

Central Bedfordshire Council

Executive

5 February 2019

Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Funding Review – Executive Response

Report of: Cllr Richard Wenham, Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Corporate Resources
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This report relates to a decision that is non-key.

Purpose of this report

To respond to the outcomes of the scrutiny task force review into voluntary and community infrastructure funding in Central Bedfordshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive is asked to:

1. agree the response of the Executive to the scrutiny task force recommendations contained at Appendix 1;
2. note that in parallel with the review of funding for the three Voluntary and Community sector infrastructure organisations, £69,000 has been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2019/20;
3. agree with the scrutiny task force recommendation that a second phase of the review is necessary;
4. agree that this second phase be sponsored by the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources, in place of a scrutiny task force;

- 5. request Officers to prepare a Project Implementation Document (PID) to scope the parameters of the review, outline the timescale for completion and the resources and capacity required to undertake the review and set a realistic timeframe for preparation of the PID;**
- 6. delegate responsibility to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources to approve the PID ensuring the Council's relationship with the entire Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) is in scope; exploring how the sector supports the delivery of the Council's statutory obligations; where there is leverage of external resources and grant income and where greater clarity might be required to ensure the sector can adapt to changing needs and future challenges; and**
- 7. agree that the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources be asked to nominate two Executive Members, and in consultation with the Chair of Corporate Resources OSC, nominate two non - Executive Members to participate in the Phase 2 review.**

Background

1. At Executive on 4 December 2018, the Committee received a report from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CR OSC) which had reviewed the funding to the Voluntary and Community Infrastructure organisations.
2. 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.
3. The outcome of the review was to recommend that Executive reinstate £69,000 to continue funding the infrastructure organisations for 2019/20 and undertake a further, more detailed review of the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector to understand its links to our statutory obligations and where greater clarity might be required ensuring it can adapt to changing needs and future challenges.
4. Executive should note that in parallel with the review, £69,000 has been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for funding the three Voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations in 2019/20.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The report and recommendations were received by Executive on 4th December and the Executive is now asked to support those recommendations in recognition of the role that the VCS Infrastructure organisations play in supporting the wider voluntary and community sector, and consider how best to take this work forward. In parallel with the review the Executive has included £69,000 in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2019/20.

6. This will enable the Council to ensure outputs and outcomes are addressing the challenges around community cohesion and the community resilience priorities for Central Bedfordshire.
7. The Task Force also recommended that a phase 2 review be undertaken to consider the Council's relationship with the entire Voluntary and Community sector (VCS), understanding its value and where greater clarity might be required. Executive values the work of the scrutiny task force, wishes to build on it and take it forward as a project led by the Executive. This project is to secure an evidence based, collective understanding across the Council of the role and relationship with the entire voluntary sector that can embrace and adapt to changing needs and future challenges. Officers to be requested to prepare a Project Implementation Document (PID) to scope the parameters of the review, outline the timescale for completion and the resources and capacity required to undertake the review and set a realistic timeframe for preparation of the PID.
8. Responsibility is proposed to be delegated to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources to approve the PID ensuring the Council's relationship with the entire Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) is in scope; exploring how the sector supports the delivery of the Council's statutory obligations; where there is leverage of external resources and grant income and where greater clarity might be required to ensure the sector can adapt to changing needs and future challenges. It is proposed that two Executive Members and in consultation with the Chair of Corporate Resources OSC, two non -Executive Members should participate in the review.

Corporate Implications

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

Legal Implications

10. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. 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

11. If the recommendations of this report are agreed additional funding of £69,000 for the forthcoming financial year (2019/20) will be allocated. This funding has been included in the current MTFP.

Equalities Implications

12. 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.
13. The Infrastructure organisations and the range of voluntary and community groups they support, address specific issues fostering good relations and supporting vulnerable communities.

Conclusion and Next Steps

14. The Committee is asked to note the £69,000 funding to the Infrastructure organisations for 2019/20 and lead a wider review of the Council's relationship with the entire voluntary and community sector, involving two Executive and two non Executive Members. A PID to be prepared by officers to outline the scope of the review and realistic timescale for completion, to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources.

Appendix 1: Response to Task Force Enquiry

Background Papers

VCS Review Task Force report

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