



**annual report**  
september 2017 - august 2018



## Foreward

The past year has seen the work and influence of Support Cambridgeshire grow. We are now the 'go to' partnership for statutory and community groups in Cambridgeshire, supporting and enabling all sectors to come together in support of local priorities.

We have all felt under pressure, and we know that only by working collaboratively will we be able to understand each other's challenges and work together for the benefit of our communities.

Our annual state of the sector survey entitled Building Confidence gives us an insight into the vibrancy and sustainability of the sector, identifies support needs and tells us how well we are (or are not) meeting these. Key headlines this year are:

- Community groups are thriving.
- The sector is adapting to funding challenges: trying new things, diversifying, and working together.
- Their engagement with statutory partners ranges from extremely good to not good at all.
- Community groups recognise and value Support Cambridgeshire representing them at key statutory meetings across the county.

The full survey report can be found [here](#).

We have had some successes and I am proud of the activities partners have undertaken over the past year across our 5 key strands of work. Pages 5-6 of this review, Our Impact will tell you more about these, but I am particularly pleased to see our Network and training programme growing, and the success of our self-funding portal.

Recognition of our innovative and inclusive approach saw us working alongside NHS England, National Voices, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, the latter on the development of both Personal Care and Support Plans and a Dementia Strategy.

Our annual report gives a small insight into the vast amount of work undertaken last year and we hope you enjoy reading it.



## Community Facilities

Well-run village halls and other community buildings are critical for the sustained well-being of local communities and their residents. Running these facilities often requires detailed knowledge of governance, legislation, funding and business planning. With many community facilities being run by volunteers, this can place a huge burden on those who step forward to help.

Our community buildings advice network continues to grow. Working closely with individual trustees or a whole committee allows us to bring about long-term change and increased trustee confidence.

Casework figures are growing. In year 2 of the Support Cambridgeshire programme, 237 individual queries have been resolved, an increase of 3% on the previous year.

We use regular communications to keep the village halls community informed and have a dedicated website shown [here](#). Our programme of network and training events are popular and have seen increased delegate attendance over the past 12 months.

We have developed a Community Buildings Mentors scheme where volunteers successfully managing their own community building offer peer support to others. Mentor numbers are increasing and feedback (both formal and informal) has been positive.

We continue to promote and deliver the Hallmark quality standard for village halls and community buildings. Hallmark is a nationally recognised accreditation that uses trained peer visitors to assess performance and provide an external validation of achievement.

We aim to increase community capacity to manage a range of community assets by supporting volunteers with the implementation of 'community rights' and asset transfer enabling new facilities to become community-owned. Our work in this area has consisted of signposting to other specialist organisations such as the Plunkett Foundation (community shops) and Pub is the Hub (community pubs).

## What's working?

- Our Year 2 casework has increased. The top four areas of advice include governance, health and safety, hiring arrangements and capital projects.
- Our Year 2 programme of networking and training events has been popular and highly valued.
- The Community Building Mentor scheme is growing momentum.
- In Year 2 we increased the number of village halls receiving Hallmark accreditation.

## What's challenging?

The cases we provide advice and support on are often complex and require several interventions in order to bring to a successful conclusion. Some also require specialist charity law support which can be costly and which village halls find difficult to fund. We are exploring how such support can be provided in a more cost effective way.

Embedding volunteering schemes in a three year period presents some challenges but we believe these schemes will continue to grow and develop.



“ Exceptionally helpful: I am happy and confident with the advice given ”

## Town and Parish Councils

Local Councils in town and parishes are the vital first tier of local government. Our work aims to improve the lives of local communities by having vibrant, dynamic and effective town and parish councils.

Support Cambridgeshire delivers a programme of peer learning events and an annual conference for local council clerks and councillors. We believe that local councils could improve their practices by learning from each other so we've run peer learning events around topics of interest to local councils (identified through our surveys of clerks and councillors).

