

 Executive Committee – 10th July 2013		Agenda Item No. 9
Title	Mediation & Community Support Service	
For further information about this report please contact	Susie Drummond Susie.Drummond@warwickdc.gov.uk (01926) 456081	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A	
Background Papers	N/A	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan?	Yes
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	N/A

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive	03/06/13	Chris Elliott
Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer	03/06/13	Andrew Jones
CMT	03/06/13	Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	25/06/13	Mike Snow
Head of Service	03/06/13	Susie Drummond
Portfolio Holder	03/06/13	Councillors Doody & Mrs Grainger
Consultation & Community Engagement		
None		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report seeks Executive support for the Mediation & Community Support Service and a one-off financial contribution.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive supports the Mediation & Community Support (MACS) service, active in all wards in Warwick District.
- 2.2 That Executive notes that MACS is mainly a volunteer-run service which has recently been unsuccessful in a bid to their major funder.
- 2.3 That subject to agreeing recommendation 2.1, Executive agrees up to £14,230 being made available from the 2013/14 Contingency Budget to help finance the service.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In April of 2013, the Secretary of MACS (Mrs Judy Falp) approached this Council's Deputy Chief Executive to ascertain whether Warwick District Council could offer support to the MACS service. The MACS service provides Mediation and Conflict Resolution services to individuals, communities and businesses across Warwick District as well as Rugby & Stratford Districts:
- Mediation and conflict coaching empowers people to resolve their current conflicts and gives them skills and confidence to deal with future conflicts constructively. This prevents both escalation of conflicts and repeat complaints to statutory agencies such as environmental services, housing and the police.
 - When people are empowered to find their own solutions that meet their needs, they are much more likely to work, unlike solutions that are imposed on them.
 - Parties gain insight by listening to and understanding each other's points of view, feelings and needs.
 - Conflict within the community is reduced, communication improved, positive relationships are built in communities, tension and stress is reduced, leading to improved wellbeing, safer and stronger communities.
- 3.2 Mrs Falp advised that the MACS service has made recent funding applications to the following groups:
1. Big Lottery Reaching Communities (unsuccessful);
 2. Police Commissioners Innovation Fund;
 3. Tudor Trust.

The result of the funding application to Big Lottery has had a significant impact. All of the thirty-four Mediators are volunteers and MACS has 4 employees. With the reduction in funding MACS are no longer able to continue to employ their staff members or continue to rent their accommodation. They will be carrying on with Training, Workplace Mediation (both of which they get income from) and the Neighbour service until at least September. The Parent and Children work will stop as there will be no staff to run that part of the service.

- 3.3 MACS are continuing to make further applications for funding to ensure the service can be maintained. These include:
- The Police Innovation Fund for the Rugby area (a pilot to see if mediation combined with conflict coaching will reduce repeat complaints of low-level Anti-Social Behaviour);
 - Innovation fund for Stratford (specifically to deal with family work which is the majority of Stratford cases);
 - The Tudor Trust;
 - Esme Fairbairne;
 - Heart of England;
 - Lloyds TSB Foundation;
 - Local businesses.
- 3.4 The MACS service is free to residents of Warwick District. Fifty-seven new households in Warwick District were assisted in 2012/13. MACS has thirty-seven active volunteers, who deliver Mediation work and administrative support. MACS also provide Workplace Mediation and Conflict Resolution training programmes to businesses, which are charged for to raise funds for MACS. This work is growing steadily, and funds raised will be used for other costs and to ensure that the service becomes more sustainable in the future.
- 3.5 If the funding is unavailable the neighbourhood mediation work will decrease significantly, as there will be no co-ordinator to manage cases and the volunteers. This is the work that is important to WDC as conflict often causes increased officer time, police time, possible damage to our properties, and environmental health issues with noise.
- 3.6 The Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Corporate & Community Services advised Mrs Falp that an approach could be made to the Executive for interim funding for MACS. There is no funding in the Corporate & Community Services budgets for this, as the Voluntary and Community Sector is supported via commissioned work. It is ultimately a decision for the Council's Executive to make.
- 3.7 Members will appreciate that the request from MACS does not accord with the commissioning approach the Council has taken with regard to Voluntary and Community Sector services. This Council has tried to move away from large grants preferring to have in place more robust contractual arrangements. However, this should not mean that a one-size-fits-all approach should be doggedly adhered to. There will be circumstances when opportunities present themselves which merit Council support.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 This Council has endorsed the Sustainable Community Strategy for Warwick District. This includes the Priority Themes of Safer Communities and Health & Wellbeing, and the cross-cutting theme of Engaging and strengthening communities. The MACS service supports these themes:
- Mediation and conflict coaching empowers people to resolve their current conflicts and gives them skills and confidence to deal with future conflicts constructively. This prevents both escalation of conflicts and repeat complaints to statutory agencies such as environmental services, housing and the police.

- Conflict within the community is reduced; communication improved; positive relationships are built in communities; tension and stress is reduced, leading to improved wellbeing, and safer and stronger communities.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 Should Executive agree to match fund the project then £14,230 could be drawn down from the Contingency Budget which currently stands at £160,000 (subject to any other requests being considered at this Executive meeting).
- 5.2 The breakdown of the funding request is for interim funding for 6 months to include:

Salary for fund-raiser /co-ordinator 25 hours per week (incl. NI and Pension)	£12,500
Volunteer expenses	£600
Room hire for client and business meetings	£500
Telephone, internet and IT support	£630
Total	£14,230

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Executive could decide not to support the MACS service.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The aims of MACS are:
- Develop, promote and deliver a mediation service for the benefit of the general public and so enable people to find workable solutions in difficult situations
 - Educate people in the nature and causes of conflict and the use of peaceful conflict resolution methods such as mediation
 - Generate volunteering and employment opportunities and services for the benefit of individuals and local communities.
- 7.2 MACS service provides mediation to neighbours and whole communities experiencing disputes and anti-social behaviour. Mediation is a flexible process that can be used to settle disputes in a whole range of situations without the need for costly statutory interventions. It involves an independent third party - a mediator - who helps both sides come to an agreement. The mediators help parties reach a solution to their problem and to arrive at an outcome that both parties are happy to accept. Mediators don't take sides, make judgements or give advice. They are simply responsible for developing effective communications and building consensus between the parties. The focus of a mediation meeting is to help the parties reach a common sense settlement agreeable to all parties in a case. Mediation is a voluntary process and will only take place if both parties agree. It is confidential and the terms of discussion are not disclosed to any party outside the mediation meeting. If parties are unable to reach agreement, or one party does not want to use mediation, MACS can help by providing Conflict Coaching.

- 7.3 Conflict Coaching is a 'one-to-one' confidential, impartial service involving just one person experiencing conflict and the Coach. It offers people the opportunity to question and possibly change their responses to, or their views and beliefs about a situation. This is not to remain 'passive' in the face of unacceptable behaviour, it is to find a way of supporting themselves first in order that they can respond more effectively to the behaviour they find unacceptable or to find a different way of seeing the situation if they feel unable to do anything to change it. Through creating different responses or perspectives people give themselves a choice, and having good self-created choices leads to empowerment.
- 7.4 The following outcomes have been reported by Referral Agencies:
- A reduction in the number of people reporting the same problems after taking part in mediation;
 - A reduction in the need for costly legal intervention;
 - A reduction in the amount of time spent on dealing with conflict situations by the agency's staff.