



PRCC.27 11/12
Prosperous Communities Committee
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Subject: Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector in West Lindsey

Report by:

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Purpose/Summary:

This paper has already been considered and approved by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee as the Committee with responsibility for the voluntary sector . It is presented to the Prosperous Communities for noting given the role of the voluntary sector in supporting the Council's Localism programme and for Committee to agree its nominations to the Member Panel.

This paper summarises the work carried out to date to improve the council's understanding of its relationship with the voluntary and community sector and recommends a Strategic Review of all of the voluntary organisations operating within West Lindsey over the next 12 – 24 months.

In the context of the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the Localism Programme in particular the council recognises that the role of the voluntary sector is essential.

This Review would ensure that any future financial or other commitments made by the

council are clearly aligned to the council's Corporate Objectives.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Members agree to the establishment of a Member Panel to oversee and direct the Strategic Review and nominate 2 councillors to fulfil this role.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

Under the new Best Value Statutory Guidance issued by the Government the council is required to comply with the requirements of the Voluntary Sector Compact. This details the length of time for adequate consultation with the sector and other measures which clarify support.

The recommendations in this report comply with the legal requirements

Financial:

Negotiations across the voluntary and community sector over the last year have reduced the overall budgetary provision made by the council by £23,000.

In addition the council has up to £35,000 available under the Council Tax Second Homes Discount that, the County Council have been asked to confirm, can be used to support the voluntary and community sector over the next two years while the Strategic Review is completed.

This report recommends investing these savings into Infrastructure support to help sustain the development of the voluntary sector and to ensure that an adequate Strategic Review into all of the council's relationships with voluntary organisations can be undertaken.

As such there is no additional pressure on the 2012/13 budget from the recommendations in this report.

Staffing:

None

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

The voluntary and community sector organisations support a range of individuals and communities within West Lindsey, often those most vulnerable and in need of

assistance. Equality and Diversity is an essential component to this support. Service Level Agreements are required to detail the ways in which organisations ensure adherence to the council's equality and diversity policies.

Risk Assessment:

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:
N/A

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
Voluntary Sector Guidelines

Call in and Urgency:
Is the decision one which Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

Yes

No

Key Decision:

Yes

No

Introduction

1. The Voluntary Sector

- 1.1 Voluntary organisations play a fundamental role within our society. While often referred to as one ‘Sector’, the diversity and variety of voluntary and community groups active in the United Kingdom is vast and includes a wide spectrum of very different organisations. They range from local branches of national agencies that campaign and deliver services across the country – for example the Citizens Advice Bureau, all the way to tiny self-help organisations that support people who share a common problem from someone’s front room.
- 1.2 At all levels these organisations work to develop activities to support people to address the realities of modern living and they add considerably to the quality of life across our district in a variety of different and specific ways.
- 1.3 One common feature of the Voluntary Sector is the participation and organising of volunteers who provide expertise and personal energy without pay, to develop and support the valuable work of these organisations.
- 1.4 Voluntary organisations bring significant value into our communities including additional finance as well as volunteer effort – this leverage can be £9 for every £1 of investment.
- 1.5 Clearly a strong, diverse and healthy voluntary and community sector is as essential to an effective society as a dynamic and prosperous business community is to a successful economy.
- 1.6 The council’s Corporate Plan illustrates the need for a corporate approach to our work with the voluntary sector as it plays an essential role in the delivery of our ambitions for West Lindsey. This is particularly evident in our commitment to Localism where voluntary and community organisations undertake activities which are central to local neighbourhoods.

Theme 1

An accessible and connected district where we will have the best opportunities in life to help ourselves and others.

In specific terms within our commitment to “Localism” the council has agreed:

As a diverse district, we propose to create an infrastructure for greater area, parish, village and neighbourhood focus where citizens and communities can help themselves, volunteer to help others and look out for their neighbourhood.

