



## Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission                      18 November 2021

Wards affected:                              All wards

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### **VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS UPDATE**

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Report of Director, Community Services

#### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To update members on the new arrangements for overseeing the Borough's VCS Partnership arrangements and supporting activities.
- 1.2. To report on the outcomes of the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) commissioning round for October 2019 to September 2020, and October 2020 to September 2021

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 To note the positive impact and contribution of the voluntary and community sector and its many volunteers during lockdown, and results from the ongoing direct commissioning of front-line services via our local VCS commissioning arrangements.
- 2.2. To note the Borough's new lead VCS organisation, the Rural Community Council (RCC) now overseeing the Borough's VCS Partnership, and acknowledge the significant contribution of Next Generation as the previous provider.

#### **3. Background to the report**

- 3.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partnership is a collaboration between the local authority and the VCS, and has been in place since 2013, with the overall aim of helping to sustain and grow the vital work delivered by

the VCS and its many volunteers. The following provision is delivered via the VCS partnership:

- Delivery of a VCS Development Forum, which meets regularly, enabling learning and development, networking and collaboration, and acts as a key link with the community
- Management of the VCS Commissioning Board, which provides a robust and fair mechanism through which the council and other sectors, can commission services from the VCS
- Maintenance of a comprehensive VCS database, through which the different community groups can share information with each other, and a key mechanism for HBBC and other key partners to communicate, engage and consult with the VCS
- The development and delivery of an online volunteering service, a central point of contact within the Borough where organisations can promote their volunteering opportunities and the community can find out about volunteering

3.2. The Borough Council HBBC annually ring fences funding to directly commission services via our VCS, this funding has increased from £20,000 in 2013/14 when we were testing the model, rising to £45,000 for 2016/17 and 2017/18, and then £70,000 from 2018/19. The VCS Commissioning Board is made up of 8 VCS representatives and 2 HBBC Executive Members (currently Councillor Keith Lynch and Councillor Martin Cartwright).

3.3. VCS Commissioning 2019/20

3.4. The VCS is particularly well placed to support the Borough's health and wellbeing priorities, providing cost effective and practical frontline services, which complements statutory provision. They are often closest to the community, and based on this insight, have the flexibility to tailor their approach to meet diverse needs in a timely way, not always afforded by the statutory sector, and specifically in relation to:

- Reducing the impact of social isolation and loneliness, and
- Helping maintain good mental health and wellbeing within our communities

Therefore, the focus for commissioning during 2019/20 reflected these two themes.

3.5. To date, during a period of 12 months, at least two rounds of commissioning takes place, usually August/September and February/March, inviting constituted community groups to apply for funding of up to £3000. In addition, there is a Community Volunteer Fund to support very small groups of volunteers, of up to £500 which is available on an ongoing basis.

3.6. The VCS Commissioning Board met in September 2019, and assessed and allocated funding to 13 projects from across the Borough. A further round of commissioning was planned for March 2020, however, following the national lockdown on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 this did not take place.

- 3.7. At the end of March 2020, £40,000 of the £70,000 VCS commissioning funds 2019/20, had been allocated to 13 key VCS projects, and 14 smaller volunteer groups via the Community Volunteer Fund.
- 3.8. Given the need to support our VCS and community volunteers as the impact of the pandemic and lockdown arrangements on our most vulnerable members of the community, became so explicitly clear, in March 2020, a request was made via the Strategic Leadership Board, with the support of Cllr Keith Lynch, VCS Member Lead, to gain support to carry forward the remaining £30,000 VCS commissioning funds into the next financial year. This was subsequently approved.

#### **4.0 VCS Commissioning 2020/21**

- 4.1. As we entered into the new financial year, we had already started to see the incredible work of our VCS and volunteers, who stepped up in the most important of ways to support our community, and especially those who were on the governments 'shielding' list.
- 4.2. Many of our longstanding and well-established VCS organisations reworked their offer, to respond quickly to the immediate and ongoing needs of the community. In addition numerous local/neighbourhood groups were set up to support people at the most local level to help with fetching shopping, including food and other essential items and prescriptions. Alongside this, however many planned community projects and activities had to be stood down.
- 4.3. Owing to the pandemic VCS activity was considerably impacted, therefore, it was agreed that the VCS commissioning funds totalling £100,000 for 2020/21 (£30k carried forward from 2019/20, plus £70k for 2020/21), would focus on supporting the sustainability of our key VCS community hubs across the Borough, as these hubs had quickly become key sources of support and a central access point for advice, information and safe service delivery in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 4.4. **Appendix 1** details the outcomes delivered by our key VCS community hubs during 2020/21. A total of £43,737.20 was allocated to our key VCS hubs to support this delivery. Please note ongoing assessment, monitoring and review was undertaken throughout, with sign off and approval of funds via Cllr Keith Lynch, VCS Lead Member.
- 4.5. As part of this incredible and enduring community effort, in March 2021 when **Hinckley Leisure Centre was set up as a central vaccination site**, via the VCS partnership volunteers were recruited to act as volunteer marshals. To date 72,795 vaccinations have been administered, with up to 8 volunteers supporting every shift.
- 4.6. On 3rd June 2020, during National Volunteers week we held a virtual **Making a Difference Awards event**, to recognise and celebrate our volunteers. Members of the community were invited to nominate individuals or groups who they felt should be recognised and publicly thanked for their help and

support to their community in such exceptional circumstances. Whilst we very much missed our usual physical celebration event, holding the session online meant that many more friends and family could join in this annual celebration.

