

Taws Annual Report 17/18

Forward from the Chair

I am delighted to introduce our first annual report, which details our journey of “establishing ourselves”, but also at the same time continuing to deliver the innovative and fantastic services and programmes that we provide to the citizens and communities of Birmingham. Very early in the new calendar year we appointed our executive team members, starting with our CEO Karen and Directors, Steve and Ash followed by other interim and key appointments. After a major effort by our exec team, supported by our Company Secretary, we managed to TUPE over our delivery teams and integrated them in our great new premises in the Custard Factory. I cannot emphasise enough the extraordinary effort and commitment of our staff in making this happen and would pay tribute also to the support from BCC’s Leader, Councillor Ward in helping get this over the line. The work that has taken place in developing the detailed policies, working arrangements and service development in such a short period of time has been extraordinary, allied to the work on delivering our services and programmes by our staff teams. We have had in effect been building our ship whilst taking it out into choppy seas all at the same time!

I would like to thank the contribution that our society members and interim board have made in supporting, guiding and sometimes challenging the exec team to found and lead our organisation. At our first AGM we will begin the process of shaping our Board so it can bring together membership representation and the skills needed with three-year tenure of service.

The wellbeing service in Birmingham has since 2015 made great strides in delivering amazing services that uplift people’s lives; often in the most deprived parts of the city. We are now in a position as a community benefit society to continue that journey in partnership with the city to continue to make a difference and to help create wellbeing.

Chief Executive Report:

The financial year 17/18 was all about ‘being established’ for The Active Wellbeing Society.

Background:

In 2015 Birmingham City Council had established the Wellbeing Service, with the intention of transforming former leisure centres in the deprived parts of the city into Wellbeing Centres, and rolling out a programme of free outreach activities in parks and open spaces. The wellbeing service launched a free Bike initiative (Big Birmingham Bikes), and worked closely with Sport England as one of the core cities. Within a few months of the Wellbeing Service being established, the leader of the council at the time, Sir Albert Bore, put the council on notice with a paper including severe financial forecasting on the future funding model and service capacity for local authorities, known as the ‘Jaws of Doom’. As a result the Wellbeing Service was advised that as a non-statutory service it would be at risk for the future funding model. Political support for the outcomes that the Service was delivering was clear, and the Wellbeing Service Management team (SMT) were given a mandate to explore alternative service delivery models outside of the council for a potential externalisation solution. This was not unique to the council at the time, as a number of other non-statutory provisions were given similar mandates to explore.

The model:

The SMT spent time looking at a variety of potential models for the externalisation, and also went off visiting other organisations that had externalised from a local authority context. Later in 2016, an initial options appraisal and recommendation were presented to leader about possible models and process. There was an agreed way forward and the initial options appraisal was agreed to support a model of externalisation that both offered as much flexibility as possible to the new entity while also locking in the assets for community benefit and providing a public sector ethos as closely as possible. Sport England agree to help with business plan support and offered financial support as well as technical expertise. Consultants were identified to work with us on the model and devise an initial business plan. This work was underway by the beginning of the financial year 2017/18 and the SMT were given a mandate to start to form the shadow structure of a Community Benefit Society to assist the business planning required for any eventual externalisation.

Early Governance:

An Interim Board were identified, approached and recruited. The criteria for approaching the interim board members was on the basis of their knowledge of the service, or their skill set around establishing a new organisation, or their understanding of the needs of a new organisation and how to develop it, or their skills and expertise around risk management and business planning, or their knowledge of the council processes and ways to work proactively with the council to achieve change.

The interim board consisted of Ifor Jones (chair), with specific experience of managing complex change in BCC; Carol Coombes OBE, with specific experience of setting up new organisations, leadership in a public sector context, and experience of working directly with the SMT to develop their skill set; Sam Porter, with specific experience of business planning, mutual organisations, and senior level business expertise; Prof. David Cox, a former chair of *Be Active*, a keen knowledge of the Service, extensive experience of board level work, and experience of externalisation of services within the NHS; and John Cornett, lead auditor for KPMG East Midlands local government team with experience of risk management, working with Local Authorities, and business planning. The first formal board meeting was 11th May 2017 and at this meeting the society's name was agreed. The model was agreed and the Community Benefit Society was then incorporated by the interim Society Secretary Mark Johnson from Elderflower Legal Services.

Vision and values:

The Vision and Values for the CBS were established and agreed with interim board. They were summarised in the following presentation:

Vision and mission

We are a mutual society established in 2017.

We are grounded in the communities where change needs to take place the most, where inequalities are at their highest.

We work innovatively with organisations, institutions, communities and individuals to create a society where people have the autonomy, capacity, resources and skills to become the architects of their own destiny, creating and sustaining happy, healthy communities.

We are experts at delivering the necessary 'social knitting', using physical/social activities, that brings about sustainable societal change on a social, environmental and economic level.



Rules* of the Active Wellbeing Society Ltd.

