

Support Cambridgeshire Update

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 19 October 2023

From: Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: For members of the committee to receive the “State of the Sector” and the “Voluntary Sector in Cambridgeshire” reports produced by Support Cambridgeshire.

Recommendation: The committee is recommended to:

Note the key findings of the reports.

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1. Background

- 1.1 In 2016, the Council replaced nine annual grants to voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure support organisations with one combined agreement. Providers were invited to tender against a new single service specification to build the capacity of voluntary organisations, community groups and local councils, as well as the Council's relationship with the sector. This new arrangement provided an opportunity to develop a strategic, long-term approach, which reduced duplication and was more efficient and effective for all parties.
- 1.2 The single contract is currently held by Support Cambridgeshire, a partnership between Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations (lead) and Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services.
- 1.3 Support Cambridgeshire delivers infrastructure support to Cambridgeshire's VCS. This support takes the form of information, training, leadership, representation, resource, skills and knowledge. Included in this infrastructure support is an online funding portal, and in 2022, Cambridgeshire organisations accessed a combined total of £570,000 of funding via this resource.
- 1.4 Support Cambridgeshire conducts an annual "State of the Sector" survey, and the results from the 2023 survey are attached at Appendix 1 of this report. This year, Support Cambridgeshire also worked with Kane Data to analyse what national data from the Charity Commission and 360 Giving tells us about local charities, with the concluding report attached at Appendix 2. Together these reports provide an up-to-date picture of Cambridgeshire's VCS.

2. Main Issues

- 2.2 There are 2,100 registered charities operating in Cambridgeshire. More than 80% of these are considered "small" (an annual income of less than £100,000). At the other end of the scale, the largest charities in Cambridgeshire, which include Wood Green Animal Shelters, East Anglia's Children's Hospice, The Papworth Trust and Arthur Rank Hospice, each have an annual income of over £10m.
- 2.3 In the main, Support Cambridgeshire offers infrastructure support to the smaller voluntary and community organisations, which may or may not be registered charities.
- 2.4 The 2023 "State of the Sector" survey was conducted in February and March 2023. The survey was widely promoted amongst VCS organisations across Cambridgeshire.
- 2.5 Unsurprisingly, the respondents identified the uncertain economic outlook as the issue most impacting on their work. Other issues identified impacting on their work included increased social isolation, increased demand for services, and divisions and inequality in society.
- 2.6 Fundraising, particularly raising money for core costs, is an on-going issue for organisations at all levels of income.

- 2.7 The findings from this Cambridgeshire specific survey align with national trends around the increasing challenge of volunteer recruitment, with the majority of groups saying that it has become harder, or significantly harder to recruit and retain volunteers.
- 2.8 The survey is also used to ask the VCS organisations what they want from Support Cambridgeshire. This feedback is used to ensure that the offer from the Support Cambridgeshire contract is responding to the needs of the sector.

3. Alignment with ambitions

- 3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 3.3 Health inequalities are reduced

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 support the reduction of health inequalities.

- 3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs

A thriving VCS supports individuals to take responsibility for their own physical and mental health and to support others. Building community resilience and VCS infrastructure will help to develop and sustain place-based support responding to the needs of the local community.

- 3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality

Building community resilience and VCS infrastructure will be key to ensuring the sustainability and development of front-line organisations helping individuals out of poverty and income equality.

- 3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised

A thriving VCS supports individuals and communities to thrive, bringing funding and employment into Cambridgeshire. A thriving VCS complements statutory services and gives residents access to a greater range of services.

- 3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

A thriving VCS includes services to benefit children, young people and their families.

4. Source Documents

4.1 None.