

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 5 September 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director, Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Environment & Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Programmes Office Update

WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update to Corporate PPB on the work of the Programmes Office in securing external funding resources into Halton.

The Report covers the following areas:

- An update on the Programmes Office key activities and priorities.
- Emerging issues in external funding.
- Funding statistics for the period 2022-2023.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board note the report.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Report focuses on the period April 2022-March 2023; statistics are included for this period and a comparative review of the last five-year financial period (between April 2018 and March 2023).

3.2 The Programmes Office's role is to help maximize external funding into the Borough and to undertake the monitoring for large-scale grant programmes to ensure compliance and eliminate clawback. The Office, formerly the External Funding Team, was established in October and consists of the following posts:

- Programmes Office Manager
- Senior Funding Development Officer
- Funding Development Officer
- Senior Monitoring Officer
- Monitoring Officer x 1.5
- Funding Support Assistant
- Promotions Officer 0.5

A Team Structure chart is provided at Appendix 1.

- 3.3 The Team is responsible for preparing medium to large-scale funding bids (primarily over £50,000) on behalf of Council colleagues, public sector partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, with the aim of maximising external funding opportunities for Halton.

The Team focuses mainly on the following funding sources: Government, European, National Lottery, Landfill Funding, Trusts and Foundations.

Key functions of the Team include:

- Drafting or Proofing of large-scale funding bids.
- Monitoring of strategic grant programmes, including the submission of claims, in order to ensure compliance and eliminate clawback.
- Maintaining a strategic approach to funding to ensure the most appropriate bids from Halton are submitted and internal competition is averted.
- Undertaking funding searches for specific projects; bid writing and development of supporting documents, e.g., policies and business plans etc.
- Dissemination of funding information to target audiences, mainly via the production of monthly Funding Bulletins on a range of themes, including targeted Cost of Living and Climate Change Bulletins.
- Lobbying funders, developing strong relationships with key funding bodies, and participating in key forums to ensure Halton gets its fair share of funding.
- Developing strong partnerships with Council colleagues, and the voluntary and private sectors where appropriate, to submit joint bids.
- Develop and deliver a training programme for HBC colleagues and partner organisations to enable capacity building.

3.4 Key Priorities 2022-23

Emphasis over the period 2022-23 has been on:

- Embedding the new Programmes Office function, including recruitment to new posts
- Supporting the delivery of the Government's levelling up agenda, including Towns Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)
- Disseminating details of funding that will support the Cost of Living crisis
- Disseminating details of funding that will help mitigate climate change and help deliver HBC's Climate Change Action Plan
- Ensuring the remaining ESIF (European Strategic Investment

- Fund) is secured, spent and monitored.
- Supporting the development of the HBC Cultural Strategy and Heritage Open Days programme.

Examples of schemes supported include:

- Town Deal Monitoring and servicing of Town Deal Board
- UKSPF programme delivery and monitoring
- Completion of Ways to Work employment support programme
- Destination Marketing Programme delivery
- Supporting HBC colleagues and voluntary sector partners with a range of schemes

We continue to look at how we can further support HBC colleagues to bid for funding for priority schemes in order that we do not miss out on any appropriate funding streams. We are now tracking funding secured by the whole Economy, Enterprise and Property Dept, rather than just Programmes Office and this will be included in the next Report.

4.0 FUNDING CONTEXT AND EMERGING ISSUES

4.1 External Funding Environment – Challenges and Opportunities

- 4.1.1 Much funding, including National Lottery, now has a Cost of Living focus and we responded to this by producing a separate funding bulletin for a period of time which highlighted funding for organisations to support people experiencing difficulties relating to cost of living issues. An example of the Cost of Living Bulletin is included at Appendix 2.

Funders are also generally placing more emphasis on environmental sustainability /impact across all types of projects and programmes; this aligns with the Government's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the Team will be looking to ensure that all bids supported consider green measures in relation to their projects. We are supporting the Council's Climate Action Plan through identifying and helped to secure four grants from LCR's Community Environment Fund. We also sit on HBC's Climate Action Plan Group and produce a Climate Change Bulletin which identifies funding that could support this work – an example of the Bulletin is included at Appendix 3.

Additionally, funders are expecting bids to address EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) in all funding bids and again the Team is supporting potential bids to meet these requirements.