A Advancing health & saving lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing participation in physical activity and exercise providing, or assisting in the provision of, recreation and other leisure time occupations in the interests of social welfare
B Advancing citizenship & community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing health inequalities associated with long-term physical and mental health conditions building social cohesion and increasing community capacity, in particular by increasing participation by under-represented groups, such as ethnic minorities and families in poverty
C Providing relief to those in need because of their youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or other disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bringing community assets and open spaces into public use and promoting investment in environmental improvement facilitating more active travel through non-restored routes engaging in any activities which in the reasonable opinion of the Board are conducive, and/or of potential to any of the above

* In accordance with the co-operative & community benefit societies Act 2014

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Initial funding:

During the early part of the financial year 2017/18, Birmingham City Council confirmed that it had set aside an initial amount of 'set up' grant for the new entity which was to be taken from some non-recurrent Public Health funding. The amount was confirmed as £200,000. Approval was given to use this money to set up the shadow organisation that the interim Board would oversee, and a condition of the spend was that some of it was to be spent on the production of a business plan to support the eventual case for externalisation. Around this time an application to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for £20,000 was submitted on a fund that was established to support council services to set up as independent mutual. The application was successful and the award made to The Active Wellbeing Society for £20,000 on 6th November 2017- our first successful tender for business.

During this time the Wellbeing Service senior management, in collaboration with colleagues from Solihull MBC, secured the Local Delivery Pilot status with Sport England, further securing TAWS as 'project leader' for the project. While there wasn't a set amount of funding outlined in the bid, the total funding pot for the 12 projects approved was £130 million.

Approval and 'go live':

Birmingham City Council Cabinet approval for business plan and green light for transfer of phase 1 outreach services was secured on 12th December 2017. BCC had proposed that the disposal of the wellbeing centres was to be delayed 12 months to allow for a full review of each site, with appropriate options being:

- Transfer to TAWS
- Asset Transfer to community organisation

c) Closure

It was confirmed however, that full transfer of all support teams and outreach work would take place from 1st April, with appropriate transfer of intellectual property, associated collateral, and that TAWS would deliver the strategic support for BCC that had previously been delivered by the Wellbeing Service SMT.

Within 10 days the board had responded with an advert in the Guardian for a Chief Executive. The board had been working closely with the Wellbeing Service SMT during the set up phase, and the report to cabinet had been delayed several times. By the time of approval the board were ready for the organisation to spring to life, and the recruitment of the directors and senior management team was a top priority.

By the end of January the Chief Executive had started work, office accommodation was secured and moved into, and there was a functioning space for the new staff to join. A small group of staff from the Wellbeing Service were released part time to support the development of the new organisation, ready for the eventual TUPE. By the end of February the two new directors had also been recruited, and due diligence was under way.



Doors open for business

During all of this the LDP work commenced and the new senior management team of TAWS, along with a couple of staff still within the BCC Wellbeing Service, started work on bringing the LDP to life as the project management function and the first award of £1 million was confirmed.

TUPE and transfer of assets:

The TUPE of the staff was scoped and negotiated with BCC as part of the due diligence. The business plan was revised in light of the LDP work, and also the restructure that BCC undertook ahead of the eventual TUPE. At the end of January BCC confirmed that they would not be able to complete the TUPE within the agreed timescales, and there was a revised completion date set of 30th June, with an eventual delay on the date to 9th July.

Achievements for the financial year:

- Funding secured to support set up
- Partner buy in secured
- Clear vision, values and purpose established
- Robust governance processes put in place
- Founder members established
- Expertise required to run business identified and secured

- Doors open and ready for TUPE

Closing statement:

It has been an honour, on a personal level, to lead the service from the council into TAWS. I am extremely proud of all the hard work and commitment of the staff, volunteers, and our partner organisations. The quality of our delivery could have easily suffered during this time, and people within BCC and TAWs have worked hard to prevent that from happening wherever possible. There is much to be proud of and build on, and there are many opportunities to capitalise on. This is an exciting time to be in Birmingham, working in this field, but we cannot underestimate the scope of the work we have to do and the level of need that some of the poorest people in our country experience here in Birmingham on a daily basis.

My thanks go to the interim board who kindly and wisely stewarded us out of the council and into a firm foundation from which to build. Their guidance and support has been second to none, and as founder members, they will always have a special place in the heart of the organisation. I would also like to thank our interim society secretary Mark, who guided us through incorporation and rule-making, and who sat patiently next to us through the due diligence phase, supporting us with clear legal expertise in, what were sometimes, difficult discussions.

We remain committed to ensuring that our services and interventions provide real opportunities to those in the most need. We remain focused on removing the barriers to engagement, speaking truth to power, and ensuring we are doing everything we can to amplify the voices of the least heard. There is much to do, let us do it with joy in our hearts and an open mind to the art of what is possible.

Karen Creavin

CEO, TAWS