

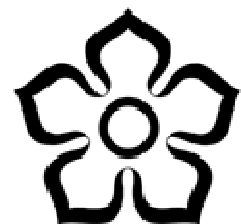
Report to Scrutiny Commission

Neighbourhood Services and Community
Involvement

Date of Commission meeting: 4th December 2013

Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) – Consultation proposals

Report of the Director of Delivery, Communications and
Political Governance



Leicester
City Council

Useful Information:

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Miranda Cannon, Director of DCPG
- Author contact details 29 6079
- Date of Exec meeting 19/09/13

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to set out the background and provide an overview of the consultation proposals for the future support model for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and for engaging with key communities to support a cohesive Leicester.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny

The Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission are recommended to provide their views on the future proposals as part of the consultation approach.

3. Supporting Information**3.1 Background**

Leicester's VCS is an important strategic sector for the council. They provide support and services in a number of key areas including health and social care, services to alleviate child poverty, educational initiatives, employment and community development.

This review is important to Leicester City Council because the VCS are a key partner and provider of a range of services in the city, of which a significant number of services are commissioned by the Council. Equally in the current climate of welfare reform the pressure on individuals and families continues to increase and the VCS are recognised as providing a range of key support services to complement support provided by the public sector organisations in the city. Increasingly there have been clear indications of the challenges facing the sector resulting in the dissolution of some VCS organisations and other organisations flagging concerns about financial sustainability. The Council recognises the need for a flexible and dynamic approach to supporting the sector to appropriately adapt and change in order to maximise future opportunities for funding.

Whilst acknowledging the work of infrastructure organisations Leicester City Council needs to be clear on what the future of our core offer of support should be to the

VCS- and what the best model of delivery is. This model needs to be affordable and should contribute to savings for the City Council.

The Council currently contracts with Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) to provide support to the VCS. This is a joint contract with Leicestershire Police and the Leicester Clinical Commissioning Group. The contract costs the Council £295,900 per annum.

The support covers three main areas:

- Sector development and support e.g. through training, advice and guidance, policy development
- Strategic representation and engagement of the VCS for example through the facilitation of specific groups and input to consultation activity
- Support for volunteering including brokerage in terms of matching volunteers to opportunities.

The Council also has contracts / agreements with a number of other organisations which primarily focus on representation and engagement of specific communities of interest. In some instances these organisations also undertake an element of casework activity to support individuals and families in defined communities.

For further detail, Appendix 1 sets out the objectives and outcomes of the two largest value existing agreements with VAL and TREC. Information on the other 5 agreements can be provided if the Commission would find this useful.

3.2 Aims and objectives of the review

The review aims to put in place arrangements to:

- Support a strong, vibrant, responsive and forward-looking VCS in Leicester which is able to make an effective contribution to the priorities outlined above; and
- Work closely with the VCS to ensure a cohesive city where there are good relations between communities and which actively and creatively celebrates its diversity.

The review's objectives are:

- To explore new, alternative ways of working with the VCS
- To maximise the opportunities for Leicester City Council to support local VCS providers and to help them, in turn, support and work with others within their sector
- To provide a model for supporting VCS groups which reflects the nature of the needs and challenges facing the sector and is also aligned to the Council's own priorities
- To ensure the City Council has appropriate arrangements in place to help support and enhance understanding between communities, and ensure a cohesive city through effective representation of and engagement with key communities
- To ensure the City Council appropriately supports volunteering in the city to help

ensure a thriving VCS and to support wider priorities such as the development of the local economy

- To ensure value for money is achieved and to contribute to the additional financial savings that the City Council is required to make.

A set of detailed proposals have been produced which cover specifically:

- Support for the City's VCS
- Engagement to support a cohesive Leicester
- Support for volunteering in the city

Appendix 2 sets out the proposals in the form of the consultation document that has been published.

3.3 Review approach and timescales

The review commenced on 8th October with a letter which was sent to the current contracted providers. This explained that a review is needed given the very different context we are all now operating in, and summarised the review timescales and stated the date that new arrangements will be put in place. The letter clearly set out our intent in terms of an extension to current contracts and specified when those existing contracts will end. A one-to-one discussion with a member of the City Mayor's Executive and senior officers has been offered and taken up by the majority of those organisations.

