

Support Cambridgeshire 2019-20 Annual Report

To: Communities and Partnership Committee

Meeting Date: 3 December 2020

From: Service Director: Communities and Partnerships, Adrian Chapman

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: For Committee to have received the annual summary of the Support Cambridgeshire achievements between September 2019 and August 2020, and priorities for 2020-21.

Recommendation: The Communities and Partnership Committee is asked to:

- a) Note achievements outlined in this report for the period September 2019-August 2020;
- b) Note the achievements shown in Appendix 1, 'Impact of the Partnership during Covid'; and
- c) Note the priority outcomes agreed for September 2020 to September 2021.

Officer contact:

Name: Elaine Matthews
Post: Think Communities Area Manager
Email: elaine.matthews@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 706386

Member contacts:

Names: Councillor Steve Criswell
Post: Chairman
Email: steve.criswell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 706385

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2016, Cambridgeshire County 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, and our relationship with the sector. This new arrangement was an opportunity to have a strategic, long-term approach, which reduced duplication and was more efficient and effective for all parties.
- 1.2 The successful provider was Support Cambridgeshire, a partnership between Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations (lead), Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services and Cambridgeshire ACRE (Cambridgeshire's Rural Community Council). The new grant agreement started on 1 September 2016 and was due to end August 2020.
- 1.3 The November 2019 Committee endorsed an extension to the current grant agreement with Support Cambridgeshire up to 31 March 2021, and on 2 July 2020 Committee endorsed a further extension to 30 September 2021, to allow for adherence to procurement regulations for the new support contract.
- 1.4 This report covers the achievements made during the fourth year, 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020.
- 1.5 Collectively, Support Cambridgeshire delivers:
 - Support for 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
 - Support for community facilities – To increase the contribution of well managed and sustainable community owned facilities

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 On 21 November 2019, Communities and Partnership Committee endorsed the following Council priorities for Support Cambridgeshire for the coming year
 - More placed based approaches that complement the work of Think Communities.
 - More added value contracts which support a sense of place and complement the work of Think Communities
 - Expansion of the Local Council Conference to meet the needs of delegates and partners
 - A contract review which will assess the Partnership's progress against the original project plans and the terms of engagement
 - The continued development of the Chief Executive Officer Network as a one stop shop for information exchange between the statutory and voluntary/community sectors

- The continued development of the Commissioning Forums to identify best practice in commissioning and procurement.
- A Connecting Communities Conference which examines volunteering and its impact on youth engagement
- A wide and varied training offer which will include new topics based upon information received from the sector and arising out of the State of the Sector report 2019
- Three more Practitioner Forums which focus specifically on charity and business relationships (the Support Cambridgeshire 'More than a Giving Machine' series)
- Further best practice sessions based upon work stream activity which includes village hall coffee mornings and local council peer networking

2.2 During what has been an extraordinary year, for reporting purposes Support Cambridgeshire's work can be split into pre-pandemic delivery and that carried out in response to COVID-19, although much of the support to the sector set up pre-COVID-19 continued throughout the year.

2.2.1 Pre-pandemic

Work plans incorporating all Council priorities were agreed by partners and delivery started or continued on the following:

- Community facilities
 - Promoting Village Halls Week
 - Increasing take up of the Hallmark Quality Scheme
 - Providing Peer Mentoring/advice and guidance
- Town & Parish Councils
 - Coordinating the Annual Local Council Conference
 - Monitoring the Local Council Development Plan
- Volunteering & Social Action
 - Delivering a Connecting Communities Conference
 - Designing and delivering Corporate Social Responsibility events – Think Differently
 - Promotion and engagement with Think Communities, influencing priorities as the voice and representative of the sector
 - Providing access to funding through the SC4C funding portal
- Voice & Representation
 - Continued representation at Influencing and Engaging Forums
 - Continued development of Networking events – including the CEO Network and the Trustee Network
 - Continued development of Commissioning Forums and involvement in the Integrated Commissioning Board
- Information & Advice
 - Delivery of a co-ordinated training programme
 - Delivery of an extensive support service to VCS groups
 - Provision of an increased range of resources responding to the sector needs including toolkits, factsheets and communications
 - Provision of funding support

2.2.2 Response to COVID-19

During lockdown all services moved to telephone or videoconferencing, Support Cambridgeshire Partners joined the VCS Emergency Partnership co-ordinated by Red Cross to co-ordinate local VCS responses. They attended weekly meetings of the resilience forum and linked local VCS with county and district hubs.

The Support Cambridgeshire and all partners' websites were updated with timely and relevant COVID-19 related information and advice. Partners have shared new fact sheets, videos and information helping groups to find the information they need. Newsletters moved from monthly to weekly (and sometimes more often) to ensure that groups were kept up to date and they have continued to send round the funding bulletins. From the start of March to June Support Cambridgeshire sent out 25 news bulletins, with feedback showing the information within was very well received.

2.3 Appendix 1 shows an infographic depicting the impact of the Support Cambridgeshire partnership during the pandemic from March to August 2020. From March 2020 and the start of the pandemic lockdown, support for the Voluntary and Community Sector required a fast, flexible and focused response and Support Cambridgeshire were able to fulfil that immediate need for the sector. As a member of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough multi agency COVID-19 Community Resilience Group, Support Cambridgeshire were well placed to provide the voice and representation of the voluntary and community sector at the higher strategic level.

