

**LEADER**

**AGENDA**

**DATE:** Wednesday, 13 October 2021

**TIME:** 9.30 am

**VENUE:** Microsoft Teams Meeting

**MEMBERSHIP:** Councillor Richard Cooper (Leader)

**EXECUTIVE DECISION**

1. Voluntary and Community Sector Strategic Funding Arrangements 2022-24 - Forward Plan Ref: 44CA21: The Partnerships and Engagement Manager to submit a written report. 3 - 8

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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Leader
<b>DATE:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
<b>SERVICE AREA:</b>	Legal & Governance
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Partnership & Engagement Manager <i>Ann Duncan</i>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Voluntary and Community Sector strategic funding arrangements 2022-24</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	ALL DISTRICT
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF:</b>	Key Decision No. Yes

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## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to request to renew the provision of services arrangements that are in place with the council's VCS strategic partners for a further two years so that they can continue to plan and deliver key services across the Harrogate district. Formal service level agreements would be in place and would cover both the transition year following the Local Government Reorganisation announcement and the first year of the new unitary authority.
- 1.2 The current funding terms for the existing recipients comes to an end on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and subject to approval of the recommendation, the new arrangements will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 for a period of two years. Those funded will continue to be the Council's VCS strategic partners for the services provided during the term of the service level agreements.

Following this period, they will be reviewed as part of the new unitary authority arrangements and the new budget setting process once in place.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 2.1 To agree to renew the strategic VCS SLA's for a further 2 years, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022-31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. This will ensure the delivery of key services across the Harrogate District and allow some stability to the organisations

that will be in receipt of the funds whilst the current council governance is in place and begins its transition into the new unitary authority.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDED REASON/S FOR DECISION/S**

- 3.1 By approving the extension period the voluntary and community sector organisations will continue to deliver key services across the Harrogate district within their available budgets. It also gives the organisations time to plan ahead for any possible changes in funding that may occur in the future following Local Government Reorganisation.
- 3.2 The budget will be allocated and committed for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

### **4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTION/S CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION** *(Must be used for reports to Cabinet & Cabinet Members)*

- 4.1 Not to agree the allocations would mean that none of the ring fenced budget for the voluntary and community sector strategic SLA's would be committed within the budget.
- 4.2 There would be a loss of service provision across the Harrogate District currently provided by the voluntary and community sector that complements and enhances the council's service provision. This would have a detrimental impact on council services. Those funded have provided key services throughout the pandemic and our communities are dependent on them to be there.
- 4.3 Should the VCS strategic partners not receive their funding, they will have a budget deficit and will have to make significant cuts to their services and inevitably to their already limited staffing pool in a very short time frame. Alternative fund raising opportunities have been hampered by the pandemic and they would struggle to fill any shortfall in the existing funding landscape.

## **5.0 THE REPORT**

### **5.1 Background**

- 5.1.1 The Council has always worked with and supported the voluntary and community sector and recognises the contribution the sector makes to maintain and improve the quality of life for the community within the Harrogate district. The sector has always been included in strategic and service related consultations and have been represented and participated in various multi-agency partnerships over the years. Their involvement has been influential to the strategic planning of services for the local community, especially over the last 18 months as part of the community Covid-19 response.
- 5.1.2 During 2018, a strategic review of the existing strategic grant fund arrangements to the VCS was carried out and in the November a report was brought forward to Cabinet with the recommendation to move away from grants to service level agreements with key strategic partners. The new

arrangements would ensure that funds were allocated and managed to support the voluntary and community sector in a way which aligns with the council's corporate priorities and services.

5.1.3 Those awarded funds are 'strategic partners' of the council. Being a strategic partner is understood to be '**a long-term relationship to achieve defined objectives common to all partners**'. The Council will enter into funding arrangements with **Strategic Service Delivery (SSD) Partners**. This involves the delivery of services by one body on behalf of another or through joint working, aspires to deliver more value for money, can include elements that are not contractually defined but left to partners to agree the way forward. These are collaborative relationships between local authorities and other organisations in the public, private and / or voluntary sectors.

5.1.4 It was agreed that three areas were to form the basis of allocation;

1) Housing and homelessness, (HBC corporate priority Supporting our communities, A strong local economy, Excellent public services)

2) Sustaining the voluntary and community sector and supporting stronger communities, (HBC corporate priority Supporting our communities, A strong long economy)

3) Welfare reforms and the roll out of Universal Credit (HBC corporate priority Supporting our communities, A strong local economy, Excellent public services).