2. Infrastructure

- 2.1 The council has long recognised the value delivered by voluntary organisations active in West Lindsey and has supported, both financially and in other ways a number of voluntary organisations for some years.
- 2.2 Within this support the council recognises the value of the so-called 'Infrastructure' voluntary organisations that have a role over and above the provision of a particular service. These organisations work to provide support to a range of voluntary and community organisations and have as a primary objective the creation and development of a healthy voluntary sector.
- 2.3 These organisations achieve these aims by providing expertise in funding proposals, by organising networks of volunteers across the sector, by coordinating information and advice to other organisations to help them grow and flourish and by promoting a voice for the voluntary sector as a whole.
- 2.4 In the West Lindsey context the 2 principal 'Infrastructure' organisations are 'Community Lincs', the Lincolnshire Rural Community Council and 'Urban Challenge', the local Council for Voluntary Service.
- 2.5 Both organisations will be central to the Strategic Review as recommended in this paper and already carry out work which is 'over and above' the limited requirements in their current Service Level Agreements.
- 2.6 This work is varied and includes significant support to the council in its developing relationships with voluntary organisations by acting as a conduit to the wider sector and assisting the development of the council's localism ambitions, both for community led planning and building volunteering opportunities within the district.
- 2.7 This paper recommends a new two year agreement for both organisations, to reflect the length of the two year strategic review and the role of both organisations in supporting the review by undertaking new duties and tasks to support the wider voluntary sector in West Lindsey.
- 2.8 The county council are currently embarking on a similar process to review their relationships with the voluntary sector and intend to continue their financial support to the Infrastructure organisations while this review is undertaken. West Lindsey District Council is working closely with Lincolnshire County Council already and the Strategic review recommended in the report will be carried out in close cooperation with the county council.

3. Council for Voluntary Service (West Lindsey)

- 3.1 The CVS model is a national one and there is an active CVS in most geographical locations across the country however it is important to note that while there is national advice there is no national funding. CVS's are critical organisations working to grow and maintain a healthy number of effective

voluntary and community organisations in a given location. In Lincolnshire the voluntary sector is generally under developed and poorly funded and the sparsity of the population across the county provides additional challenges to the sector in attracting and supporting volunteers.

- 3.2 **CVS West Lindsey** is one of three Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) run by Urban Challenge, which covers the administrative areas of Lincoln City, North Kesteven and West Lindsey. Lincolnshire County Council is a key funder and has worked for many years to support the development of an effective CVS model across the county. This merger some years ago was promoted by the county council to create both critical mass and efficiencies of scale.
- 3.3 West Lindsey's service currently provides the following services:
- A district wide Volunteer Bureau
 - The coordination of a Voluntary Sector Forum
 - Expert funding advice to voluntary organisations
 - Community engagement and consultation
 - Promotion of volunteering to locals businesses
- 3.4 Last year the organisation dealt with 1,500 enquiries around volunteering and group support from across the district. Additionally, they have a database of 256 organisations representing the full range of voluntary organisations in West Lindsey. This provides an excellent platform for consultation with the voluntary sector.
- 3.5 There was an average of 155 live volunteering opportunities registered with the Volunteer Bureau, offering an average of 4 hours per week at an equivalent rate of £12 per hour. This gives a potential value of almost £350,000 in volunteer labour.
- 3.6 The brokerage service dealt with 603 enquires during the year and placed 126 clients - a conversion rate of 21%. This is in line with the national average. Online applications currently account for 55% of all enquires and this figure will no doubt continue to rise. The value of the placements at an average 4 hrs/£12 per hour is around £300,000.
- 3.7 Over and above this core support the West Lindsey CVS has worked closely with the council directly to support our community consultation and engagement through the Area Forums and other mechanisms, and has supported the development of our volunteering plans running effective promotion campaigns within the council to increase volunteering.
- 3.8 West Lindsey District Council currently funds the CVS with £10,000 on a three year Service Level Agreement and they rent an office within the Guildhall in Gainsborough. An additional £5,000 was provided by the County Council making the total contribution £15,000. The funding agreement ends on the 31 March 2012.

3.9 It is recommended that this Service Level Agreement is continued and the funding increased to £25,000 for a period of two years to reflect the level of work required by West Lindsey District Council over the duration of the Strategic Review. The CVS will need to play an important role in supporting the wider voluntary and community sector throughout the review and will provide expertise for members in undertaking the review. Any continued funding will be considered as part of the Review.

4. Community Lincs

4.1 The other key Infrastructure voluntary organising for West Lindsey is **Community Lincs** - The Rural Community Council for Lincolnshire, part of a national network headed up by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). The Rural Community Councils are obviously core to the voluntary sector in the rural counties of England.

4.2 They are specialists in:

- Community-Led Planning (CLP)
- Community consultation and development
- Village Halls
- Rural Affordable Housing issues
- Rural regeneration

4.3 The Rural Community Councils are central to the support provided to rural communities and they work to complement the services offered by Councils for Voluntary Service.

