

**RECOMMISSIONING OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT SERVICES ACROSS CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH**

**To: Communities and Partnership Committee**

**Meeting Date: 10 October 2019**

**From: Adrian Chapman: Service Director - Communities and Safety**

**Electoral division(s): All**

**Forward Plan ref: N/A Key decision: No**

**Purpose: To set out the arrangements for the planned recommissioning of voluntary and community sector infrastructure support services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.**

**Recommendation: The Communities and Partnership Committee is asked to:**

- a) Consider and approve the proposed approach to tender for voluntary and community sector Infrastructure Support Services jointly with Peterborough City Council;**
- b) Comment on and approve the key features proposed for the specification, as described at sections 2.2.3 and 2.3; and**
- c) Note the requirement for, and endorse, an extension to the current grant agreement with Support Cambridgeshire, to allow for adherence to procurement regulations, as described in section 2.6**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** Voluntary and Community Infrastructure Support Services are currently delivered to frontline Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCO) in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through separate grant agreements and by different organisations.

This investment in infrastructure support services sends a strong signal to the voluntary and community sector about their value and contribution to informing, influencing and inspiring future practice and policy.

- 1.2** VCOs can vary significantly in size from small local groups to large national charities, and include:

- community groups (unincorporated clubs or associations)
- voluntary organisations (registered charities) and
- local councils (parish, town, city or community councils)

- 1.3** In Cambridgeshire, the infrastructure support is delivered by Support Cambridgeshire. Established in 2016 when Cambridgeshire County Council replaced nine annual grants to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Support organisations with one combined agreement, Support Cambridgeshire is a partnership between Hunts Forum, Cambridgeshire ACRE and Cambridgeshire Council for Voluntary Services (CCVS). This new arrangement was an opportunity to have a more strategic, long term approach which reduced duplication and was more efficient and effective for all parties.

The annual value of this contract is £121,800 to £126,102 (increased per annum in line with inflation).

- 1.4** Support Cambridgeshire deliver on:

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

- 1.5** In Peterborough the infrastructure support is provided by Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service (PCVS), a registered charity set up by local organisations in 1980 as an umbrella and network organisation to the voluntary sector in Peterborough. Since inception Peterborough City Council have provided a £40k grant p.a. as contribution to community development work and the Volunteer Centre.

- 1.6** In more recent years, the purpose and type of infrastructure support has evolved to meet changing needs of both communities and of local authorities, with a greater emphasis on supporting and encouraging communities who want to be more resilient, develop their own social action and raise funds in different ways (e.g. through

crowdfunding), whilst helping to shape local authority policy, providing market intelligence to strategic commissioners and representing the voice of the sector at strategic boards.

- 1.7** Infrastructure support services work with the Councils and voluntary sector on strategic priorities with an aim to improve community groups' understanding of the Councils roles, their offer and how Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council can support them to achieve their local ambitions for themselves and their communities.
- 1.8** On 27 September 2018 Communities and Partnership Committee agreed to
- endorse the Council's priorities for Support Cambridgeshire to further strengthen the Voluntary and Community Sector for that coming year in line with our Think Communities approach
  - support the development in principle of a revised and joint grant agreement for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with a view to tender in early 2020
  - note the potential future joint approach to further improve outcomes and efficiencies.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1** Infrastructure organisations are the backbone of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) providing crucial guidance and resources<sup>1</sup> to hundreds of community organisations such as local charities, community groups, village hall committees, social enterprises and parish councils. A good infrastructure body will *“offer the right mixture of support, challenge, leadership, resource, skills and knowledge. It will also help to foster relationships between the local voluntary sector, public bodies and local business. They also promote social action and make sure local communities have a voice”*.
- 2.2** There is an ambition to ensure our commissioning approach to the sector and infrastructure support is co-produced and works in the best interests of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's communities, equipping communities with greater resilience and self- management whilst helping reduce the demand on specialist services. Recommissioning VCS Infrastructure Support Services offers the opportunity to redesign services in line with local findings, national best practices and service needs.
- 2.2.1 Local findings**
- The 'State of the Sector Survey' informs infrastructure organisations and others of the challenges, trends and patterns taking place across the voluntary sector in Cambridgeshire. The recently published results of the 2019 'State Of The Sector Survey' show:
- Groups are doing more, with scarcer resources
  - The major concerns for the sector include finding funding, followed by the ability to recruit volunteers
  - Most groups are small – with 50% having a turnover of less than £50,000 and 66% having 5 or fewer staff

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Stuart Etherington, chief executive of NCVO (31 Oct 2012)

- There is an appetite for networking with people working in a similar field and for training in project development and management and strategic planning, followed by fundraising
- 89% of respondents felt that it was extremely or very important for the VCS to be represented at Council and other meetings

As part of the process to develop a fit for purpose specification, voluntary and community organisations will be asked to comment on the areas of support most important to their organisations, including their opinion on the inclusion of

- building a sustainable organisation
- facilitating partnerships
- understanding community rights
- start-up advice on setting up an organisation or network

They will also be asked to comment on the most important infrastructure functions to VCOs, including their opinion on brokering, information and advice, networking, representation of VCS interests at strategic groups, and training.

