



**Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council**

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission 16 March 2023

Wards affected: All wards

**VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP UPDATE &
COMMISSIONING OUTCOMES 2021/22**

Report of Director, Community and Development Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To update members on the key achievements arising from the Borough's Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Partnership arrangements and supporting activities.
- 1.2. To report on the outcomes of the VCS commissioning programme for October 2021 to March 2022.
- 1.3. To note the post pandemic increase in VCS activity and delivery during 2022.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the positive impact, outcomes and contribution of the voluntary and community sector and its many volunteers, enabled via the VCS Partnership arrangements and the ongoing direct commissioning of VCS front-line service provision.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 The 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 and physical Volunteering Hub, a central point of contact within the Borough where organisations can promote their volunteering opportunities and the community can find out about volunteering

3.1.1. The Borough Council 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 per annum from 2018/19. The VCS Commissioning Board is made up of 4 VCS representatives plus 2 HBBC Executive Members (currently Councillor Keith Lynch and Councillor Martin Cartwright).

3.1.2. Members will be aware that since July 2021, the Rural Communities Council (RCC), were awarded the VCS Partnership contract (previously delivered by Next Generation). It should also be noted that the balance of VCS Commissioning Funds from 2020/21, totalling £56,262.80 was subsequently 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 K Lynch.

3.2. **VCS Commissioning 2021/22**

3.2.1. 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 2021/22 reflected these two themes.

- 3.2.2. It should also be noted that during 2021 many voluntary and community sector organisations were still recovering from the impact of the pandemic, many having to restart or re focus their activities as a result of depleted funding (i.e. all fund raising activities had to cease during lockdown), coupled with a loss of volunteers.
- 3.2.3. Therefore, applications for the VCS commissioning funds during the latter part of 2021, and early 2022 were significantly lower than in previous years (discounting 2020).
- 3.2.4. **Appendix 1** details the outcomes delivered by voluntary and community sector organisations across the Borough, who were successful in securing VCS commissioning funds, through either the Making a Difference Fund (grants of up to £3000) or the Community Volunteer Fund (grants of up to £500). A total of £25, 386.51 was allocated in this period of October 2021 to March 2022.
- 3.2.5. It should be noted that applications for the VCS commissioning funds have increased significantly since the Spring of 2022, with the VCS commissioning Board meeting in June, September and December 2022, to assess applications, and a further Board meeting scheduled for March 2023. Therefore, as anticipated VCS Commissioning funds carried over the last couple of years (supported by SLT and Cllr K Lynch), will be allocated by the end of March 2023. See paragraph 6 for further details.
- 3.2.6. In addition, early 2022 saw the arrival of Ukrainian families to our Borough, and during the Summer we were already considering the impact of the rise in cost of living, therefore we have actively encouraged funding applications from organisations in respect of these priorities. Most recently we have initiated a specific Warm Spaces grant funding programme. See paragraph 6 for further details on breakdown and allocation of funding.

4.0. Broader VCS Partnership outcomes

- 4.1. Since July 2021, when the Rural Communities Council (RCC), were awarded the VCS Partnership contract (previously delivered by Next Generation since 2013), all support and provision has continued, including the further enhancement of some services including:
- the introduction of a streamlined online grant application process
 - introduction of online, face to face and hybrid VCS forums
 - a more regular e-newsletter, and
 - the establishment of a physical Volunteering Hub at the Atkins building, which is also fully mobile

- 4.1.1. On 9 June 2022, during National Volunteers week, after 2 years, a return of our Making a Difference Awards event, at Hinckley Rugby Club, 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.

5. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

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

6. Financial implications (IB)

- 6.1 As at end of March 2022 the commissioning funds pot totalling £96,000 was carried forward to 2022/23. In addition, there was an annual allocation of £70,000 for 2022/23. The revised pot for 2022/23 is £166,000. The following details the breakdown and allocation of how the commissioning funding pot of £166,000 for 2022/23 has been allocated to date:

VCS Commissioning Programme April - June 2022 - £30,000

VCS Commissioning Programme July – September 2022 - £30,000

VCS Commissioning Programme October - December 2022 - £30,000

Warm Spaces Grant funding programme October 2022 - £40,000

Leaving £36,000 to support January – March 2023 VCS Commissioning programme

7. 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 the Rural Communities Council 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 included 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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