5.1.6 The following organisations were identified as the council's strategic partners and awarded allocations:-  
Harrogate and Ripon Centres for Voluntary Services (now Harrogate and District Community Action – H&DCA) £40,000  
Harrogate and Craven Districts Citizens Advice - £60,000  
Harrogate Homeless Project - £22,500  
Nidderdale Plus Community Partnership - £8,000  
Community First Yorkshire - £5,000

5.1.7 The agreed allocations amount to £135,500 per annum. The organisations received a three year funding term which comes to an end on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

## 5.2 The proposal

5.2.1 Throughout the funding period there have been regular reviews with the recipients, they have been engaged with the work of the council and all have continued to provide essential services throughout the pandemic and have stepped up and enhanced their service delivery to support our more vulnerable residents and those who have had to isolate for a period of time. The council has worked closer with the organisations and built on the existing relationships.

- 5.2.2 As part of the LGR transition arrangements budgets and contracts will be reviewed, it therefore makes sense to roll over the existing arrangements for a further 2 years until these are defined and established.
- 5.2.3 Many of the recipients have already approached the council asking about the future of the funding and the existing service provision arrangements. They are concerned about continuity and potential budget shortfalls that they will have to make up, for some it would be a significant amount too. If they have the security of a further two years they can begin to plan for any possible changes.

## 6.0 REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The following were considered: Financial Implications; Human Resources Implications; Legal Implications; ICT Implications; Strategic Property/Asset Management Considerations; Risk Assessment; Equality and Diversity (the Public Sector Equality Duty and impact upon people with protected characteristics). If applicable, the outcomes of any consultations, assessments, considerations and implications considered necessary during preparation of this report are detailed below.
- 6.2 The service provision provided by the organisations to residents within the Harrogate District constitute contracts for services under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("the Regulations"), However, the relevant procurement routes embodied in the Regulations will not apply to these contracts for services as the aggregate sums paid to any one organisation since the service level agreements commenced are below the relevant procurement threshold.
- 6.3 An Equality Impact assessment has been carried out and is held within the overall Impact Analysis within Appendix 1. The EIA shows that withdrawing funding from any of the organisations will be negative on the individuals that access the services and who fall within one of the protected characteristic groups as identified by the Public Sector Equality Duty. This is no surprise given the nature of the services provided by the organisations and the individuals that access these.

## 7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Allocating the funds via service level agreements within the voluntary and community sector to address the stated corporate priorities will provide vital support services to our Harrogate district residents for a further two years.

### Background Papers – None

**OFFICER CONTACT:** Please contact Ann Duncan, Partnerships and Engagement Manager, if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at *Communications and Engagement Team, Legal and Governance, PO Bo 787, Harrogate, HG1 9RW* 01423 500600 ext 58607 or by e-mail [ann.duncan@harrogate.gov.uk](mailto:ann.duncan@harrogate.gov.uk)