4.4 Over and above the core services as listed above Community Lincs provides direct and independent support to the parish and towns of West Lindsey in order to develop local community led or parish plans. This activity has been very successful and there are 17 completed plans within West Lindsey, covering 30% of the population, the highest number of any district area within the county of Lincolnshire. In addition, Community Lincs have supported the council's work with the ex MoD communities with community development capacity and expertise.

4.5 The council has a three year Service Level Agreement with Community Lincs amounting to £10,000 per annum due to end on the 31 March 2012.

4.6 It is recommended that this Service Level Agreement is continued and the funding increased to £20,000 for a period of two years to reflect the level of work required by West Lindsey District Council over the duration of the Strategic Review. Community Lincs will need to play an important role in supporting the wider voluntary and community sector throughout the review and will provide expertise for members in undertaking the review. Any continued funding for this organisation will be part of the Review.

4.7 General contact figures last year show 119 separate points of contact with West Lindsey organisations covering 38 parishes in addition to the CLP work. This

'contact' takes a variety of forms from one-off telephone advice to in-depth follow-up and possible visits or attendance at meetings.

5. Council support across the Voluntary Sector

- 5.1 Over and above the role of the Infrastructure voluntary organisations the council also funds or provides other support to a number of other voluntary organisations. These arrangements are largely 'historic' in that in some cases they were agreed many years ago and have not since been reviewed by members. Or they were 'Service Specific' and agreed by a particular service committee to meet a particular service need but were not considered at a corporate level. As such there has been no way to either check that original agreements still hold fast and/or whether or not the delivery is still in line with new overall corporate objectives.
- 5.2 This situation is not uncommon among other local authorities but it has meant that the council has not had a systematic approach to these relationships and has not thus reviewed these funding arrangements in a corporate context. It also means that new funding opportunities that emerge are difficult to manage and the council is not thus making best use of the voluntary sector in driving its corporate ambitions.
- 5.3 Given the council's commitment to localism and the critical role played by the voluntary and community sector across West Lindsey in supporting local community action it is important that this situation is resolved.
- 5.4 A start has been made over the last 12 months to help the council better understand the voluntary and community sector and our relationship with it and for the first time the council can now produce a total figure for the financial support it provides for this sector and a limited analysis of how the work funded supports the delivery of the authority's corporate ambitions.
- 5.5 The council currently supports a total of 17 organisations, which, in this financial year amounts to £249,000. This support ranges from £46,500 (West Lindsey Citizens Advice Bureau) to £800 (Art on the Map).
- 5.6 The overall picture is however complex as some of the council's existing arrangements are part of county-wide agreements e.g. where all districts contribute to SoundLincs and the Lincolnshire Sports Partnership, while others are decisions which West Lindsey District Council have taken with Lincolnshire County Council e.g. the Citizens Advice Bureau, while others still are local decisions based on local needs.
- 5.7 As such more work needs to be done to create a clear and comprehensive set of relationships with the voluntary sector based on a clarity of purpose and robust expectations on both sides.
- 5.8 Within this it is important the council understands the relevant legal restrictions. The Government is keen to promote the work of the voluntary sector and a

number of legislative requirements have been enacted recently which make it essential that adequate consultation is carried out with any voluntary body before any changes in funding are made and that full impact assessments are undertaken to fully understand the potential result of any loss of service on the local community. The recommendations within the report comply with these legal requirements.

- 5.9 A comprehensive review will take time in order to build in effective consultation and dialogue with the voluntary sector and to enable proper work with other principle funders (Lincolnshire County Council) to understand their strategic intentions.
- 5.10 It is recommended therefore that a Strategic Review of the council's relationships with the voluntary sector is commenced and that a Member Panel is established to oversee a comprehensive Review, which will carry out the following functions:
- Agree the Council's priorities for funding the voluntary sector
 - Develop an effective communication channel with the sector to understand its role and functions within West Lindsey
 - Explore the commissioning plans of the county council to enable good joint decisions on future funding to be made
 - Agree the council's available budgetary provision for support to the voluntary sector
 - Devise and oversee a process of individual reviews of all existing funding arrangements with voluntary organisations. This will include capturing the value and understanding impact
 - e.g. A 'value for money' exercise with West Lindsey Citizens Advice Bureau showed that for every £1 invested, £29 came back to the community through services delivered and debt recovered
 - In 2009/10 the BTCV volunteer workforce completed 880 workdays in West Lindsey - equivalent to £52,536 in donated labour
 - Develop a process of inviting bids from voluntary organisations for future support
 - Explore 'in kind' support
 - Carry out effective consultation throughout the review
- 5.11 This will provide the council with a much better strategic understanding of its funding arrangements with the voluntary and community sector and will allow for the building of a robust set of relationships that support the delivery of its ambitions for West Lindsey.
- 5.12 All of the current service level agreements are monitored against an agreed set of outputs and outcomes but this has not been collated or interpreted into an overall picture of the social impact the voluntary sector has on our communities.
- 5.13 Part of our 'new way of working' captured within the new framework with the voluntary sector will include a more robust and coherent framework for capturing the social and financial outcomes and looking at their combined contribution to