In the week commencing 28th October a 12 week consultation was launched, which involves:

- Electronic distribution of the consultation document to VCS organisations
- On-line survey via the Council's consultation hub
- Hard copy of the survey available on request
- 9 in the community briefing sessions as follows:
 - 6 Nov at 6pm - 8pm, Leicester City Town Hall
 - 14 Nov at 4pm - 6pm, African Caribbean Centre
 - 20 Nov at 11am - 1pm Highfields Centre
 - 27 Nov at 2pm - 4pm, Stocking Farm Neighbourhood Centre
 - 6 Dec at 2pm-4pm, Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre
 - 12 Dec at 6pm-8pm, Knighton Library
 - 19 Dec at 10am-12pm, Brite Centre
 - 8 Jan at 6pm - 8pm, Linwood Community Centre
 - 13 Jan at 10am -12pm, Thurnby Lodge

These sessions are led by Miranda Cannon supported by the VCS Engagement Manager, Project Manager and other officers. The sessions are open to anyone to attend including service users as well as representatives of VCS organisations.

The session comprise a short overview of the proposals and the groups are then divided up into smaller tables each with a facilitator and each of the 3 strands of the proposals are discussed and the views and feedback captured. The aim being to add

greater depth to the responses that can be achieved through a survey alone. In particular the sessions to date have been very helpful in better understanding the challenges faced by the range of different organisations and what their needs are typically. We have been particularly pleased to see the level of engagement in these sessions from very local community groups. Our aim in running these sessions in different locations, in community based buildings, is to help encourage the smaller community based organisations to engage in the process.

Appendix 3 sets out the survey has been posted on-line and available in hard copy.

Appendix 4 provides an indication of the organisations who have engaged in the consultation process so far, as at the 22nd November. This provides a helpful indication of the sort of range of organisations who are engaging with us, which includes small, grass-roots community organisations.

The consultation will close on 17th January 2014. After this time the proposed timetable is as follows:

- Undertake analysis and revise proposals – 31st January 2014
- Report back to Executive – 6th February 2014
- Executive decision – Late February Issue formal notice to current providers – at the latest by 1st March 2014 (assuming contracts are extended for a 3 month period)
- Commissioning of new arrangements – February – June
- New arrangements commence 1st July

According to the current timescales, the new arrangements will not be fully established by 1st April 2014, in time for when the existing contracts end. It is therefore proposed that all contracts receive a final 3 month extension from 1st April 2014 – 30th June 2014 and that the new arrangements commence from 1st July 2014. Letters to contracted providers made this intent clear.

3.4 Implications for current providers

It is not possible to assess at the current time what the full potential impact of these proposals for the current providers will be:

- Current providers are likely to be eligible to access VCS support under the new arrangements
- Some of the providers may wish to bid to be a provider of specific support packages
- May be opportunities for some of the current providers to bid to provide volunteering support
- Some of the current providers may wish to bid for the representation and engagement for specific communities of interest.

The scope of the review does not include provision of advice, guidance and support to individual service users. Two of the existing providers, namely TREC and SDS currently provide a range of other services to individual service users. During the review there will be detailed consideration given to any implications the proposals

may have in relation to such services and what other services the Council commissions or are available within the city which may provide equivalent advice, support and guidance. This will be fully captured within an equality impact assessment during the review, and the information gathering and assessment for this has already commenced.

The current providers are in receipt of a range of other funding sources, typically these include Lottery funding, European Social Fund, funding from specific Government Department initiatives, and from other public sector organisations including Police, County Council and Health. In addition, some of the organisations have been in receipt of other sources of Council funding, for example from Economic Development for activity related to Leicester to Work and from ward community budgets for specific projects and activities.

4. Financial, legal and other implications

4.1 Financial implications

The current budget is £582,200. This is allocated entirely across contracts with the organisations set out in the table below, and which all run until the 31st March 2014.

The nature of the contracts and scope of the services provided varies with some providing infrastructure (or group) type support to the sector and others focused more on a role relating to representation and engagement. The contract with Leicester Centre for Integrated Living has now been excluded from scope and passed to Adult Social Care to manage in light of the close connection with this service. Adult Social Care will be responsible for determining what is needed in future from any such engagement of a lead organisation for disability.

There are no previously agreed savings required to be delivered from this budget but the review is included in the Council savings review programme. Initial savings put forward in the scoping document for the programme were estimated to be in the range of £153,400 - £278,000. However, with the exclusion of LCIL, this has had the effect of reducing the savings potential, which is now estimated to be £132,200 (23% of current budget) based on the proposals as set out in Appendix 2.

