

Central Bedfordshire Council

Executive

4 December 2018

Voluntary and Community Sector Funding Review – Phase 1

Report of: Cllr John Chatterley, Task Force Chairman
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Purpose of this report

To provide Members with the outcomes of the scrutiny task force review into voluntary and community infrastructure funding in Central Bedfordshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

- 1. consider the report and recommendations of the enquiry attached at Appendix A; and**
- 2. respond to the report within two months indicating what actions, if any, it proposes to take and if it decides to take no action, the reasons for that decision.**

Overview and Scrutiny Comments

1. The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Task Force recommendations at their meeting on 29 November 2018. The comments from the meeting are attached at Appendix B.

Background

2. At their meeting on 20 September 2018 Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a task force with the purpose to review the relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and determine the best solution to support them.

The scope of the review would also look at the nature and characteristics of the relationship between CBC and the voluntary and the community sector, how it is supported, its relevance and importance in the context of our corporate priorities, government policy and community outcomes.

3. In particular to focus on funding the role of the VCS Infrastructure organisations (Phase 1).
4. Members of the task force gathered evidence from a variety of sources including representatives of the three VCS Infrastructure Organisations, officers from each of the Council's directorates, national guidance and best practice in order to support the findings of the review.

Corporate Implications

5. The recommendations of the enquiry are aimed to support the Council's approach to Building Strong and Resilient Communities and Great Universal Services

Legal Implications

6. There are no direct or immediate legal implications arising from this report.
7. Infrastructure organisations support and encourage the wider voluntary and community sector on a range of capacity building needs. Their services comprise the provision of advice and information including funding searches, constitutions, policies, charity registration, community buildings, insurance and charity bank accounts, management and governance. Training on a range of issues including safeguarding; GDPR, volunteer recruitment, placement and support; sector representation and brokerage; and community development activity thereby helping the sector to develop and thrive and operate legally.

Financial and Risk Implications

8. The report is recommending that funding of £69,000 for the forthcoming financial year (2019/20) be allocated. This funding is not within the current MTFP so it will be an additional pressure.

Equalities Implications

9. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
10. The primary purpose of voluntary organisations is to create social impact rather than profit. As a whole, voluntary organisations engage with a huge range of issues – from youth clubs to specialist medical research. Most focus on a particular issue that needs solving such as community transport or unaffordable housing.

Others focus on a specific group in society who require support and representation, such as disabled people or women facing domestic abuse . Voluntary organisations achieve their aims through a wide range of activities, such as providing services or other forms of direct support and advice to the groups they help.

11. Volunteering also has positive individual impacts in terms of helping residents access future employment opportunities and engaging in meaningful activity, e.g. after retirement. Volunteering and active engagement can also prevent social isolation.
12. Infrastructure organisations support and encourage the wider voluntary and community sector (VCS) on a range of capacity building needs, helping the sector to develop and thrive. A reduction in the capacity of the local infrastructure organisations could have a negative impact in the following ways:
 - put at risk community cohesion as well as contracts and arrangements CBC and other organisations have with VCS organisations
 - impact on Good Neighbour Schemes and support to community building committees
 - VCSE organisations will find it harder to recruit, train, support and manage volunteers
 - Loss of oversight of capabilities and needs of local groups to promote high quality services
 - More challenging for residents to access the range of formal volunteering opportunities and get support to volunteer and choose the right opportunity.
 - Central Bedfordshire Council will find it harder to engage and consult with the local VCSE sector when they are required to do so.
13. 40% of local volunteering enquiries come from deprived households.

Conclusion and next Steps

14. The Committee is asked to consider and support the recommendations in the Phase 1 report so they may be referred to Executive. That Phase 2 of the review start in December 2018 and be reported to Corporate Resources OSC in March 2019.
15. If the recommendations are supported, it is suggested that the Committee requests an update from the Executive on the implementation of the recommendations within 6 months of their consideration in March next year.

Appendix A: VCS Funding Task Force Report

Appendix B: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Comments

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