

**REPORT TO THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MEETING ON 25th MARCH 2021**

Status: *For discussion*
Title: *Review of Voluntary Sector Strategy*
Originator: *Tom Day, Community Partnerships Service Manager*
Where from: *NA*
Where to next: *Cabinet*

Objective: *To review and input into the refresh of the Voluntary Sector Strategy.*

1. Outcome sought from Panel
 - 1.1 To feed into the review of the Voluntary Sector Strategy
2. Background
 - 2.1 In 2015 the Council agreed its first Voluntary Sector Strategy to guide the Councils engagement and relationship with the sector and provide a strengthened policy framework.
 - 2.2 This was also developed in the context of reductions in Council funding which meant that it may not have been possible to maintain funding support levels at the time. It was therefore important for the Council to consider its resource allocation in a strategic and joined up way to ensure maximum outcomes and value for money.
 - 2.3 The Voluntary Sector Strategy builds on the role of the Council as an 'enabler' – helping the community to meet its own needs, opportunities and problems in the most effective way, rather than the Council being the default provider of services. The aim is to ensure a variety of support mechanisms are available from the Council to help build capacity and sustainability in the voluntary and community sector and ultimately reduce the need for Council support over time. A copy of the Strategy is attached at Appendix A.
 - 2.4 An updated copy of the Action Plan 2015-2020 is set out in Appendix B. This sets out progress in meeting key actions.
- Covid-19
 - 2.5 The work of the VCS during the pandemic has been invaluable. Since March 2020 the Council has worked in partnership with the VCS to support vulnerable people with food, medicine, transport and loneliness.

Reviewing the strategy in the context of the Budget Challenge

- 2.6 As outlined to Members in various reports the pandemic has significantly impacted the Councils finances. The question for HDC is whether it can afford to continue to support the VCS to the same levels moving forward and, if it can, is this support targeted in the right areas help the council deliver its objectives.
- 2.7 A review of the Councils Voluntary Sector Strategy will ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to supporting the VCS moving forwards. To achieve the best outcomes, it will be necessary for a review of the strategy to in the context of both the budget challenge and the current and future needs of communities in the district – people and places. The objective will be to prioritise support to VCS organisations that best meet identified needs.
- 2.8 Any grants issued by the council in the future must be outcome focussed and have clear performance expectations.
- 2.9 The review of the Voluntary Sector Strategy will be undertaken in 2021/22 in order to inform the awarding of grants in 2022/23.

3 Points for discussion

- 3.1 This is an opportunity for Members on the Scrutiny Panel to review and comment on the action plan and feed in any comments or recommendations to be considered as part of the review of the strategy in 2021/22.

4 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes (attach completed EIA)

- 4.1 The original equality assessment on this policy is set out in Appendix C.

5 Impact on Communities

- 5.1 The voluntary and community sector is a key partner to the Council and plays a vital role in supporting and enriching local communities.

6 Legal Issues

- 6.1 Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the local authority the power to give support to organisation(s) which promote the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of their area, which includes incurring expenditure.
- 5.2 Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 covers disposal of land and states that except with the consent of the Secretary of State, a council shall not dispose of land, for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained.

7 Resource Issues

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8 Community Safety Implications

8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9 Risk Management Implications

9.1 The Council should look to ensure it is meeting the needs of the local voluntary and community sector within available resources and achieving maximum value for money.

10 Consultation

10.1 Public consultation will form part of the review.

11 Background Papers

11.1 Voluntary Sector Strategy, Executive, 19 October 2015

11.2 Draft Voluntary Sector Strategy, Community Leadership Panel, 10 September 2015

Previous report(s):

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Y/N

Appendices

A. Voluntary Sector Strategy 2015-2020

B. VCS Strategy Action Plan

C. VCS Strategy Equality Analysis