SLA recipient	Award	Current relationship	Impact	Allocation area/ Corporate priority	Comments	
Organisational name	£	How HBC currently works with the organisation	Impact on the Harrogate District if funding was withdrawn	Impact on HBC if funding was withdrawn		
Citizens Advice Harrogate and Craven districts	£60,000	Citizens Advice (CA) are dealing with the more complex benefits advice cases. Work was done to look at referral routes and how services can be complemented to avoid duplication and to provide the best service to those who need it. CA partnered with HBC to assist those needing support following Brexit and continue to support those who haven't already signed up to the European Union Resettlement Scheme and other matters arising from those whom they have supported through this process. CA are one of many partners in the My Neighbourhood project groups and overarching steering group contributing to reducing financial inclusion. They are also referring people to join the Harrogate District Credit Union and into the Warm and Well fuel poverty project. Part of the Harrogate district Get Digital project.	<p>Outreaches in Ripon, Masham and Pateley Bridge would close. Complex advice appointments in Harrogate office waiting times would increase dramatically (currently 1-2 weeks) - might be nearer 4-6 weeks and with less capacity prioritisation would have to be made based on vulnerability. Overall number of clients seen would reduce across all channels (phone, email and in person). Debt Advice and Financial Capability support may be reduced to signposting only to other organisations. Impact would also affect staff and the many volunteers they have who have extensive training and development.</p> <p>Many vulnerable people who fall within one of the protected characteristic groups accessing this service would have to seek advice and support potentially from other sources that may not be face to face or within the Harrogate District. The impact would therefore be negative to the highlighted groups.</p>	HBC may see an increase in demand for advice services. There could be an increase once furlough ends/ end of the £20 Universal Credit uplift. More vulnerable people would present themselves to HBC with debt and financial concerns with a possible increase in rent arrears/ homelessness that would have an impact on HBC resources. Benefits cases have seen an increase due to Covid-19. The team are currently stretched dealing with the Test & Trace Support payments. Already identified there is a need for more basic budgeting and money management advice due to the impact of Covid-19.	3) Welfare reforms and the roll out of Universal Credit. <b>HBC Corporate Priorities:</b> A strong local economy, Supporting our communities, Excellent public services	Have signed up to THE LOCAL LOTTO as a means to generate additional income
Harrogate and District Community Action (HaDCA)	£40,000	<p>Currently partners with HBC and works on two key strategic projects - namely THE LOCAL FUND and THE LOCAL LOTTO where HADCA is a direct delivery partner. Helps HBC engage with the wider VCS through consultation and engagement for various proposals and changes to HBC services and wider place shaping such as LGR through utilising the information service and networks and forums that HADCA support and facilitate.</p> <p>Has provided the Covid-19 community response hub for Harrogate town &amp; worked closely with the other 5 hubs across the District.</p> <p>HADCA are one of many partners in the My Neighbourhood project groups and overarching steering group. HADCA is the local VCS representative on the Public Services Leadership Board providing key input and cascading key information and messages back to the sector. Also an active participant in the Harrogate Place project and Steering Group and the Harrogate District Climate Change Coalition. Part of the Harrogate District Get Digital project.</p> <p>Owns and manages Harrogate Community House which provides office accommodation for 15 charity organisations and meetings rooms for groups, + information and signposting. Part of the Harrogate district Get Digital project.</p>	<p>HBC core grant funding enables HADCA to provide a comprehensive local voluntary and community sector information service, including an online community information directory. HADCA hosts a number of local forums and networks and contributes to local partnership working and programmes. It also supports the leadership of THE LOCAL FUND and champions local volunteering via the Volunteering Directory and support for the Harrogate District Volunteer Oscars. This provision would cease if funding was withdrawn.</p> <p>Many local VCS groups who rely on HADCA for support or to utilise their information sharing platforms would have to either seek support elsewhere or carry out this function themselves which can have a huge resource implication, especially for volunteer led groups and organisations.</p> <p>The local VCS as a collective would have a reduced presence and voice with less joined up working across the district. There would also be an impact on the staff and volunteers who help to provide some of the support and advice services.</p> <p>If HADCA ceased to exist there would also be an impact on the operation of Harrogate Community House and it's tenants and customers.</p> <p>The impact on individuals who fall within one of the protected characteristic groups would be negative as HaDCA support many individuals and organisations who fall within these groups, more specifically older people and those with a mental health illness/ disability.</p>	Would need to establish and maintain our own data bases as a means to engage with the voluntary and community sector across the District therefore having a resource implication on HBC as all vcs engagement would have to be done in house. Direct support to promote benefits of signing up and playing THE LOCAL LOTTO would be lost - which would impact on the income generated through the LOTTO impacting on the income available to the voluntary and community sector across the district. A core partner of THE LOCAL FUND would be lost having a possible knock on affect with the reputation of the Fund.	2) Sustaining the voluntary and community sector and supporting stronger communities <b>HBC Corporate Priorities:</b> A strong local economy, Supporting our communities, Excellent public services	HELP (direct service provided by HaDCA) has signed up to THE LOCAL LOTTO as a means to generate additional income.
Harrogate Homeless Project (HHP)	£22,500	Currently work closely with HHP to help those who are homeless find accommodation and provide advice and support to address some of the wider issues they may be facing. Have regular review meetings with HBC on specific cases/individuals as well as monitoring on No Second Night Out and the SAFE project that works with those who are repeatedly homeless. Part of the Harrogate district Get Digital project.	The grant provides a significant level of funding towards the No Second Night Out (NSNO) scheme, which continues to handle around 200+ referrals each year. This figure has increased during the course of the year which reflects the increase in demand and the additional pressures brought about by the pandemic ie; increased numbers of singles identified as sharing inappropriate accommodation. Supporting and accommodating clients in the NSNO provision does not generate any income for HHP (in contrast to hostel accommodation through which we can achieve a housing benefit income). In addition, the costs of operating NSNO are predominately salary costs, and it would be difficult to achieve revenue funding at this level elsewhere (typically most grants being restricted to capital purchases). This scheme would be a jeopardy should funding be withdrawn leading to more homeless people across the district which would impact on other public services across the district. There would also be an impact on staff and volunteers who help to provide some of the services. <p>The impact on individuals who fall within one of the protected characteristic groups who is accessing this provision/service would be negative, all are vulnerable, have complex needs and chaotic lifestyles that require considerable support and resource to do so.</p>	HHP works very closely with HBC Housing Options and with the new Homeless Reduction Act there are many more referrals from HBC. If grant funding was withdrawn the council would see an increase in the number of individuals that they would need to house and support having a significant impact on council resources.	1) Housing and homelessness <b>HBC Corporate Priorities:</b> Supporting our communities, Excellent public services	Have signed up to THE LOCAL LOTTO as a means to generate additional income