Support Cambridgeshire has established online networks and social media aimed at a local council audience. Our [www.cambsparishes.wordpress.com](http://www.cambsparishes.wordpress.com) has grown as a resource and we've upped our game with regards to social media. Our @cambsparishes Twitter feed has 315 followers (up from 174 at the start of the year). We've posted 133 unique tweets and gained 72,870 tweet impressions.

Support Cambridgeshire is working to deliver the Cambridgeshire Local Council Development Plan 2017 – 2022 which sets out the actions to be taken to strengthen support, engagement and collaboration between district and county councils, sector-specific organisations and the voluntary sector to support local council aspirations for their communities.

Support Cambridgeshire continues to encourage the development of Neighbourhood and Parish Planning. We've worked with 13 local councils to introduce the concept of Neighbourhood Planning and to help them to decide whether a Neighbourhood or Community Led Plan is most appropriate for their community's needs. Some local councils have then had ongoing support with their chosen route.

### What's working?

- Our second Cambridgeshire Local Council Conference in November 2017 was popular, with attendees representing 73 local councils.
- Our Rural Affordable Housing Myth-buster Coach Tour in July 2018 took 34 delegates

- on a tour of rural affordable housing sites in Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire.
- Our quarterly Stakeholder Group meetings are now hosted by local councils and at each meeting the hosts share details of how they run their council and take delegates on a walk-about within their village.
- We have produced three 'parish profiles' that tell the real stories of those involved in their local councils using interviews, photographs social media.
- Delivery of the Local Council Development Plan is well underway and we are being held to account by an engaged group of local council stakeholders.
- We ran a networking event in June 2018 for local councillors and clerks around Neighbourhood Planning. The event received an average rating of 4.35 out of 5 from delegates.

### What's challenging?

We have faced some challenges around working with partners with limited resources to undertake additional activity. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) took ownership of many of the actions within the Local Council Development Plan, but do not have the capacity to do the work required which means some lack of progress is being reported. We continue to facilitate discussion amongst strategic partners as to how this can be overcome.



“ They give me everything I need to manage the execution of Neighbourhood Planning in my village ”

## Volunteering and Social Action

Social Action is when individuals, groups and communities come together to solve issues of mutual concern. In doing so, it develops and strengthens communities around a sense of place.

Click [here](#) for more information on Volunteering and Social Action.

The nature of volunteering is changing. While traditional, long-term volunteering roles still exist, many people are looking for more fluid ways to support their community.

Support Cambridgeshire continues to train community organisations in volunteer recruitment and support (four courses in Year 2, with 40 delegates attending). We have also supported more fluid forms of connecting people to communities through the Cambridgeshire Time-banking Partnership and our Quest for Funding scheme, which trains volunteers on how to write fundraising applications. Our annual State of the Sector survey highlighted a desire for community leaders to meet to discuss best practice, and we are making plans to address this in year three.

We believe in a place-based approach to helping communities. We have developed our Love it, Hate it, Shape it model, which actively engages communities and enables us to work with them to solve their concerns. Our model framework can be viewed [here](#).

Support Cambridgeshire sits on various stakeholder boards to encourage partnership opportunities between statutory and voluntary organisations. Our Network programme brings people together to offer advice, share best practice and critically analyse ideas, and has received excellent feedback from attendees.

### What's working?

- Our Year 2 Network Programme has seen an increase of 60% in delegate attendance.
- Our Year 2 Training Programme has seen an increase of 27% in delegate attendance.
- The place-based approach is coming to

- fruition in Huntingdonshire and will be further developed in East Cambridgeshire as a result of National Lottery Funding.
- Quest for Funding began in year 2, and trained eight volunteers to support their local umbrella charity by applying for funding.
- We ran the very first Community Organising course in the East of England.
- We attended 19 Strategic Partnership Boards throughout Year 2, with more being pipelined for year 3.

### What's challenging?

The idea that Cambridgeshire businesses are ready to support local charities has been widely assumed over a number of years: Whilst we have brokered support from eight Cambridgeshire businesses in year 2, take-up is slow and our experiences mirror those of other business brokerage schemes across the UK.