The Team continues to keep abreast of Government's levelling up agenda and any funding associated with this, e.g Towns Fund, UKSPF, Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership funding. The

Team is tracking all of these funds and prioritizing bids that HBC wishes to submit.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) continues to be the conduit for funding streams including One Public Estate, SIF, Community Environment Fund etc and the Team supports colleagues to access these funds where appropriate.

The Programmes Office, working in close collaboration with other Departments, needs to ensure well-planned, competitive, sustainable and, where possible, innovative projects are put forward for Halton's priorities.

The Programmes Office aims to respond to any changes in the current funding environment and maintain knowledge of new strands of funding; the Team maintains regular contact with some of the key funders, including landfill funders, Lottery funders and European and Government funding bodies.

The Programmes Office is able to provide the necessary expertise and experience regarding current bid-writing best-practice and key funder priorities and act as a liaison point with the funders. In a highly competitive field, the Team provides a critical yet objective eye to highlight both the threats and opportunities within each organisational plan, project proposal and chosen funding body. The Team has introduced a Business Justification Case to be completed by the lead officer before any support is initiated; this ensures that potential bids have been approved by senior management and have the resource in place to develop and deliver the project. A copy of this is included at Appendix 2.

Projects supported during 2022-23 in which the Team played a key role in securing and monitoring important grant investment to the Borough include:

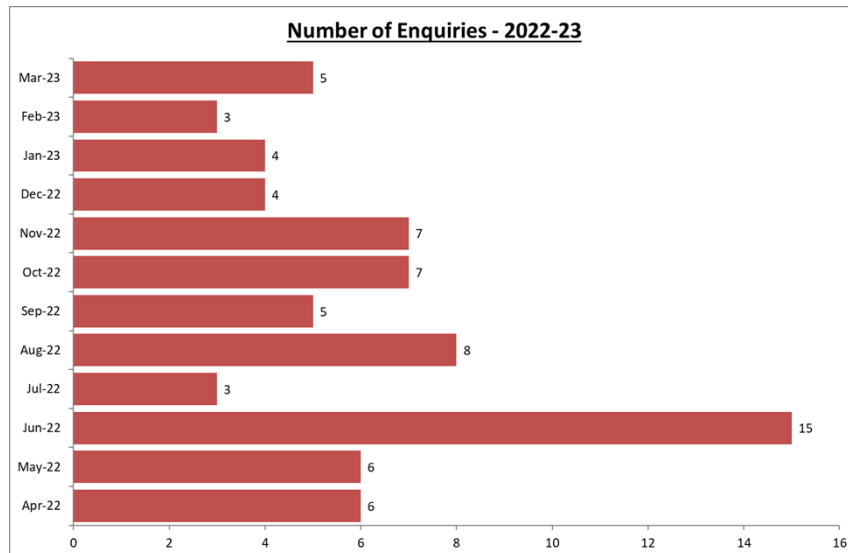
- St Berteline's Windmill Hill for the reconfiguration of the church building;
- Wat Phra Singh Buddhist Temple for replacement windows and a community garden;
- Trinity Safe Space to deliver support and activities for vulnerable people;
- LCR Community Environment Fund – four grants secured to deliver green projects in Halton;
- Development and Delivery of Halton's UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation;
- Delivery of Halton's element of an LCR-wide Destination Marketing campaign to promote the Borough to residents and visitors.

The work of the Team is summarised in our Annual Funding Review

which goes out to our networks – the latest version is included at Appendix 4.