our corporate plan objectives. This can be co-designed with the sector to ensure realistic and meaningful targets and outputs.

- 5.14 A Member Panel comprising two members from the Policy and Resources Committee and two members from the Prosperous Communities Committee will oversee the entire Review and report back to the Committee at regular intervals.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Recent work to renegotiate a number of individual agreements with the voluntary sector has resulted in efficiencies of £23,000. In addition the Council Tax Second Homes Discount which is a sum of money allocated to West Lindsey District Council by Lincolnshire County Council on a yearly basis could be used to support the voluntary and community sector. The Council have been asked for this use to be approved' by the County Council and we are awaiting their confirmation. Early indications suggest that this is very likely to be agreed as the County Council is keen to work with West Lindsey District Council on a joint approach to our commissioning of the voluntary sector into the future.
- 6.2 These two sources of funds provide sufficient resources to further support the Infrastructure organisations for the duration of the Strategic review, in order for them to continue to support the wider voluntary sector and the council over the next two years.

7. Summary

- 7.1 Members are asked to support the initiation of a Strategic Review of the council's individual and overall relationships with the voluntary sector and to appoint a Member Panel to oversee this review. In order to undertake this review in a context which recognises the importance of the sector members are asked to support the reinvestment of the 'efficiencies' made to date and to utilise the Council Tax Second Homes discount provided by the county council.
- 7.2 The recommendations in this paper provide for the first time a strategic framework within which the council should be able to make, consistent, rational and effective decisions about its support to the voluntary and community sector. Regular reports on the outcomes of the Review will be brought to members for consideration.

