

Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy

2015 - 2020



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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Strategy is to provide a framework to guide the Councils engagement and relationship with the sector from 2015 until 2020. This includes;
- Community Grant funding,
 - Promoting volunteering,
 - Support and advice for groups/organisations,
 - Core funding for local voluntary and community sector hubs
 - Property lettings and hire charges,
 - Procurement of services,
 - National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) Relief.
 - Other non financial support e.g. providing litter picking equipment for community use.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Harborough District Council is an organisation who are proactively responding to changes in funding and service needs. To survive and thrive Councils have to do things differently, look to new models of service delivery, and increase self-sufficiency and value for money as far as possible.
- 2.2 The Council has a corporate priority to work collaboratively with others to deliver our key outcomes and priorities;
- Working with Communities to develop places in which to live and be happy.
 - Provide public services which are effective and deliver value for money.
 - Encourage a vibrant and sustainable business community intent on prosperity, employment and learning opportunities.
 - Support the vulnerable in the communities where they live.
- 2.3 The voluntary and community sector is a key partner to the Council and plays a vital role in supporting and enriching local communities. The Council recognises and values the contribution the sector makes to its corporate priorities and the wider economy, environment and social fabric of local communities.
- 2.4 The Council also recognises that the majority of voluntary and community sector organisations have no direct relationship with the Council. Our future relationship with the sector will therefore, encompass the sectors role as both a provider of services and its wider role in supporting individuals and communities in Harborough District.

3. Background

Voluntary and Community Sector

- 3.1 For the purposes of this strategy the voluntary and community sector is used to define not for profit independent, voluntary and community groups or organisations formed by local people, or those with a local interest, to improve the quality of life for

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themselves and/or fellow citizens in Harborough District. These include registered charities, voluntary organisations and community groups, faith groups involved in social action, community interest companies and social enterprises. Parish Councils are outside the scope of this strategy.

- 3.2 Harborough District has a particularly strong voluntary and community sector with around 560 groups registered in the district¹, working in everything from Adult Education to Health and Social Care. To put it in context this is 26% of the 2135 groups registered in Leicestershire with Harborough District only representing around 12% of the Population. Many of these groups are small community groups and on average 44% have an annual income under £10,000².
- 3.3 Harborough District is also estimated to have a high level of volunteering with around 31% of adults undertaking regular (once a month) formal volunteering³. This compares to an average of 23% in Leicestershire. The volunteering community ranges from local branches of national charities to those individuals that want to make something happen in their neighbourhood. It is difficult to quantify the value of volunteers work but could be up to £16 million per year in Harborough⁴.

Key Legislation

- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.

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- 3.6 Total council funding for community grants and core grants totalled £226,000 in 2015/16. In addition the Council worked with communities to deliver s106 community projects worth £198,000. The Council also offers accommodation and premises to voluntary and community sector groups at reduced rates including ongoing repair and maintenance costs.
- 3.7 This Strategy is intended to build a golden thread that starts to link together these otherwise separate interactions into a clear and consistent approach and based on a consistent statement and set of principles.

4. Consultation

¹ Voluntary Action Leicestershire: VAL Directory search 07/2015.

² The Charity Commission: 2393 Charities registered in Leicestershire.

³ Formal volunteering is defined as giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations which support social, environmental, cultural or sporting objectives.

⁴ Office for the Third Sector.

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- 4.1 A six week consultation was carried out on the principles set out in this strategy. There were a total of 96 responses from organisations, individual volunteers and residents.

5. Equality Duty

- 5.1 Development of this strategy included a full analysis of Equality implications.

6. Policy Statement

- 6.1 **Harborough District Council recognises the important contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes to communities across the Harborough District, and the need to enable support for the sector within the context of funding and service pressures. The Council will aim to help enable the local voluntary and community sector to meet the needs of communities in Harborough District in the most effective way and to reduce the need for Council support over time.**

- 6.2 **Support will be prioritised for voluntary and community sector groups;**

- a) If they can evidence a local need – linked to a Council priority and Critical Outcomes,
- b) If no other support is practically available,
- c) If they can evidence sustainability or completion of a project within a set period of time,
- d) If they can evidence value for money – cost, quality, or wider social impact,
- e) If they can use Council support to secure match funding from other sources,

- 6.3 **Principles underpinning this strategy;**

- a) The Council will work with partners/ funders to build the capacity and resilience of the voluntary and community sector to meet the needs of communities within the resources it has available.
- b) Financial and non-financial support will only be provided with a valid Agreement in place.
- c) The Council will continue to provide direct support to the sector but prioritise the resourcing of a community grants process. The Council will ensure grant funding is accessible to organisations across the sector; supporting innovation and projects that help us deliver our corporate priorities.
- d) The Council will continue to provide core funding within available resources and where possible, funding will be for at least 3 years to allow organisations more stability and to plan appropriately.
- e) Voluntary and community sector organisations will be expected to pay a market rent when hiring or leasing Council premises. However, they will always be invited to apply for assistance from the Council for a maximum of 5 years if they cannot meet this cost. As set out in the Action Plan a **VCS Accommodation Policy** will be developed to set out when and how this will operate and what support and assistance the Council can provide.

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- f) The Council will consider requests for the transfer of Council owned assets to a voluntary and community sector organisation. This will be considered in line with the Council's Corporate Property Strategy.
- g) The Council will consider the additional benefits (social, environmental, economic) that can be created by the voluntary and community sector when procuring or commissioning goods and services, above and beyond the benefit of merely the goods and services themselves. See the Council's Commissioning Strategy.
- h) The Council will always consult voluntary and community sector organisations on potential changes in support, ensuring sufficient time for the voluntary and community sector to respond. This will usually be a minimum of 6 weeks.
- i) The Council will always give voluntary and community sector organisations at least 3 months notice of any changes in funding or support.

7. Monitoring and review

- 7.1 Harborough District Council will review this strategy and its implementation by 2020.