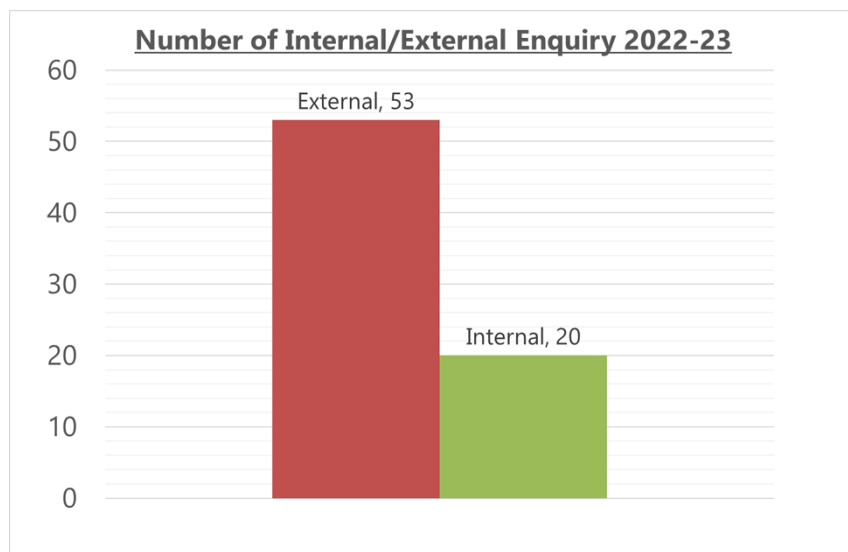
4.1.2 Capacity and Demand

Demand for the service remains steady; the Team received 73 requests for funding in 2022/23, many of which remain active with ongoing support. They are broken down by month in the table below.

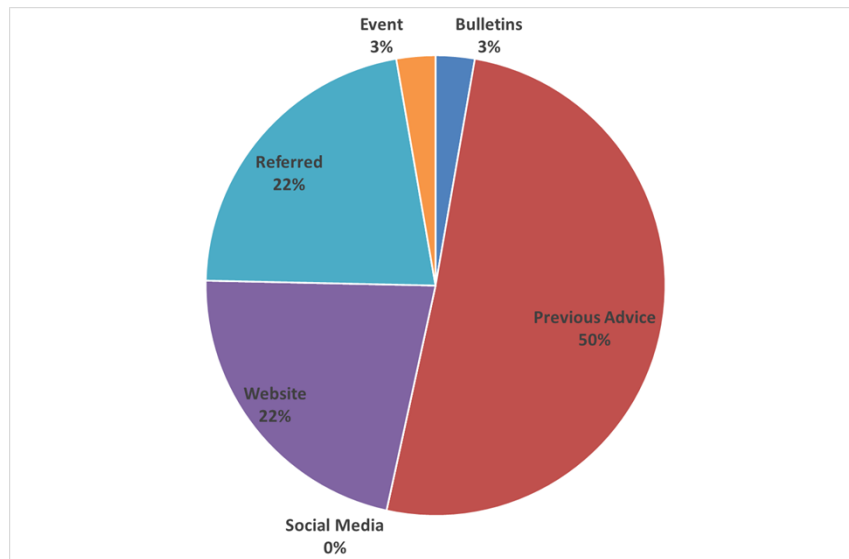


The Team works to full capacity which means decisions need to be made at times about where to allocate support, allowing the ability to respond to new enquiries and priorities, manage tight deadlines for bids, horizon scan to ensure opportunities are not missed etc.; Importantly, the Team does not drive projects, but specialises in sourcing funding and bid-writing; the Team does not 'own' bids, the 'owner' needs to drive the project as the specialist in that particular area.

Enquiries can be broken down into internal and external as follows:



This table shows a breakdown of the sources of funding.



Funding secured this year by the Programmes Office is £1.499m; this is lower than usual which sometimes is the case; the Team can be dealing with bids that take a long time to develop and then to receive a decision. Our current work profile includes the following:

Bids submitted awaiting a response - £5.2 million

Bids in draft - £4.9 million

The Team is currently monitoring projects worth £47.9 million. Our pipeline list gives a current profile of the projects the Team will be supporting over the coming year; this pipeline is subject to new priorities being identified – should this be the case; the new projects will be discussed with the Operational Director and relevant Portfolio Holder.

4.2 Key Schemes

Details of some of the key schemes the Team is currently supporting are outlined below:

4.2.1 Town Deal

The £23.6 million Town Deal Programme for Runcorn is one of the key priorities for the team. We are responsible for servicing the Town Deal Board meetings and also for collating and submitting the twice yearly monitoring reports which triggers an annual payment from Government.

One officer in the monitoring arm of the team is attached to each of the 8 schemes and works closely with the project leads to ensure monitoring information is collected and any risks mitigated.

We work closely with our finance officer to manage and profile the budgets, to ensure compliance and prevent the clawback of any funding.

4.2.2 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

The Programmes Office is leading on the monitoring of Halton's allocation of the Government's UKSPF funding stream; Halton is due to receive 7.9% of the total allocation and this t present amounts to around £3.5 million over the three year period 2022-2025.