2.4 Support Cambridgeshire's key outputs over the last year include:

- 35 news bulletins, 12 funding alerts and 888 factsheets, keeping the sector up to date with key information, support to access COVID-19 funds and how to run trusted and resilient organisations
- 3 Impact of COVID-19 surveys with 51% response rate, shaping the way we support the VCS as they further develop their community response (some feedback is provided at Appendices 2 and 3)
- 2,199 Volunteers accessed online video training sessions
- 80 people attended the Connecting Communities Conference, with 249 views afterwards
- 210 attendees at online webinars with 2,430 views afterwards, providing access to support in a more accessible and flexible way
- 98 attendees at CEO Network and Trustee Network sessions
- 110 attended formal training sessions, increasing the knowledge, skills and behaviours of those service our communities from within the sector
- The Communities Facilities network dealt with 286 enquiries with 147 attending peer support sessions
- 238 new users on the funding portal with a massive £443,213.00 secured in the last 12 months

2.5 In addition to the key outputs, much of the impact from Support Cambridgeshire delivery is less easy to quantify with data, but nonetheless vital to the sector in being able to carry out their role for longer, more professionally or with greater confidence. The feedback from the sector demonstrates the importance of the Support Cambridgeshire support, advice and guidance.

- "Just had to let you know we got it !!!! The full £50,624!!! ABSOLUTELY THRILLED!! Keeps us going for another 6 months and we shall hopefully apply for 3 year funding in February 2021. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH for your help as ever but particularly in these uncertain times, it really is such a huge boost to my confidence to have your back up and thoughts"
- "First I want to you to know that [named officer] have been a huge help to me. I was feeling pretty overwhelmed, working on my own with a seemingly insurmountable amount of things to do. [They] spent time with me on Zoom and made lots of suggestions how I could manage. Since then I have a list app on my phone and have delegated a huge piece of work which was overwhelming me. I also attended [their] COVID risk and recovery training and have completed my risk assessment and recovery plan. I hosted a Zoom board meeting on Saturday and they were very impressed."
- "..Thank you for the signposting and awareness building of grants – it is getting harder and harder to compete with hearts and minds larger charities for the funds and donations so getting an email alert is a magic! Our admin assistant has also been accessing your training sessions (is on one today) and again this accessible and affordable type of training is so vital. Keep up the great work it is appreciated even if we never meet face to face."

2.6 Other case studies demonstrate the value of linking local organisations in to others with similar experiences or to share learning. For example:

Case study: Hauxton Parish Council

The parish council are building a new village hall, which they will be running as a central community hub for the village. ACRE have supported both the old village hall charity and parish council as they close one facility and open the new facility. Part of their aspiration for this project will be to include other community services so that the community have access to more services. One local ambition included exploring the idea of having post office services within their new facility. ACRE were able to help and support the parish council by facilitating discussions with other community buildings around the county that offer this service (offering peer-peer support and learning) and support them as they work with Post Office services to develop their local offer.

Case Study: 'I love Wisbech'

A cross-sector partnership that has been active in Wisbech for many years and conducted the largest single survey the town has seen. Over 40 partners have been involved over time developing projects and ideas to benefit the town and its communities. With the '*I love Wisbech*' project coming to an end, many partners were keen not to lose the momentum and co-operation that had been developed and asked Support Cambridgeshire to look at options.

Following a series of surveys and workshops, the 'I love Wisbech' partners have developed a shared vision and understanding that will help ensure that the partnership work in Wisbech will continue. Next steps are to develop a strong partnership agreement that will help to leverage in greater sums of funding for the town and its communities, increasing projects and enhancing the lives, opportunities, and culture of the town.

- 2.7 The outcomes agreed for the year ending 31 September 2021 continue to focus on the five main headings in the current Grant Agreement, with each having a new or updated outcome to suit the priorities relevant to the Cambridgeshire Local approach and the pandemic response and recovery, and deliverable within the 13-month timeframe, as follows:

Community Facilities

For community facilities to remain at the heart of their communities, responding to the changing requirements brought about by COVID, developing their offer and adapting to the need within the communities they serve.

Voice and Representation

Enabling the VCS to play an equal role in co-producing services and supporting our communities as the needs grow and change.

Volunteering and Social Action

For communities and individuals to feel empowered to develop a response to their local needs, to have the support, information, confidence and skills that allows them to be in the best place to respond.

Town and Parish Council

For the successful delivery of a Cambridgeshire Local Council Conference in October 2021. That the Local Council Development Plan is adapted and updated in 2021 to represent the change in the needs of the communities and services the Parish Councils are now offering.

Information and Advice

That the VCS have access to the information and advice, connections and networks they feel they need to be better resourced within their organisations.

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 are 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 VCS 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.
- 3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050
- The VCS play a key role in championing environmental concerns and local action. This grant agreement supports VCS organisations to achieve their ambitions and Local Councils to understand environmental concerns and how to address those.

4. Significant Implications

- 4.1 Resource Implications
- County Council resources for this work are already identified in the Council's budget for 2020/21.
- 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications
- Support Cambridgeshire's grant agreement was fulfilled in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications
- There is a continuing legal duty on local authorities to ensure that vulnerable people are not exposed to additional or unreasonable levels of risk as a result of the implementation of these strategic objectives
- 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications
- Evidence indicates that some services delivered within local communities can be more successful than statutory services at reaching people who may need support.
 - Building capacity within local communities 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
- Engagement with VCS has resulted in a greater understanding of the needs of the sector and has shaped the previous, current and future agree outcomes required from this service.
- 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, 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

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Gus DeSilva

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes

Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health Yes

Name of Officer: Val Thomas

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Impact of the Partnership During Covid-19

Appendix 2 - Survey of Charities and Community Groups

Appendix 3 - The Impact of Covid-19 on Huntingdonshire Community Groups and Charities

6. Source documents

None