

Subject: Voluntary and Community Sector support services- commissioning process  
Report to: Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee

Report by: Holly Notcutt, Community Development Manager  
Date: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016

#### **SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS**

**To update EMT and Policy and Resources committee on the plan to replace the previous GYBC VCS support services grants scheme with a commissioning process.**

### **1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 For more than ten years the council has provided financial assistance in the form of core grants to a range of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to contribute to the delivery of their support services. Annual grants were awarded to the same organisations for several years without the need to re-apply, without definite criteria linked to the council's corporate priorities and with limited monitoring and performance management.
- 1.2 In 2013 the council implemented performance management processes, in the form of signed agreements, liaison meeting, project visits, and end of year monitoring forms, to better understand and monitor the impact of the spend.

### **2. THE COMMISSIONING APPROACH- RATIONALE**

- 2.1 The Internal Audit, undertaken during July and August 2015 to look at grant processes, recommended both a review and re-commissioning. The review recommended;
- Establishment of a clear, open process for commissioning (replacing the current 'closed' group of annual grant recipients)
  - Establishment of a Grants Allocation Panel or a Strategic Commissioning Panel, to approve all funding applications based on clear and agreed eligibility criteria, explicitly linked to the current Council's corporate priorities
  - The initiation of Service Level Agreements with successful applicants for longer periods (up to three years) with claw-back conditions
- 2.2 At full council in November 2015 a commissioning process was proposed for Voluntary and Community Sector led support services, to replace the existing grant system and to complement the Corporate Plan, relevant Group Plans, and to add value to the Neighbourhoods that Work Big Lottery investment. The proposal was agreed by full council, in light of the following rationale;
- **The needs of communities have changed** requiring re-shaped services, with reference to benefits changes, complex needs, and the 2015 Index of

Multiple Deprivation ranking the borough at 20<sup>th</sup> most deprived in England, with 5 LSOAs in the bottom 1%

- **The Voluntary and Community sector is transforming**, with organisations delivering public services through range of new and innovative approaches.
- **Aligning all GYBC activity with GYBC's corporate plan for 2015-2020**, including support provided to VCS organisations, will enable the council to ensure wider service delivery undertaken by partners and the subsequent outcomes are complementary to the council's strategic vision for the borough.
- **The Neighbourhoods that Work programme** alignment, adding value to the delivery and strengthening the transformational agenda, creating more sustainable outcomes for residents of the borough.
- **Alignment with Group Plans and GYBC service delivery** will ensure complementary service delivery and subsequently impact, alleviating demands placed on services, providing added value, and streamlining or combining complementary commissioned work with VCS partners.
- **There is a need to align work with our partners**, to ensure commissioned delivery does not duplicate wider plans in the borough and across the county, e.g. community transport provision, Citizens Advice Bureau delivery, and Children's Services and Early Help.
- **To deliver efficiencies**, a three year commissioning model reduces administrative burdens on both the council and applicants, allowing for commissioned organisations to undertake longer term service delivery plans in alignment with the council's own longer term vision.

2.3 Additionally, a one year (2016-17) extension to existing funding arrangements with grant recipients was proposed by councillors, and agreed, at the November 2015 full council meeting. This resulted in the original proposed start date for the VCS commissioning process being revised from April 2016 to a delivery start date of April 2017.

2.4. The proposed delivery themes to frame the VCS support services specifications were identified in consultation with relevant service groups.

<b>VCS support service grants: delivery themes</b>	
<b>Advice and Guidance</b>	Providing quality advice on debt and budgeting, housing and wellbeing
<b>Housing and crisis support</b>	Direct support helping people in crisis situations
<b>Employability</b>	Direct support to help people to develop skills and access employment
<b>Total £50,000</b>	
<b>The Plan: NEIGHBOURHOODS, COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT</b> <b>Residents will form strong, safe communities that are resilient and work together.</b> <b>While we will provide a range of services which everyone requires, our aim is to support people and communities to get involved in making the most of</b>	

**their lives and opportunities. The Council will support communities to become more resilient and self-supporting by fostering and encouraging voluntary and community activity.**

Applicants will be able to apply for one or more of the lots, individually or in partnership, from a total budget of £50,000.

2.5 A cross party member's working group was established following the council meeting to set assessment criteria. These were agreed as the following;

- Experience and track record
- Capabilities and skills
- Capacity and resources
- Partnership working
- Sustainable community development
- General approach
- Delivery model
- Collaboration
- Equality and Diversity
- Code of Conduct

### 3. TIMETABLE

3.1 The following timetable outlines the plan for launching the application process, the appraisal, delivery preparation and commencement of delivery.

