiving the requirement for competitive tenders to enable a further 7 month extension.

There would a risk of challenge to the further extensions. However , that risk mitigated to a certain extent by;

- 1 relatively short length of the extension
- 2 the value falling below the financials threshold for light touch services
- 3 the impact of COVID 19 delaying preparation for re-tendering
- 4 limited market for provision of these services

#### **4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:**

The main environmental impact of the youth offer is the use of energy, water, and waste generation on the sites. Organisations running youth centres have a vested interest in ecologically sound practice, with council commissioners ensuring this is adhered to through robust contract monitoring and quality assurance processes in place which will continue during the proposed extension period.

#### **4.4 Resident Impact Assessment:**

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A Resident Impact Assessment was completed on 01/07/2020 and the summary is included below. The complete Resident Impact Assessment is appended.

Through the extension of the current contracted provision the council will ensure that there is no gap in provision for young people.

The services under the current contacts are likely to have positive impacts on residents of all ages as young people are supported through high quality youth work relationships to make the most of their teenage years and contribute positively to their communities. The service specifications require providers to have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that the services provided eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity.

## 5. Reason for recommendations

5.1 It is recommended to continue the current arrangements for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 October 2021 as this is the best interim arrangement in order to ensure:

- No break in youth work services for young people from these three venues
- Sufficient time is allocated to stakeholder engagement about the youth offer
- Work is undertaken to better understand how the value of the council's youth buildings can be implemented for the benefit of young people, including those who are vulnerable.

## Appendices

- Resident Impact Assessment

## Background papers

- None

Final report clearance:

### Signed by:



26 August 2020

Executive Member for Children,  
Young People and Families

Date

Report Author: Holly Toft  
Tel: 020 7527 8012  
Email: holly.toft@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Tim Partington  
Tel: 020 7527 1851  
Email: tim.partington@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: David Daniels  
Tel: 020 7527 3277  
Email: david.daniels@islington.gov.uk