

**PAPER NO. 5**

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 19 OCTOBER 2015**

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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 19 October 2015  
**Subject:** Voluntary & Community Sector Policy  
**Report of:** Community Partnerships Manager  
**Portfolio Holder:** Communities Portfolio Holder  
**Status:** For Approval  
**Relevant Ward(s):** Not applicable

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1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To consider and agree the Voluntary & Community Sector Policy and action plan (Appendix A).

2 Recommendations:

2.1 To approve the Voluntary and Community Sector Policy for implementation (attached at Appendix A).

2.2 To consider Community Grant and Core Grant funding amounts for 2016 onwards as part of the budget setting process.

2.3 To note that a detailed Voluntary and Community Sector Accommodation Policy will be brought back to the Executive in January 2016.

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1 To provide a strengthened policy framework to guide the Councils engagement and relationship with the sector from 2015 until 2020.

3.2 In the context of ongoing reductions in Council funding it may not be possible to maintain current support levels. It therefore important for the Council to consider its resource allocation in joined up way to ensure maximum value for money.

## 4 Key Facts

- 4.1 Currently the Council has no overarching Voluntary and Community Sector Policy to guide its support to the sector. Support is provided in a number of ways – both financial and non financial across multiple service areas.
- Community Grants process funded from New Homes Bonus.
  - Funding additional work in Harborough District on volunteer development and group advice and support. (Over and above that, funded in all districts/boroughs by Leicestershire County Council).
  - Core funding for local Voluntary and Community Sector ‘Hubs’:
  - Funding to enable free, impartial and confidential advice to residents.
  - The Council also offers accommodation and premises to voluntary and community sector groups at reduced rates including ongoing repair and maintenance costs.
  - The Council enables new and extended Community Facilities from s106 Housing developer contributions.
  - The Council also provides in-kind/ non financial support, e.g. litter picking equipment and refuse collection for community litter picks/groups.
- 4.2 The purpose of the Voluntary & Community Sector Policy is to provide a framework to guide the Councils future support to the sector from 2015 until 2020. In the context of ongoing financial pressure the Council needs to ensure that it is using available resources to best effect. This includes being consistent and transparent in the support offered to individual organisations, particularly those leasing or hiring Council premises, where significant variation exists on terms and amount of rent paid.
- 4.3 The draft policy 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.
- 4.4 In terms of rent/hire charges for voluntary and community sector organisations in Council properties the position taken by Hounslow Council was tested as a starting point. Hounslow’s approach is to charge voluntary and community groups market rent/hire, but provide a subsidy for up to 5 years in certain circumstances. The aim of this approach is to ensure the long-term sustainability of community assets, whilst recognising that some voluntary and community organisations simply cannot afford full premises costs, but provide valuable services to the community that should be supported.
- 4.5 The Council held a 6 week public consultation on the above proposals from 13 July to 24 August 2015 with the results set out at Appendix B. This was an online survey with paper copies available on request. A copy of the consultation survey is attached at Appendix C. There were also a number of 1-

1 meetings held with existing tenants that would be affected by a policy change in accommodation charging.

- 4.6 A total of 96 responses were received. The headlines were that;
- 60% of respondents support the Policy Statement.
  - Funding Community Grants was the number one priority with support spread quite evenly amongst other options.
  - 48% support the approach to leasing/hiring premises.
- 4.7 The Policy was finalised following the consultation to reflect community priorities and comments. Comments and concerns on how the proposed approach to renting/hiring premises would be implemented, including the method used to calculate market rent and transitional arrangements will be considered as part of a more detailed Voluntary and Community Sector Accommodation Policy.
- 4.8 A high level comparison to other districts was also carried out on amounts given in Community Grants, Core Grants and to the Citizens Advice (Table 1). This suggested significant variation in community grants and core funding but more consistent funding for Citizens Advice. Some things to note;
- These figures are from 2014/15 and depending on data availability.
  - This does not include the £125,000 New Homes Bonus funding which Harborough passported to parishes.
  - This does not include subsidies given/ lost rent from organisations in Council owned premises that pay less than market rent.

**Table 1.**

	Core Grants £	Citizens Advice £	Community Grants £	Total VCS	Population	Per capita £
Blaby	47000	58000	60291	165291	93915	1.8
Charnwood	191962	54500	376460	622922	153462	4.1
Hinckley & Bosworth	67670	54000	118549	240219	100141	2.4
Melton	76869	44000	No data	120869	50376	
North West Leicestershire	92020	55000	262000	409020	93468	4.4
Oadby & Wigston	No data	55000	No data	55000	56170	
Harborough	34000	67200	125000	226200	85382	2.6
<b>District Total</b>	<b>509521</b>	<b>387700</b>	<b>942300</b>	<b>1839521</b>	<b>632914</b>	
% split of Total VCS funding	28	21	51	100%		

## 5 Legal Issues

- 5.1 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.

## 6 Resource Issues

6.1 Council support to the voluntary and community sector is both financial and non financial. Amounts given in community grants, core grants and to the Citizens Advice are set out in table 1. In addition to this the Council has enabled community facilities projects worth £198,000 through s106 developer contributions.

## 7 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

7.1 The Equality implications of this policy have been considered and are set out in Appendix D.

## 8. Risk Management Implications

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

## 9 Consultation

9.1 A six week consultation was carried out on the draft policy during July and August 2015. The results of the consultation are attached at Appendix B along with a copy of the consultation survey at Appendix C.

9.2 The Community Leadership Scrutiny Panel considered the draft policy at its meeting in 10 September 2015. The minutes of the meeting have been included as a background paper.

## 10. Options

10.1 Option 1: to continue without a voluntary and community sector policy.

10.2 Option 2: to agree and implement a voluntary and community sector policy.

## 11 Background Papers

11.1 *Hounslow Community Buildings Strategy 2000*

11.2 *Minutes of the Scrutiny Leadership Panel, 10 September 2015*

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**Previous report(s):**

**Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: N**

**Ward Members Notified: N/A**

**Appendices:**

- A. Draft Voluntary and Community Policy 2015-2020.**
- B. Public Consultation Results**
- C. Public Consultation Survey**
- D. Equality Analysis**