

Report of the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion

Developing a Thriving Voluntary Sector in the City of York

Summary

1. This paper outlines progress towards the production of a Voluntary Sector Strategy for the City of York. It summarises developments so far and details forthcoming consultation events leading to the development of the final strategy.
2. The paper also makes recommendations around the future funding criteria and management arrangements for merged Voluntary Sector funding pots within the CANS directorate.

Background

3. York's voluntary sector contributes enormously to the economic, social and cultural life of the City at every level. The renewed emphasis on localism and the focus upon neighbourhood working provides an ideal opportunity to capture the value of the Voluntary Sector within a clearly defined strategic document.
4. Cabinet, through the City of York Council Plan 2012-2015, initially commissioned a Voluntary Sector Strategy focusing on ways and means whereby the Council might positively impact upon the sector.
5. A detailed Position Paper was subsequently produced, outlining the current relationship between the Council and the voluntary sector and identifying opportunities for future collaboration and co-production.
6. As part of the consultation process the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion and the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods attended an open meeting with voluntary sector representatives on 19th March.

7. The Council's Position Paper was welcomed but there was a clear call for the creation of a Citywide Voluntary Sector Strategy and Action Plan (involving a wider range of public sector partners).
8. Feedback from the consultation event indicated that the production of a Citywide Voluntary Sector strategy should help to inform the agenda of key strategic partnerships such as the Health and Wellbeing Board.
9. Feedback also indicated that the final Voluntary Sector Strategy needed to be a relatively simple document with measurable, achievable outcomes as follows:

A) Grant Funding and Commissioning

The council will provide leadership, ensuring that the voluntary sector will be at the forefront of public agencies' thinking when designing and commissioning services.

- Recognising the important preventative work carried out by the voluntary sector, and the role that the voluntary sector plays in keeping people healthy, safe, well and as independent as possible.
- Establishing clarity and transparency around public sector commissioning and grant making procedures for voluntary sector organisations.
- Strengthening the fabric of front-line voluntary sector organisations, ensuring that they are tender-ready and able to supply or deliver services on behalf of public sector organisations.

B) Localism Agenda

Involving the voluntary sector in the facilitation of community participation, neighbourliness, social connections, and informal local activity that help disadvantaged areas and people.

- Exploring the potential for the voluntary and community sector to deliver neighbourhood services and to act as social enterprises.
- Harnessing opportunities to work with the voluntary sector and local residents to develop new neighbourhood based services and solutions to social problems.

C) Social Enterprise

Exploring and strengthening relationships between the private, public and voluntary sectors.

- Working with the voluntary sector to deliver new public service delivery models through the use of mutuals, co-operatives and social enterprise spin-outs,
- Fostering a more enterprising culture within the voluntary and community sector and providing training in social entrepreneurship for more voluntary organisations
- Encouraging voluntary sector organisations to develop new services and income streams.

D) Volunteering

Supporting the voluntary sector and other partners to achieve the highest standards when involving volunteers.

- Developing projects to extend local and informal volunteering that have the potential to empower people in their communities and reduce social isolation.
- Developing projects designed to support people into employment through volunteering, establishing stronger links between the voluntary and private sector.
- Building a strong and effective Volunteer Centre for the City.

Next Steps

10. Cabinet is asked to endorse the above outcomes as the basis for further work on the strategy. Next steps towards the completion of the finalised Voluntary Sector Strategy will then include a series of further consultation events, involving CYC, other public sector partners and voluntary sector representatives. The intention is to secure City wide agreement on a Strategy and 3 year Action Plan by September 2012:

- April: Fairness Commission Debate: Communities and Volunteering
- May: Health & Wellbeing Board Citywide Consultation Event
- June: Draft Citywide Strategy and Action Plan produced.
- July: Further consultation with City wide partners around the key objectives and actions contained in the strategy.

- Sept: Final sign-off of the Citywide Volunteering Strategy by the WOW Partnership Board.

CYC Voluntary Sector Funding

11. The Council will clearly continue to play a key role in the development of the Citywide Voluntary Sector Strategy. While this will progress over a number of months, there are key elements of the Council's funding relationship with the Voluntary Sector which require immediate attention.
12. Cabinet's recent decision to pool several existing Communities and Neighbourhoods grant programmes (some former ward funding, core grants and play grants) into a single pot needs to be actioned over forthcoming weeks. A tender process has been initiated to recruit an external partner to oversee the management of this combined funding pot. (An update on this will be provided at the meeting.) The broad parameters for this funding now need to be agreed so that detailed criteria can be established with the new management organisation, once established, and through further consultation with the voluntary sector.
13. The following outline criteria are proposed, based around the Building Stronger Communities priority within the Council Plan:
 - **Community Engagement:** Supporting initiatives which break down barriers between communities and individuals, meeting identified gaps (e.g. initiatives to promote racial harmony, supporting the LGBT community).
 - **Inclusive Communities:** Supporting initiatives that address the needs of communities of interest identified in the JSNA and other relevant needs assessments including assessment undertaken by the communities themselves.
 - **Stronger Voluntary Sector:** Promoting new, innovative volunteering initiatives at a neighbourhood and community of interest level - and investigating alternative, voluntary-sector led service delivery mechanisms.
 - **Healthy, Sustainable Communities:** Supporting voluntary sector initiatives that may realise significant savings to Council services as a result of early intervention and prevention. Priorities will include financial inclusion initiatives and neighbourhood based support for isolated older people.