Contract	Budget p.a.	Contract type
African Caribbean Citizens Forum	£43,100	Funding Agreement
Federation of Muslim Organisations	£25,000	Funding Agreement
Gujarat Hindu Association	£30,000	Funding Agreement
Leicester Council of Faiths	£25,000	Funding Agreement
Somali Development Service	£45,400	Service Agreement

The Race Equality Centre	£117,800	Service Agreement
Voluntary Action Leicestershire Plus £95,312 from partners - Police ; £10k and PCT; £85,312	£295,900	Service Agreement
Total	£582,200	

4.2 Legal implications

The main legal implications are:

4.2.1 The Council has a duty to consult on the matters described both pursuant to the Best Value Statutory Guidance 2011 and general public law principles. The consultation must follow due process and client officers have been taking legal advice and should continue to do so.

4.2.2 The Council has a general duty under s149 Equality Act 2010 to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination etc and advance equality of opportunity between different groups – when considering these proposals and when taking decisions of this nature, the Council must consider equality impact. It is understood that an equality impact assessment is being developed.

4.2.3 The Executive must have regard to this assessment in particular, when making its decisions following consultation and when final proposals are put forward.

4.2.4 Where the Public Services (Social Value) Act applies, the Council must consider social value at pre-procurement stages. Client officers have been advised as to the application of this Act.

4.2.5 After consultation and decision-making by the Executive, the Council is likely to commence commissioning of the services, this must follow the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.2.6 The current contracts expire on 31.03.14 and dependent upon the Executive's decision client officers will need to take action to either give notice to terminate or extend the contracts. Legal advice should be taken accordingly.

Beena Adatia – Principal Solicitor (Commercial & Contracts). Ext 37 1417

4.3. Climate Change implications

There are no significant climate change implications associated with the consultation.

Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team. Ext 37 2251

4.4 Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment will consider the potential impacts of each of the three proposals on the VCS and those who use its services within the city. Consultation feedback will be crucial in identifying and framing these equality impacts and the assessment will be available for consideration after this stage of the review process has been completed.

Currently some of those organisations within the scope of this review provide support and undertake casework with individuals and families within specific communities. This work is not within the scope of this review but will be considered within the City Council's commissioning of welfare advice and support services.

Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead. Ext 37 4147

5. Summary of appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Objectives and outcomes of existing agreements with VAL and TREC
- Appendix 2 – Consultation proposals
- Appendix 3 – Consultation survey questions
- Appendix 4 – Respondents to date

Appendix 1 – Objectives and outcomes of existing agreements with VAL and TREC

Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL)

The aims of the service that is currently commissioned from VAL are:

1. To build and maintain an appropriate infrastructure organisation that represents and supports all voluntary and community organisations in Leicester, based on the NAVCA Core Standards
2. To build and maintain an effective volunteer centre based on the six core functions as defined by Volunteering England
3. To build and maintain effective communication and consultation channels between the voluntary and community sector, the City Council, Leicester City CCG, and Leicestershire Constabulary and other statutory agencies as appropriate, that ensures the sector is fully engaged in both the planning and delivery of services, and in taking forward the City Mayor's vision for the city.

The expected outcomes of this service are:

1. The voluntary and community sector in Leicester has a voice which ensures that issues affecting the sector and the communities they serve are given appropriate consideration within the policies and operations of the City Council, Leicester City CCG, and Leicestershire Constabulary, leading to appropriate and targeted services
2. There is a clear point of contact for engagement with the City Council, Leicester City CCG, and Leicestershire Constabulary on behalf of the voluntary and community sector in Leicester that enables issues to be effectively and sensitively addressed when they arise
3. The city has a vibrant third sector whose development is well supported.
4. The people of Leicester have access to good volunteering opportunities and organisations access to a wide and diverse spectrum of volunteers

The Race Equality Centre (TREC)

The aims of the service that is currently commissioned from TREC are:

1. To keep the Council and key partners informed on race equality and race relations issues across the City and their impact on community cohesion.
2. To build and maintain an appropriate infrastructure organisation that represents and supports ethnic minority groups and the communities they serve in Leicester.

3. To work with the Council to improve and maintain good race relations and champion race equality to support a cohesive city and to ensure strong and resilient communities across all neighbourhoods.

The expected outcomes of this service are:

1. The City Council and its partners are better equipped to manage on-going demographic change and its impact on community cohesion, and the integration of new communities in the city
2. The city is better able to manage any adverse situations that are likely to impact negatively on community cohesion
3. Ethnic minority voluntary and community organisations have a collective voice which ensures the issues relating to the communities they serve are given appropriate consideration within the policies and operations of the City Council, leading to appropriate and targeted services
4. There is a clear point of contact for engagement with the City Council on issues relating to race equality and race relations in the city, so that when issues do arise they can be effectively and sensitively addressed
5. New arrivals to the city granted refugee status are integrated into life in Leicester through the provision of appropriate support.

There are more detailed specifications setting out further information against which each organisation is monitored.