### 2.2.2 National best practice

Officers have engaged with a number of Local Authorities and VCS groups to consider best practice nationally. The results have been mixed with service models, levels of funding and outcomes varying. For example:

- Oxfordshire County Council, a statistical neighbour of Cambridgeshire, has a contract of £180k a year. They have been undertaking an extensive review of services, adopting a co-production approach with the sector. They aim to focus and upscale the volunteering element of the service. They have made clear that an in-house provision of infrastructure support would not work as the Council cannot support voluntary and community groups better than the sector itself.
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) have produced some statistics based on local surveys carried out with a variety of Local Authorities and from open data. This states that when there is no local infrastructure support there is on average a 38% drop in grants to local voluntary sector organisations and a 15% drop in volunteers in the local area.

### 2.2.3 Service needs

Officers from across Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have been engaged in establishing the scope of this work and articulating how the infrastructure support service can meet the needs not only of VCS organisations but also of Council services.

The outcomes Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council services need to see from VCS infrastructure work can be summarised in terms of:

- a) **Strength of the sector and local communities and the relationship between VCS organisations:**
  - Strong, sustainable, resilient, self-confident VCOs, clear of mission, supported by communities, really visible and well known to communities and us.
  - VCOs collaborating more, sharing resources and good practice.

- Thriving, energetic, inclusive communities led by local communities that are well trained and resourced and meeting their own needs.
- More people volunteering - giving time is easier to do and the benefits of volunteering are well known.
- Demand for statutory services going down. Data is used to targeted support.
- Innovative, with ideas to fill 'gaps' and replicating best practice from elsewhere
- Robust and responsible, working together with a shared agenda and shared responsibilities.
- Collaborative with good communication and trust between VCOs, shared values, opportunities to support each other, share resources, ideas and good practice.
- Bigger, better, more joined up but more local
- Sustainable, less reliant on Council funds and/or different funding models and opportunities for more joint bids.

**b) Our relationship with the sector:**

- Equal partners that we can have honest conversations with.
- Open, positive, transparent relationship with more regular 2 way communication.
- More collaborative and connected - sharing outcomes, ethos, commissioning, good practice, resources, information, helping each other and learning from each other. Much more than a contractual relationship.
- Understanding & awareness of CCC/PCC priorities and us understanding what is out there.
- Trusted relationship, with confidence in delivery - trusted behaviours, values, ethos, where we learn to let go and not define how everything is done.
- Simplified reporting - less red tape and excessive/burdensome reporting.

**Additionally, we need VCS Infrastructure services that help communities to do more to support themselves, improve people's quality of life and help manage demand for our services, through:**

- Providing information, training and support on funding, policy and process, governance, safeguarding, practice support, innovation hub to grow ideas, DBS checks, capacity building, resources and equipment.
- Connecting people to groups and each other, including support to recruit and train volunteers, promote volunteering opportunities, promote local projects and signpost people to them, engage people via technology such as social media and apps, connect local networks and celebrate skills.
- Creating thriving communities with enhanced community spirit and support to grow.
- Encouraging self-help, independent and sustainable groups, including self-funded groups and independently self-run peer support.
- Helping groups understand how to support people and provide preventative work/early intervention instead of crisis management that manages demand for services

- Helping groups learn from each other, understand their own value, evidence and share their success, maintain and measure the health of their organisation.

2.3 The Voluntary and Community Sector have a key role in helping to achieve Council priorities overall, and in particular relating to the Think Communities approach:

- **People:** Resilient communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough where people can feel safe, healthy, connected and able to help themselves and each other.
- **Places:** New and established communities that are integrated, possess a sense of place, and which support the resilience of their residents.
- **System:** A system wide approach in which partners listen, engage and align with communities and with each other, to deliver public service and support community-led activity.

This shared approach, developed in collaboration with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire County, City and District Councils, Police, Health and sector representatives supports communities to make good use of their community resources where possible, moving away from an 'entitlement' culture to one where residents co-design and co-produce services through the voluntary sector, adopting a strengths based approach.