Appendix A - Financial Arrangements with Voluntary Sector Partners 2010 - 2013

Organisation	Activity/ies	Financial Support 2010/11		Agreed support 2011/12		Proposed support for 2012/13	Funding Source	Details of arrangements	Lead Service
		WLDC	External	WLDC	External				
Infrastructure Organisations									
Community Lincs	Support for parish/neighbourhood planning	£10,000		£10,000	£5,000	£20,000	WLDC CLG	SLA in place until March 2012. New SLA to be negotiated as per report	Planning & Development
	Support for Rural Housing Enabler			£0		£0	LCC - £450K over 3 yrs for whole county	Currently 'in kind' as we are providing the management and admin support for the funding from the Area Based Grant. Agreement in place until March 2012. Currently no ongoing provision - negotiations in place to look at other structures.	Housing & Community Safety
	Consultation & community development work in Scotter	£5,000	£15,000				£10K Community Safety Partnership £5K Scotter PC £5K WLDC	Work to address long standing issues of ASB and provision for young people on a Friday night. Contract - finished Dec 2010	Community & Democratic
Urban Challenge (WL VCS)	Core support	£10,000	£5,000	£10,000	£5,000	£25,000	£10K WLDC £5K LCC	SLA in place until March 2012. New SLA to be negotiated as per report	Planning & Development
Delivery Organisations									
BTCV	Core support	£35,000		£35,000		£35,000	WLDC	SLA in place until 2013. Free accommodation at Trinity and tool store at depot	Planning & Development
CAB - WL	Core support	£45,000		£46,510		£47,460	WLDC	SLA in place until March 2014 . 2% Increase each year for inflation	Planning & Development
	Debt advice - 1 day p/w	£9,099		£9,332		£0	WLDC	Only to October 2011	Housing & Community Safety
	One-off payment	£35,000					WLDC	To replenish reserves in recognition of increased activity due to the Recession	Community & Democratic
CAB - Lincoln & District	Core support	£12,000		£12,380		£12,633	WLDC	SLA in place until March 2014 . 2% Increase each year for inflation	Planning & Development
	One-off payment	£15,000					WLDC	To replenish reserves in recognition of increased activity due to the Recession	Community & Democratic
CG Partnerships	Management of Friday Night Project		£15,000				Community Safety Partnership	Contract in place until Dec 2010	Community & Democratic
	Support for Park Springs Learning Centre	£7,500					WLDC	One off payment to support staff costs to enable the learning centre to become established and self-sustaining.	Regeneration
Children's Links	Delivery of the Play Ranger Scheme		£29,570				Big Lottery Fund	Contract in place. Project finished October 2010	Community & Democratic
Dial-a-Ride Lincoln	Core support	£8,730		£8,730		£8,920	WLDC	No formal arrangement but Member representation on Board	Regeneration
Dial -a-Ride Gainsborough (LCC)	Core support	£37,060		£37,060		£37,980	WLDC	Annual SLA under negotiation with LCC. This money is now used to create a Call Connect Plus service. Not really voluntary sector any more.	Regeneration
Gainsborough Furniture Resource Centre	Core support	£18,740		£9,370		£0	WLDC	SLA in place - tapered grant due to end March 2012.	Housing & Community Safety
GAPA	Core support	£15,000		£15,000		£0	WLDC	Original decision not to fund beyond 2011. £15K reinstated 2011 to March 2012.	Community & Democratic
	Activites in the SW Ward	£4,000					WLDC	Provision of diversionary activites at X-church. Rolling 6 week contract	Regeneration
Lincolnshire Sports Partnership	Core support	£4,000		£4,000		£4,000	WLDC	Annual arrangement, no specific SLA in place.	Public Protection
MR Foyer (Axiom)	Core support	£14,560		£14,924		£14,924	WLDC	Support for Outreach worker. Annual commitment through application process	Housing & Community Safety
SoundLincs	Core support	£3,000		£3,000		£3,000	WLDC	Annual SLA in place	Housing & Community Safety
WL Women's Aid	Core support	£10,000		£7,500		£7,500	WLDC	SLA in place. Contribution towards rent.	Housing & Community Safety
Community organisations/groups									
Act Now	Core support for theatre group supporting adults with learning and physical needs.	£2,200		£2,200		£2,200	WLDC Trinity Arts	Informal arrangement. Disabled theatre group based at Trinity.	Regeneration
Art on the Map	Core support	£800		£800		£800	WLDC	Annual SLA in place	Housing & Community Safety
Churches Festival Committee/ Gainsborough Town Council	Support to Committee + payment to GTC for Events Officer time	£10,000		£10,000		£8,000	WLDC	SLA under negotiation until 2014 - tapered grant to Festival Committee £5K 2011; £3K 2012; £2K 2013. £5Kpa for 3 years to GTC	Regeneration (Lead service but funded from elsewhere)
Gainsborough Town Council	Support for the Riverside Festival	£3,000		£3,000		£3,000	WLDC	Contribution towards Events Officer salary to organise the festival	Housing & Community Safety
Total value	NB Includes £50K of one-off payments to the CABs in 2010/11	£314,689	£64,570	£238,806	£10,000	£230,417			
		£379,259		£248,806					

Organisation	Agreed support 2011/12	Budgeted support for 2012/13
<i>Infrastructure Organisations</i>		
Community Lincs	£10,000	£0
Urban Challenge (WL VCS)	£10,000	£0
<i>Delivery Organisations</i>		
BTCV	£35,000	£35,000
CAB - WL	£55,842	£47,460
CAB - Lincoln & District	£12,380	£12,633
Dial-a-Ride Lincoln	£8,730	£8,920
LCC Call Connect (Dial -a-Ride Gainsborough)	£37,060	£37,980
Lincolnshire Sports Partnership	£4,000	£4,000
Gainsborough Furniture Resource Centre	£9,370	£0
GAPA	£15,000	£0
MR Foyer (Axiom)	£24,924	£24,924
SoundLincs	£3,000	£3,000
WL Women's Aid	£7,500	£7,500
<i>Community organisations/groups</i>		
Act Now	£2,200	£2,200
Art on the Map	£800	£800
Churches Festival Committee/ Gainsborough Town Council	£10,000	£8,000
Gainsborough Town Council (Riverside Festival)	£3,000	£3,000
Total value	£248,806	£195,417