The changing nature of volunteering (as indicated in the 2018 Annual Survey) requires a different approach to how we support groups. There will be less focus on training and recruiting volunteers and more on the legal issues involving volunteers, how to retain the very best and how volunteers become involved in fundraising. New courses will require new skill sets. How we approach this will be critical in moving in step with the sector we support.



“ It's been really fulfilling to learn how to apply for grants to help people in the community. Support Cambridgeshire helped us a lot ”

## Our Impact

**24** The number of village halls working towards Hallmark Accreditation

click inside the circle

**15K**  
The amount of income achieved through our Quest for Funding

**165**  
The number of delegates attending our Town and Parish Council conference

**8354**  
The number of visits to our self-funding portal

**409** The number of network participants in 2017/2018

click inside the circle  
**8**  
The number of community Building Mentors

**19**  
The number of strategic partnership boards attended

**63**  
The number of delegates attending the inaugural Village Hall Conference

**93%**  
The percentage of survey respondents who value our representation\*

**192**  
The number of new users to our self-funding portal

**73K**  
The value of match or added value funding

click inside the circle  
**161**  
The number of training delegates

click inside the circle  
**24**  
The number of delegates attending the Myth-buster tours

**12,990**  
The number of website page views

**25** The number of individuals trained in Voice and Representation

**45**  
The number of delegates attending our Neighbourhood Planning network event

click inside the circle  
**22K**  
The amount of income derived through our self-funding portal

**JANUARY 2018**  
Quest for Funding begins

**MARCH 2018**  
Our GDPR Charity Forum

**MAY 2018**  
Our Inaugural village hall conference

**JULY 2018**  
Our Myth-buster Tour

**NOVEMBER 2017**  
The annual County wide Town and Parish Council Conference

**FEBRUARY 2018**  
An examination of Community Organising

**MAY 2018**  
Our Civil Society consultations

**JUNE 2018**  
The formulation of Love it, hate it and shape it...!!

\*Statistics derived from the 2018 VCSE survey

Copyright myth buster tour photo is ©Cambridgeshire ACRE

## Voice and Representation

Voice and representation ensures that both community groups and statutory organisations understand the challenges and opportunities faced by each other: By having a voice, and through being represented, we ensure the best possible outcomes for communities across Cambridgeshire. Championing the work of seldom-heard voluntary and community groups is important, as is ensuring that the views and expertise of the sector are heard and acknowledged by all.

For more information about Voice and Representation click [here](#).

Our Annual State of the Sector survey for 2018 tells us that Cambridgeshire is made up of a large number of small community based organisations. Nothing has changed in this regard. Most organisations have a turnover of less than £50K per annum, far below The Small Charity Coalition and their definition of small equals an annual turnover of £1 million pounds.

Many of our community based organisations are therefore working hard to deliver projects and retain their funding, but for the first time the Annual survey reports on a brighter and more confident future for many. Whilst 51% of those that responded are still reliant on Statutory Funding, 69% of respondents said they are diversifying their portfolio and attracting private donations. Others still need continued support.

Support Cambridgeshire has attended 19 Strategic Partnership Boards in year 2, with more being pipe-lined. The result of this work is that 93% of respondents said that they valued the work of Support Cambridgeshire in representing them (up 10% on the previous year) as many do not have the time or the inclination.

### What's working?

- Our bespoke Voice and Representation has been well received by 2 separate cohorts of delegates.
- We have represented the sector at 19 strategic partnership boards in Year 2. This representation is valued highly by the sector as a whole.
- We have represented the sector in Civil

Society consultations, in conjunction with other national infrastructure bodies such as NAVCA and the Small Charities Coalition (SCC).

- Our networking sessions continue to provide topical information, discussion and debate on subjects of interest (GDPR, Adult Social Care and Community Organising being prime examples).
- We continue to provide a voice for the sector.