## **5.0. New arrangements for overseeing the VCS partnership arrangements**

- 5.1. In September 2020, Next Generation approached the local authority to give early indication that they would not be seeking to renew the SLA for the delivery of the VCS partnership arrangements from April 2021. Whilst Next Generation has successfully delivered and continued to improve the VCS Partnership work since its inception in 2013, the Board of Trustees and officers at Next Generation agreed that they had taken this work as far as they could, given the current capacity of the organisation.
- 5.2. Given the importance of this work, and specifically during the middle of a pandemic, the continuity of delivery was paramount, in the authority seeking an appropriate local VCS organisation to take this forward.
- 5.3. The Rural Community Council (RCC) has a longstanding successful relationship with communities around the Borough in the delivery of a range of community led/focused provision, including support for those who manage and run community halls and community centres, and has made a considerable contribution to the VCS partnership for many years. Therefore, the authority approached the RCC, to explore the potential of them taking on the lead VCS organisation role on behalf of the Borough Council. This was subsequently agreed, and a detailed SLA has been drawn up.
- 5.4. A transition period from April – June 2021 was agreed, with lead officers from the Borough Council, Next Generation and the RCC working together to ensure an effective hand over of this important work, with the RCC fully taking on the role of lead VCS organisation for the Borough w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.
- 5.5. Considerable work has been undertaken by RCC since July, including: expanding the VCS database with over 700 new entries, integrated and enhanced the dedicated VCS partnership website, developed an online ‘Voice of the Community’ newsletter, delivered their first very successful online VCS Forum, and set up the VCS commissioning arrangements for 2021/22.
- 5.6. On 16 September 2021, the Borough Council hosted a VCS Partnership Celebration event, attended by key HBBC officers, plus Cllr Keith Lynch and Cllr Martin Cartwright, and officers and Trustees of both Next Generation and the RCC. This provided an opportunity to formally recognise and acknowledge the work of Next Generation to our community over many decades. Cllr Lynch presented Chief Officer Shani Smith with an Award from the Borough Council, thanking Next Generation for Service Excellence. It was also an opportune time to formally thank and handover the VCS Partnership baton to the RCC, in the form of VCS Partnership Award.
- 5.7. It should also be noted that the balance of VCS Commissioning Funds from 2020/21, totalling £56,262.80 has subsequently be transferred to the

ringfenced VCS Commissioning account at RCC, to support the 2021/22 VCS Commissioning Programme. This was signed off by SLT and Cllr Lynch.

- 5.8. There is a planned programme for VCS commissioning for 2021/22 recognising that many VCS organisations are now recommencing their offer, developing new offers in response to new/emerging needs. This will include volunteering/community activities, specifically in relation to climate change initiatives. Alongside this we will continue to ensure our key VCS hubs are supported and sustained, and therefore anticipate that VCS commissioning funds (including carried forward funds) will be fully allocated during 2021/22.

## **6. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules**

- 6.1. The report is to be taken in open session.

## **7. Financial implications (DW)**

- 7.1 During 2019/20 the local authority allocated £130,000 to support the development and delivery of our VCS partnership arrangements, for the following activities:

£60,000 - SLA with Next Generation to oversee and deliver a broad range of responsibilities in supporting the development and sustainability of our VCS partnership, including our VCS Commissioning arrangements, and

£70,000 - for direct VCS commissioning via the VCS Commissioning Board arrangements

Of the £70,000, £40,000 was allocated to 13 projects and 14 applicants for the Community Volunteer.

£30,000 was carried forward to 2020/21

During 2020/21 the local authority allocated £130,00 to support the development and delivery of the VCS partnership arrangements, for the following activities:

£60,000 – SLA with Next Generation to oversee and deliver a broad range of responsibilities in supporting the development and sustainability of our VCS partnership, including our VCS Commissioning arrangements, and

£100,000 (£30,000 carried forward plus £70,000) – for the direct VCS commissioning of the VCS, for the following activities:

£43,737.20 - was committed to projects as detailed in Appendix 1.

£56,262.80 was carried forward to 2021/22

## 8. Legal implications (MR)

7.1 None

## 8. Corporate Plan implications

8.1 The contents of the report relate to and support the People, Place and Prosperity corporate priorities, and will specifically support the delivery of the following ambition: 'Support an effective and viable voluntary and community sector.'

## 9. Consultation

9.1 This report has taken account of the ongoing consultation undertaken by Next Generation through the established VCS Development Forum, Commissioning Board, and database.

## 10. Risk implications

10.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

10.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

10.3 The following significant risks associated with this report/decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) Risks		
Risk Description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Lack of sustainability of key VCS organisations within Hinckley and Bosworth, resulting in no VCS infrastructure arrangements within the locality, and significant reduction in frontline delivery of essential provision	Sustainability of the H&B VCS locality arrangements	Edwina Grant

## 11. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

11.1 The utilisation of up to date evidence sources and data, informed via the VCS Development Forum, and VCS database, has helped to inform the ongoing development of our VCS arrangements. These mechanisms also ensure resources are aligned with Borough's priorities, and gives VCS organisations from all areas of the Borough, including rural areas, access to the VCS partnership provision and commissioning funds.

11.2 No action necessary

## **12. Climate implications**

- 12.1 In direct response to the authority's Climate Change Strategy, VCS Commissioning Funds for 2021/22 will include volunteering/community activities, specifically in relation to climate change initiatives.

## **13. Corporate implications**

- 13.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

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Background papers: None

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