Funding is released in phases and the strands that are currently live are:

- Green, Resilient, Safe Communities
- Local Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Town Centres

An Investment Plan was submitted to cover these three strands which total £608k to end March 2025. Quarterly claims in arrears are made to the CA.

Forthcoming strands include a business support programme and an employment support programmes.

4.2.3 Destination Marketing

The Programmes Office is delivering Halton's allocation of an LCR Destination Marketing programme; this is funded through the Strategic Investment Fund and runs from 2022-2025. Halton's allocation is £102,000 and the purpose of the programme is to encourage visitors to Liverpool to disperse around the Boroughs as part of their visit with a view to increasing visitor spend in those areas.

In Halton we have commissioned a specialist company called Vivid to deliver a series of campaigns to promote Halton, to relaunch the Visit Halton website and to re-establish Halton's Visitor Economy Network. Vivid are currently delivering a Halton Heritage Open Days campaign for the national Heritage Open Days scheme in September.

4.2.4 Community and Voluntary Sector

The Programmes Office maintains a remit to support voluntary and community sector organisations to secure funding to support their services as well as help deliver Halton's strategic priorities.

Projects currently being supported include:

- Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum to develop a

£1 million bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund to redevelop its heritage gallery and activity.

- St Bede's Church – capital work and community programme
- Open 360 – monitoring of National Lottery Community Fund grant
- Libraries Improvement Fund Arts Council bid

4.2.5 **Liverpool City Region and Cultural/Visitor Economy work**

The Team continues to undertake some key work with Liverpool City Region and Halton partners in relation to Visitor Economy and Culture:

- The Lead Funding Officer sits on the LEP's Visitor Economy Officers Group and is currently delivering the Halton element of a SIF funded Destination Management programme and on the Liverpool City Region Heritage Officers Group;
- The Team supports Cultivate: Halton Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) with funding bids to deliver a quality arts and cultural programme for people in Halton;
- The Lead Funding Officer sits on the LCR Culture Officers Group which is currently delivering an LCR-wide Bridge to Bamboo project;
- The Programmes Office Manager played a key role in the development of Halton's Cultural Strategy which will be published imminently and which is critical in securing funding via the Arts Council of England and National Lottery Heritage Fund. They also sit on Halton's Events Board looking to deliver a programme of cultural activity in the Borough;
- The Programmes Office also sits on and supports HBC's Climate Action Group, in particular identifying funding sources to enable the delivery of HBC's Climate Action Plan. The Team produces a monthly Climate Change Funding Bulletin.

4.3 **Impact Assessment work**

The Economy, Enterprise and Property Department agreed to undertake value system mapping exercises to look at where working practices could be made leaner; the Programmes Office chose to scrutinise the funding enquiry process and where this could be made more efficient and effective.

The exercise tracked how many funding enquiries were received, where from, which ones were retained by the team, which referred, which enquiries led onto successful funding bids etc;

Key findings included: two thirds of enquiries came from outside HBC and one third from colleagues; approximately half of all enquiries were referred on to more suitable support; approximately 2% of enquiries

were progressed and led on to funding bids; the longer the time spent working on a case led to a higher level of funding being secured.

The exercise concluded that the vast majority of enquirers were satisfied with the quality of service received and that the team works well with a wide range of groups and projects; it also led to a number of areas of improvement, for example, following up enquiries that don't return enquiry forms and the reasons for this; projects that are supported for a period then go quiet after time and effort have been expended by the team to develop bids; further engage with HBC colleagues who may not be aware of the services offered by the Programmes Office.

This will now be monitored on an annual basis and also other areas of the team's field of work scrutinised with the aim of continuing to improve the service offered.

4.4 Training

The Team has traditionally delivered a free Training Programme which is available to HBC colleagues and externally to the voluntary and other public sector partners which consisted of the following sessions:

- 2 x half-day Bid-Writing sessions.
- 2 x half day Monitoring and Evaluation sessions.
- 2 x half day Now You've Got Your Grant sessions.
- 2 x Developing a Fundraising Strategy.

The training sessions are continually updated to improve bid-writing skill levels among both internal and external colleagues and also give a greater understanding of the context in which funding bids are submitted helping to ensure that bids are prioritised and of the highest possible quality.

The Team has reviewed its training delivery and now offers instead bespoke courses to individual teams or organisations; we have already delivered a bid-writing course to colleagues in the Development and Investment Department and will be rolling out these courses to other HBC Departments over the coming year.