- **Creating Communities where People Flourish:** Supporting voluntary-sector led play opportunities and facilities throughout the City.
14. Regular reports will be made by the management organisation to the Cabinet Member for Leisure Culture and Social Inclusion on grants made and on the performance of the organisations funded.
 15. Within the new approach outlined above, it is recommended that three voluntary sector infrastructure organisations in the City continue to retain a direct funding relationship with the Council, namely York CVS, York CAB and the Welfare Benefits Unit. The nature of these organisations is to offer specialist, second tier support to all other voluntary sector organisations in the City or to all members of the public and it therefore makes sense for them to be commissioned directly by the Council.
 16. These organisations' funding is currently fixed up to 30 September 2012. It is proposed that they receive 3 year funding agreements from that point reduced by 8% compared to current funding (the average sector reduction). Detailed Service Level Agreements will be brought to the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion for approval.
 17. It is also proposed to make an ongoing commitment from the Council to supporting the core costs of the York CVS Volunteer Centre. This would entail an additional commitment of £13k per annum for the next three years to York CVS.
 18. As the Voluntary Sector Strategy develops there may also be the potential for bids to Delivery and Innovation Fund to facilitate the development of new and innovative ways of working leading to more efficient and effective services.

Consultation

19. There has been extensive, ongoing consultation with the voluntary sector in York, both in terms of Council voluntary sector funding and the development of the wider Voluntary Sector Strategy.

Options

20. The Cabinet can accept the outcomes and funding criteria suggested or agree alternatives.

Analysis

21. It is envisaged that the approach outlined above will develop the capacity and capability of the voluntary sector to engage with volunteers, support marginalised communities and explore new methods of cross sector collaboration and co-production. It would also retain an element of core support for critical second tier voluntary organisations in the City.

Council Plan

22. The planned approach outlined above would make a direct contribution to the following specific Building Stronger Communities outcomes listed in the draft City of York Council Plan:
 - Community Engagement
 - Inclusive Communities
 - Stronger Voluntary Sector
 - Healthy, Sustainable Communities
 - Creating Communities where Young People Flourish

Implications

23. **Financial:** The pooled Communities and Neighbourhoods grant funding pot in 2012/13 will amount to £141 k. It should be noted that the fee to the management organisation will be paid from this pot (to be determined through the procurement process).
24. From 2013/14 a further £146k will be added to the pooled funding pot when existing funding agreements expire.
25. In addition to the pot, £129k has already been committed in 2012/13 to guarantee existing funding agreements up to 30 September.
26. The annual grants for the 3 organisations set out in paragraph 15 from 1 October 2012 (pro rata for the remaining 6 months of 2012/13) are as follows:
 - York CVS £17,860 + £13k in respect of the Volunteer Bureau
 - York and District CAB £61,983
 - Welfare Benefits Unit £11,804
27. **Equalities:** EIAs have been undertaken relating to the voluntary sector strategy and the proposed funding arrangements. The

proposed new voluntary sector funding arrangements ensure that communities of interest are in charge of identifying their needs and in charge of solutions to meet them. To enable this we have invested more resources to support an all inclusive service from York CVS and the CAB. What is proposed here contributes towards the relevant outcomes of the Council Plan.

28. It will be a requirement of all recipients of CYC funding to demonstrate and evidence their commitment to equalities outcomes in the work of their organisations. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and it was established that no negative implications arose from the recommendations contained in this report.
29. **Legal:** The Council has sufficient legal powers in the Localism Act and elsewhere to enable payment of these grants.
30. There are no Human Resources, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology, Property, or other implications arising from this report

Risk Management

31. The potential risks of the planned future approach range from failure of the external voluntary sector funding management body to deliver the agreed service at the appropriate standard, to the closure of voluntary organisations previously in receipt of CYC core grant funding. These types of risks have been considered and will be dealt with carefully through the monitoring, assessment and agreement process put in place by the Council.
32. Whilst the external provider would be responsible for overarching management of CYC voluntary sector funding, distinct lines of reporting and accountability to City of York Council against the key outputs and outcomes would be established.

Recommendations

33. Cabinet are asked to approve:
 - The above outcomes set out in paragraph 9 as the basis for further work on developing the strategy.
 - The outline criteria set out in paragraph 13 as the basis for developing detailed funding criteria for the combined voluntary sector funding pot.

- 3 year funding agreements for York CVS, York CAB and the Welfare Benefits Unit as set out in paragraph 15.

Reason: To strengthen the fabric of the voluntary sector in the city.

Contact Details

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	Report Approved	✓	Date	3.5.12.
Cabinet Member responsible for the report: Cllr S Crisp Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion				
Specialist Implications Officer(s) N/A				
Wards Affected: <i>List wards or tick box to indicate all</i>			All	✓
For further information please contact the author of the report				

Background Papers: File held by Adam Gray