Thematic transformation programmes designed to deliver the principles of Think Communities include **Best Start in Life**, focusing on the wider early years system with a strong emphasis on community involvement and creating the right conditions for long term system change i.e. one in which people (including families), communities and services can work together effectively, and **Adults Positive Challenge**, helping people to live independently for longer, connecting with their community and accessing community support

2.4 In developing the specification for the future agreement and in line with Think Communities shared approach, senior officers will be having conversations with partners across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough including City and District Councils and Health organisations to make the most of any opportunities arising and aligning support to the Voluntary and Community sector where it makes sense to do so.

2.5 Going forwards, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council will be working together to jointly commission and purchase VCS Infrastructure Support Services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Commissioners have had to balance the risks and economies of scale that could be gained from a single contract against using 2 'lots' that allows more SME voluntary organisations to participate and bid. Two lots or contracts are proposed for this tender. Providers would be able to bid for either or both lots:

- Lot 1 – To cover Peterborough, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and includes Parish Council support
- Lot 2 – To cover Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, East Cambridgeshire and includes Parish Council support

It is intended that the annual value of the contribution from CCC would remain as at present.

- 2.6 It is anticipated that tender activities with providers, voluntary and community groups will begin in November 2019. A draft specification for the tender will be developed, informed by discussions at this Committee and using information from consultations, surveys, best practice and strategic needs.

However, the total value of a contract dictates the type of tender process and length of time it will take to complete. If the total value is in excess of £500,000 it would require an Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) process to be followed. This means that the earliest expected contract start date is the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

As the Support Cambridgeshire Contract ends 31st July 2020, this will require an 8 month extension to the current contract and an exemption waiver in order to complete the tender process. The exemption waiver value for an 8 month extension to the contract is £84,060.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 A good quality of life for everyone**

- The VCS supports people to have a good quality of life in a range of ways. There is evidence that community participation supports the adoption of a healthy lifestyle and builds engagement in health and wellbeing improving initiatives.
- VCS infrastructure support in building VCS capacity and to support communities that are safe, and good places to live, is a cornerstone of our early help and preventative strategies for vulnerable people.

#### **3.2 Thriving places for people to live**

- The VCS employs a significant number of people and contributes positively to the local economy.
- This affords opportunities for individuals and communities to develop skills through participating in their community which will help them within the workplace and build resilience to undertake initiatives that improve and enable independence, health and well-being.

#### **3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's Children**

The support of the voluntary and community sector could make a real difference to the lives of children and families, providing opportunities for the whole population to succeed and to enable improved outcomes.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

The report above sets out details of significant implications above.

#### **4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

The report above sets out details of significant implications above

#### **4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

Legal advice will be taken in drawing up the contract agreement with successful bidders. Paragraph 2.3 outlines the benefits and positive outcomes to both communities and Council services of having a supported and active voluntary and community sector.

#### **4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- Evidence indicates that some services delivered by local people within local communities can be more successful than statutory services at reaching people who may need support.
- Building a strong VCS to help people help each other should therefore support more equal and diverse accessible provision locally
- Some of our services will become increasingly more localised, so that we can meet local and individual need within each specific community context

#### **4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

- The VCS will have a key role in deciding on the support required through the VCS Infrastructure support contract and the report above in 2.9 sets out the engagement and consultation activities that will take place once funding has been agreed.
- Discussions have taken place with both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Council services shown at 2.2.3.
- Any Community Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the development of the specification, incorporating feedback from community engagement where appropriate.

#### **4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

- The role of Members helps in contributing towards the success of a thriving local VCS. Members can connect local groups to this support.

#### **4.7 Public Health Implications**

- A thriving VCS supports individuals and communities to take responsibility for their own physical and mental health. It can engage them in taking steps to adopt a healthy lifestyle and other health improving activities
- Building community resilience and VCS infrastructure will impact on many of the needs identified in different Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), including the following:
  - Long term conditions
  - New communities
  - Homelessness and at risk of homelessness
  - Vulnerable children and adults
  - Carers



- Older people's mental health
- Substance Misuse
- Unhealthy lifestyles

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer Clearance</b>
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Stephen Howarth
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Gus de Silva
<b>Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?</b>	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Matthew Hall
<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Laurence Gibson

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
State of the Sector Survey 2019	<a href="https://www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/state-of-the-sector-survey-2019/">https://www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/state-of-the-sector-survey-2019/</a>
Best Start in Life	<a href="https://camweb.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/our-organisation/where-we-work-how-we-work-who-we-work-with/best-start-in-life/strategy-aims-to-give-children-">https://camweb.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/our-organisation/where-we-work-how-we-work-who-we-work-with/best-start-in-life/strategy-aims-to-give-children-</a>

Adults: accessing community support

[the-best-start-in-life/](#)

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/adults/organising-care-and-support/types-of-support/community-support/>