### What's challenging?

- Understanding the various strategic priorities of some statutory organisations is seen as a challenge for our community based organisations. The recent Annual Survey told us this. Unpicking these priorities and providing information in an easily understandable format will form part of our work programme moving forward, although the rapid pace of change makes this difficult.
- Our annual survey showed that 68% of respondents want to work collaboratively, but opportunities for them to do so appear limited, as do opportunities for self-representation, largely through workload, commitments and some statutory partners failing to understand their role and the value they can bring.
- We have been told that some partners fail to engage effectively with the sector, despite recognising the value that the sector brings.



“ Their representation strikes the right balance between challenge and support ”

## Information and Advice

While Information and Advice is a distinct work-stream for Support Cambridgeshire, it is intrinsic to all other work-streams and is vital to the development and growth of community organisations.

Information and Advice can be simple or very complex. It can range from giving a sample template document to a whole series of detailed discussions on how best to constitute and run a group.

There is never a lifespan to the giving of advice: Some groups use this to pump-prime their activities, whilst others use it as an aide memoire or refresher.

Click [here](#) for more information on Information and Advice.

Small charities and community groups work in a very competitive and challenging environment. National reports show they have been impacted more by government austerity, and new regulations (such as GDPR) have added to their workloads. At the same time, demand for their services has increased. The upshot of this is that more than ever community groups, sports clubs and small charities need somewhere to turn to for advice, good practice and to build their skills. Our Information and Advice work-stream assists in this process. By giving groups access to 1-2-1 help by telephone, E-Mail and in person, through running training courses on topical and key subjects, and by providing updates through social media and newsletters, we give organisations the tools to prosper and grow. More importantly, we are able to give individuals and groups the confidence to do and try things for themselves, thus learning from the experience while at the same time being supported and nurtured.

### What's working?

Our training courses and network events are well attended and are both topical and valued. Delegate numbers are increasing year by year.

Our 1-1 support and advice is extremely well received and highly valued.

In terms of the various type of other support we offer (beyond 1-1 support) a 95% satisfaction rate has been achieved.

Our regular monthly newsletter and funding alert is gaining new readers, with high overall levels of satisfaction for content and advice.

### What's challenging?

The demands on small Charities, sports organisations and communities are growing. This means that more organisations need support and help. A key challenge for us is how we meet that increased need and adapt our services to allow more people to benefit.

A further challenge is to recognise that not all communities, not all groups and not all individuals are made equally. It is not enough to promote an equal service to all. We need to find a way to promote an equitable service to all. This may mean concentrating resources where they are most needed or concentrating support on groups with the least ability to find their own answers.

Both of these challenges require new ways of working and increased resources. Building more demand in an environment of increased complexity will mean finding new ways of working. We will continue to build digital solutions, but at the same time we have to be where the need is greatest. We will develop solutions and events that are attractive and useful to those who are hardest to reach and have the hardest problems to resolve.



“ Your resources are fabulous and your knowledge is amazing ”

