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

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 31st March 2022 and subject to approval of the recommendation, the new arrangements will commence on the 1st 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 1st April 2022-31st 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 31st 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

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