	Nov 2016	Dec	Jan 2017	Feb	March	April
3.1 EoI launched						
ITT issued						
Deadline for applications						
Appraisal of applications						
Notice on existing grants						
Notification of successful tenders						
Award of contracts						
Delivery starts						

### 4. COMMUNICATIONS AND APPLICATION PROCESS

4.1 A 'grants page' has been set up on the council website. This opportunity will be featured there, outlining application procedures, procurement cycles and timelines, assessment criteria and delivery specifications. The opportunity will also be

promoted through local VCS distribution networks, local social media channels, and other appropriate advertisement routes as per the council's procurement strategy.

Steps in the process include;

- Registration of interest will be online, via the council's online procurement portal
- Applications will be made online through the portal, allowing organisations to openly bid for designated funds. Whilst the portal is simple to use, support and guidance will be made available to organisations.
- Scoring criteria will be made available within the ITT, allowing organisations to shape their applications accordingly.
- A Panel, consisting of council officers and a partner commissioner for the voluntary sector from Norfolk County Council in order to facilitate integration and avoid duplication, will appraise applications. Interviews will be conducted as necessary, depending on the quality of applications and competition levels.
- Notifications on awards will be made by December 2016/January 2017
- Notice on current programmes will be issued by December 2016
- Delivery commences April 2017 for a 3-year period, subject to annual review

- 4.2 On-going work will continue in order to develop partnerships with VCS organisations in the borough to better support local residents. This includes working to build stronger communities, increasing capacity at the neighbourhood level, and reducing demand across frontline services.

## **5. JOINT COMMISSIONING TO SUPPORT WIDER VOLUNTARY SECTOR ACTIVITY**

- 5.1 Additional development support, previously delivered through a service agreement with a VCS infrastructure organisation to provide support (including funding and governance advice) to VCS organisations in Great Yarmouth, was decommissioned in March 2016. This was funded through an integrated tripartite funding arrangement established in 2009 between the Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Adult Social Care (NCC) and Health East - Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The delivery was paused to both rationalise and refocus the support provided to VCS organisations in the borough.
- 5.2 Since March 2016 there have been in depth consultations, surveys, a voluntary sector workshop and dialogue opportunities developed across the sector to better determine trends, opportunities and support requirements, e.g. joined up delivery models, sharing back office functions and co-locating, income generation through social enterprise structures, payment by results models, etc.
- 5.3 The council has been leading discussions with other public sector partners, including adult social services, children's services, public health and the CCG to join up approaches to working with the voluntary sector across Great Yarmouth. There is real risk of overlap and duplication of effort, given that the public sector is relying on

the voluntary sector more heavily for front-line service delivery. There is now a clear commitment from these partners that the pooling of budgets to support the development of the local voluntary sector is the most effective approach. It is therefore proposed that the council will also manage a pooled budget to support the development of the sector as a whole, this will including funding advice, training and guidance on new operating models and will benefit local voluntary organisations that may not be directly commissioned through the council's proposed arrangements, given finite council resources available.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications beyond the budgeted annual £50,000 to support voluntary sector organisations from 2017 onwards.

## **7. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Risks will be managed accordingly. All existing recipients have engaged in an ongoing dialogue with council officers about the plans, and are aware that the new process will be competitive. Commissioned delivery will be agreed through specific SLAs, subject to annual review. Delivery will be monitored through scheduled liaison meetings, plus annual reports.
- 7.2 If existing grant recipients are unsuccessful in new commissioned arrangements and they have not been able to secure other core funding for their work there is a potential risk to their own organisational viability, particularly as other public sector funders may have already withdrawn support. There will be some support for these organisations through additional advice and guidance and support with external funding applications.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 The refreshed approach to resourcing the VCS to deliver services in line with corporate priorities will allow the council to have an improved strategic approach to working with the sector, ensuring the process is open, accessible and transparent. The model complements existing delivery and will allow for collaborative forward planning regarding support services and changing needs within communities. The outcomes from the first complete year of delivery will be presented to the relevant GYBC committee.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The committee are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the commissioning process.
- 9.2 The committee is asked to also consider nominating a sub-group to ratify decisions.

*Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?*

<b>Area for consideration</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	None
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Through EMT
Existing Council Policies:	Corporate Plan
Financial Implications:	As above
Legal Implications (including human rights):	None identified
Risk Implications:	As above
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Development support will be offered to all current providers via Neighbourhoods and Communities commissioned development work, e.g. through the NTW provision and CCG/NCC/GYBC joint commissioning arrangements, to source and bid for external funds.
Crime & Disorder:	The scheme is designed to have a positive effect on crime and disorder through creating stronger communities.
Every Child Matters:	The scheme is designed to have a positive effect on the life chances of priority households, including families