## Looking forward to Year 3

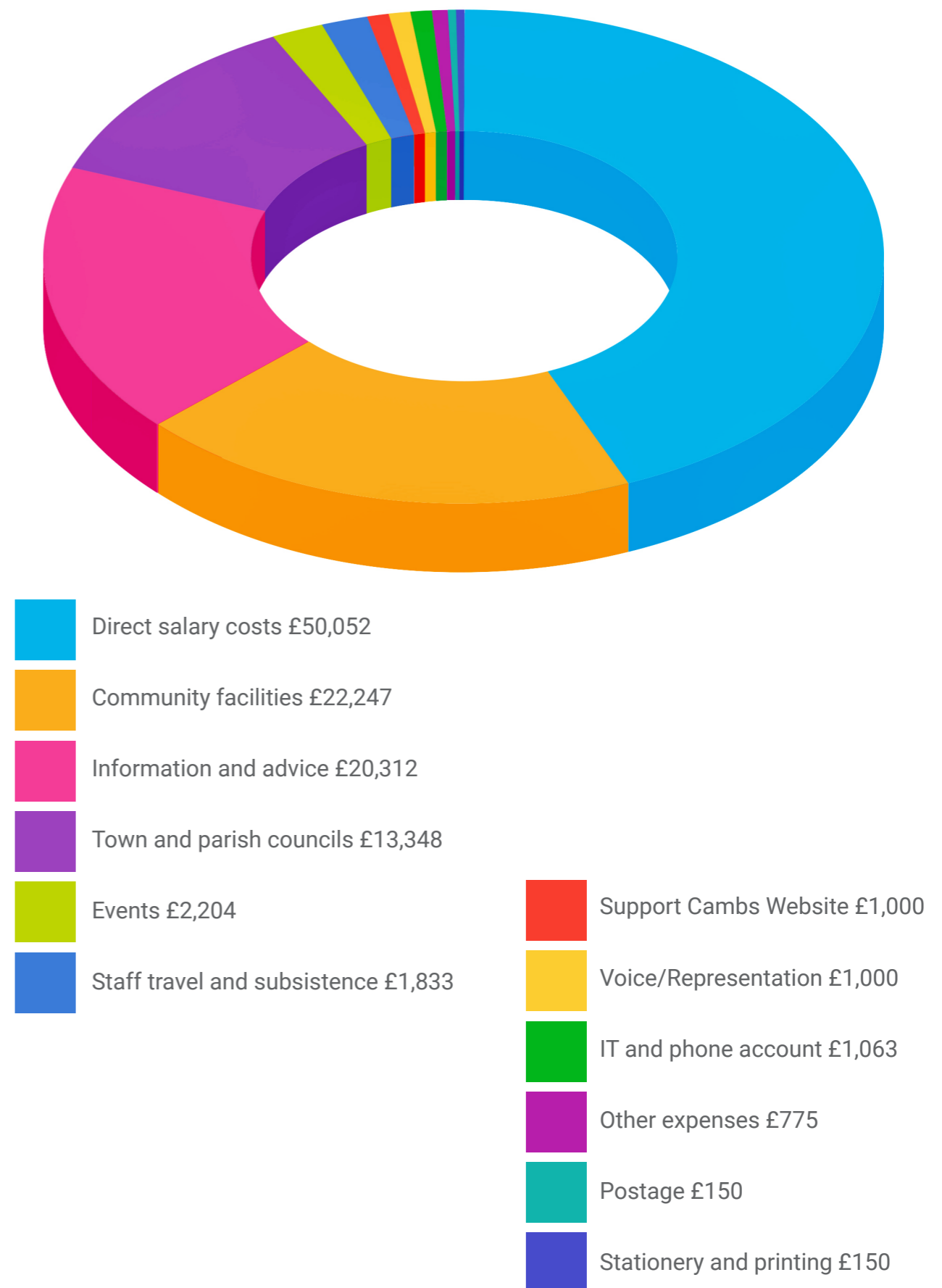


Year 3 is about continuing with our original project plans. Some of our activities naturally take time to develop and grow, but we are adding new areas of innovation where we can.

A new CEO Network to examine the big issues for the sector, a new Commissioning Forum that brings statutory and voluntary organisations together, and a Connecting Communities conference around volunteering and loneliness are three prime examples.

We will always be directed by the needs of our community groups, all of whom are regularly surveyed to ensure that our support match their requirements.

## Finance





**Community facilities** – To increase the contribution of well managed and sustainable community owned facilities



**Town and parish councils** – To improve the lives of local communities through vibrant, dynamic and effective town and parish councils



**Volunteering and social action** – To promote alternative forms of volunteering and place based social action initiatives



**Voice and representation** – To facilitate a better understanding of the voluntary and community sector and deliver trained, knowledgeable representation



**Information and advice** – To increase the capacity of the voluntary and community sector through training, information and advice



[comms@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk](mailto:comms@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk)

[www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk](http://www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk)

01480 420601

The Maple Centre

6 Oak Drive

Huntingdon

PE29 7HN