4.5 Funding Data

4.5.1 Funding Secured

In 2022-23 the Team helped to secure funding of £1.499m. The tables below summarise the funding secured in 2022-23 using different data sets:

Quarter	Funding Secured
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1	£144,994
2	£294,500
3	£229,000
4	£830,997

Type	Funding Secured
Ext	£735,491
Int	£764,000

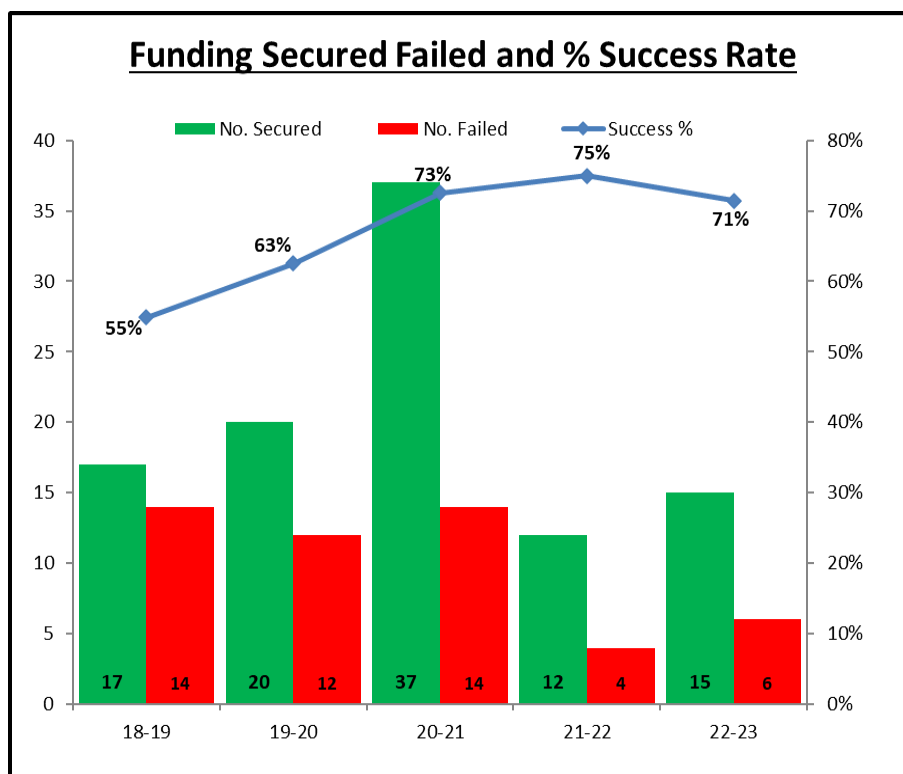
Funder	Funding Secured
Gov. Funding	£772,096
Landfill Trust	£295,997
National Lottery	£244,500
Trust Funding	£186,898

Organisation	Funding Secured
Catalyst SDC	£94,500
CHI	£150,000
HBC	£662,000
LCR/HBC	£102,000
Open 360	£23,035
Recharge & Restore CIC	£8,096
St Bertelines PCC (Windmill Hill)	£281,000
Trinity Methodist Church	£113,863
Wat Phra Singh Temple	£64,997

The table below shows details of the funding secured by the Programmes Office between April 2018 and March 2023.

Year	Funding Secured
2018-19	£3.12m
2019-20	£6.07m
2020-21	£12.7m
2021-22	£13.4m
2022-23	£1.49m

The total funding secured by the Programmes Office in the 5-year period was **£36.78m**. The table below show a graph of our percentage success rate with the number of bids failed and secured.



In the first few months of financial year 2023/24 we have secured funding of £295,941.

5.0 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

5.1 The Team's workload remains extremely busy; we continue to prioritise funding that is emerging through the Governments levelling up agenda, as well as funding opportunities via the Combined Authority in order to support HBC's priorities and to ensure Halton bids for these funds where appropriate. At the same time, we will continue with our remit to support our voluntary sector colleagues to secure funding to deliver their vital services across the Borough.

5.2 The external funding environment remains vibrant, if not competitive, and we look forward to securing further investment into the Borough in the year ahead to support the corporate vision and key strategic schemes going forward.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

All projects that request support from the Programmes Office must be supporting at least one of the Council's priorities.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

9.1 None identified.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

10.1 None identified.

11.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None identified.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.