

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 OCTOBER 2021

VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK GROUP

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Summary

On 15 December 2020 the Cabinet approved a number of recommendations relating to the sustainability and future relationship of the voluntary sector in Medway. The recommendations were based on a Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Task Group findings. This paper provides an update against these actions.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1. The voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) includes local community and voluntary groups, registered charities, foundations, trusts, social enterprises, and co-operatives. They may also be referred to as 'third sector' or 'civil society' organisations. The sector provides a range of services to different groups of service users. VCSE organisations share characteristics in the aims they pursue and are independent of government. They also reinvest any profit they make to continue to support their aims.
- 1.2. The VCSE support important services that are vital to the local community, many of which would otherwise either have to be met by the Council or cause great hardship to individuals and families. The VCSE often means that residents get help and support at an earlier stage that in turn delays or stops the need for residents to receive statutory services.

2. Background

- 2.1. At the 4 August 2020 Cabinet meeting, the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny (BSD O&S) Committee Voluntary Sector Task Group recommendations, were presented. These proposals aimed to secure the sustainability and future of the voluntary sector in Medway. The recommendations of the Task Group are set out in its report (Appendix 1). Cabinet noted these recommendations and in light of the impacts of COVID-19, instructed officers to undertake a full assessment of the recommendations

and report back on the effect the pandemic has had on the needs of the sector (decision no. 91/2020 refers).

- 2.2. At the 15 December 2020 Cabinet meeting several recommendations were approved by Cabinet.
- 2.3. The recommendations focused on:
 - Developing an agreed protocol between the Council and the VCSE sector, working with the Integrated Care Partnership to recruit local NHS support for the sector.
 - Developing a community lottery programme to help provide sustainable funding for the voluntary sector.
 - Developing a business case to create a single point of contact between the council and sector.
 - Developing a social value policy and climate change partnership with the NHS and the VCSE.

3. Recommendation update

- 3.1. Developing an agreed formal protocol between the Council and the sector, working with the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) to recruit local NHS support for the sector.
 - 3.1.1. The population health management programme in Medway and Swale has been working with all providers and voluntary and community organisations to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) as a sign of their commitment to working together. This precedes a framework which will aim to go further in setting out a number of actions that will help the Integrated Care Partnership achieve our shared aim of strong and resilient communities supported by a thriving voluntary and community sector. The framework will tackle some of the more difficult conversations in relation to funding of the voluntary sector and innovative ways to support with and commissioning and procurement of services – ensuring equitabilities for all organisations regardless of size.
 - 3.1.2. The MOU represents a revised approach for public sector partners in their relationship with the VCS. It sets out some expectations that each sector can have of the other. It is recognised that one size will not fit all. The MOU and subsequent framework will enable the local system and local teams to understand and look for the best solutions to meet people's needs – not just medically but also socially – focusing on the wider determinants of people's health.
 - 3.1.3. On behalf of Medway Council, James Williams Director of Public Health signed the MOU. A range of local authority officers continue to work with the ICP to finalise the details of the framework.
- 3.2. Developing a community lottery programme to help provide sustainable funding for the voluntary sector.
 - 3.2.1. The Medway Lottery is a weekly lottery that raises money for good causes in Medway area. All good causes supported by the lottery will benefit Medway

area and its residents. Gatherwell are the lead provider running the lottery on behalf of Medway and tickets went on sale in August 2021. 60p from every £1 lottery ticket will go direct to charities, voluntary organisations and other good causes. Players of the lottery can win a £25,000 jackpot, plus smaller prizes. As of 6 October 2021, there were 450 players in advance of the first draw, each buying an average of two tickets per week.

3.3. Developing a business case to create a single point of contact between the council and sector.

3.3.1. During the COVID response and recovery period the Public Health team have acted as the primary engagement method with the sector, providing regular updates, listening to concerns and issues, supporting with access to the funding and other resources. The team have been supported in this close engagement when it has been needed most, by a range of officers from commissioning, housing, finance, social care and communications. This regular engagement will continue, and the Public Health team are using some external grant funding to continue to provide this interface service with the sector and acting as the single point of access for the sector to the council, signposting and linking up relevant officers when required.

3.4. Developing a social value policy and climate change partnership with the NHS and the VCS.

3.4.1. A Social Value policy which takes into consideration both local and national considerations has been drafted and trialled. The foundation of the model comes from the National TOMs Measurement Framework, which is endorsed by the Local Government Association and asks for not only deliverables but provides national financial proxies against each deliverable meaning the Council can illustrate the true value of Social Value being delivered. Furthermore, the policy is being finalised and subject to approval. It will see the national proxies become local proxies.

4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Unsustainable local VCS	Medway Council can play an important role in supporting the VCS despite its own financial pressures. Failure to support the sector may result in organisations ceasing to exist, that has a detrimental impact on often vulnerable residents and will see an increase in support from statutory services, which will have an impact on the council's budget	Use the Medway lottery and support the sector with other external funding opportunities	B2

Disengaged local VCS	Residents rely on VCS groups and it is important that the public sector bodies like the council and NHS continue to work in partnership to help residents and to avoid creating an increased demand for public services. If VCS organisations do not feel supported and have confidence in Medway's commitment to work in partnership, this may lead to disengagement from many of the 1,000 third sector organisations and groups.	Regular engagement between the sector and VCS listening to and addressing concerns and informing of council priorities, using the MOU and framework as the vehicle to document the shared actions	B2
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5. Financial implications

5.1. There are no direct finance implications as a result of this report.

6. Legal implications

6.1. There are no legal implications arising from this progress report. However, officers may need to consider the legal implications of some recommendations as the proposals continue to develop.

7. Recommendations

7.1. The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and progress made against the recommendations.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Task Group Report

Background papers

None.