<p><b>Nidderdale Plus</b></p>	<p>£8,000</p>	<p>Currently provide customer access point and Tourist information point on behalf of HBC. Providing key HBC customer services within a remote rural setting. A real community hub now providing digital skills and tablet loan scheme and addressing wider welfare issues of the local residents. Fulfilled the community hub Covid-19 function and provided and co-ordinated volunteers and transport to the local vaccination sites as well as providing shopping and prescription service. Nidderdale Plus are one of the main partners delivering and supporting the My Neighbourhood Pateley Bridge/Nidderdale project. Part of the Harrogate district Get Digital project.</p>	<p>The office would have to reduce its opening hours and look at how it delivers its current services. There wouldn't be a rural point of contact within Pateley Bridge with the nearest provision in either Masham, Ripon or Harrogate, creating a large gap in a sizeable part of the District. Residents needs/issues/ concerns may not be addressed in partnership if Nidd Plus are not around the table. Nidd Plus has created significant communication and engagement networks across the Nidderdale and Washburn that HBC can utilise, and these would be in jeopardy without the support from HBC. The emerging work that Nidd Plus has grown and consolidated as a Community Support Organisation through the pandemic around health and wellbeing—and especially prevention—would be at risk if HBC were to withdraw support.</p> <p>The impact on individuals who fall within one of the protected characteristic groups and who is accessing the provision/service would be negative although to a lesser extent compared to the other organisations assessed. The impact would be largely on age and disability with the added factor of rurality causing social isolation on these groups.</p>	<p>If they are not sustainable they will not be able to deliver our customer services and tourist information service level agreement. Support to the My Neighbourhood project could be lost impacting on HBC resource to deliver and co-ordinate this element of work with minimal local knowledge and contacts/community outreach. Some of the key issues identified will not be addressed in partnership/with the community if Nidd Plus are not around the table to champion, co-ordinate and front this.</p>	<p>2) Sustaining the voluntary and community sector and supporting stronger communities  <b>HBC Corporate Priorities:</b> A strong local economy, Supporting our communities, Excellent public services</p>	<p>Have also signed up to THE LOCAL LOTTO as a means to generate additional income</p>
<p><b>Community First Yorkshire (CFY)/ Rural Action Yorkshire</b></p>	<p>£5,000</p>	<p>CFY are one of many partners in the My Neighbourhood project group supporting the Pateley Bridge and Ripon project groups on issues around fuel poverty and links with other projects. CFY are delivering across the district/county such as the Veterans project through other funding sources that have been secured. CFY are also engaging communities across the Harrogate District on Community Led Housing. They have secured considerable external funding to work across the county on fuel poverty and cold homes and established the Warm and Well project to which referrals are made from the Harrogate District/HBC and training on fuel poverty provided to staff and partners. Also providing support to rural community groups and more specifically the community buildings network across the Harrogate District and there has been significant work in relation to the opening up of community buildings following the pandemic and using them safely. CFY identify and address key rural issues and ensure there is a strong rural voice locally which can then be translated at a regional and national level. CFY have worked with the council and the local community buildings to help them access central government funding to help with their sustainability and reopening costs. CFY have worked proactively with HBC and NYCC Stronger Communities to add value to the work of the Community Support Organisations and the collective effort to deliver the Vaccine Programme by for example securing health funding to reimburse the costs of CSO volunteers staffing vaccination clinics car parking, welcome and non-clinical support activity.</p>	<p>The small pots of funding CFY receive from a number of funders to deliver rural work come together to resource and provide; asset based community development support to communities; enabling support for rural communities to take forward a project or set a vision for their locality; listen to views from rural communities and collate responses to consultations that impact on their locality and the lives of residents; and bid development and writing capacity to secure additional funding from outside the region. These are challenging times especially so for many of those living in rural communities. Yet equally it is a time of opportunity in finding and then developing new ways to involve rural communities in responding to the particular challenges facing them.</p> <p>The impact on individuals who fall within one of the protected characteristic groups and who is accessing the provision/service would be negative although to a lesser extent compared to the other organisations assessed. The impact would be largely on age and disability with the added factor of rurality causing social isolation on these groups.</p>	<p>HBC would lose a route into key rural county wide decision making boards and groups, the chance to hear about national learning and opportunities and to benefit from national funding secured, and the representation role of Community First Yorkshire for local rural issues. The work of Community First Yorkshire as local rural community council gives a focus and priority to supporting rural communities, the work of which would be reduced if funding was withdrawn. Project development such as the Men's Sheds would be impacted on.</p>	<p>2) Sustaining the voluntary and community sector and supporting stronger communities  <b>HBC Corporate Priorities:</b> A strong local economy, Supporting our communities, Excellent public services</p>	<p>HBC has a pot of money (£500,000 circa) for Community Led Housing that CFY could in negotiation with HBC tap into to do some of the engagement work.</p>
<p><b>Total:2022/23 2023/24</b></p>						<p>£135,500</p>