

## Support for Infrastructure Organisations

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<b>Key words:</b>	<i>Summarises Cheshire East Council's approach to supporting infrastructure organisations that provide assistance to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Town and Parish Councils (Local Councils) in the Borough.</i>
<b>Links:</b>	<i>Community Grants Policy</i> <i>Cross Sector Working Group Good Practice Guidelines</i>

## 1. Executive summary

This Policy details how the Council intends to support infrastructure organisations which assist the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) and Local Councils across Cheshire East to achieve their aims and objectives. For the purposes of the Policy, 'infrastructure organisations' shall mean those organisations that act as an "umbrella" organisation for a wide membership and act as a first point of contact for partner organisations.

Infrastructure Organisations tend not to deliver services direct to the community themselves, but will assist and equip the Voluntary and Community Sector and Town and Parish Councils in order that they can deliver services to the communities which they serve.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 *Purpose, aims and vision*

The Partnerships and Communities Team work closely in partnership with infrastructure organisations across the Borough who offer guidance, support and services to the VCFS and Local Councils

The purpose of the grant funding provided is to increase the capacity and capability of the VCFS and Local Councils across Cheshire East, and help them to understand and meet the needs of their communities for the wider benefit of all residents within Cheshire East. This is achieved through the provision of advice and guidance, targeted support, outreach services, training and development and other agreed activities.

The Partnerships and Communities Manager manages the Council's budget for supporting infrastructure organisations in line with this Policy. It is our intention to grow capacity in the above sector, and to prepare organisations and enable them to engage with a competitive process in the future.

### 2.2 *Policy context*

Cheshire East Council understands that providing infrastructure support for the sectors outlined above is vital to ensuring that the VCFS and Local Councils remain strong and can achieve their aims. This policy has been developed to clarify the purpose of the grant funding and the process for the allocation of funds for financial year 2015/16

## 3. Policy details

### 3.1 *Funding Policy*

Funding is only available to infrastructure organisations that can support the VCFS or Local Councils to achieve their aims. In order to be successful it is expected that infrastructure organisations will:

- **Identify and fill the gaps** – equipping the VCFS and Local Councils to tailor their services to the changing needs of the community.
- **Raise standards** – by providing access to information, training and quality assurance standards, ensuring the VCFS and Local Councils have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to support the local community.
- **Enable communication and collaboration** - encouraging the VCFS and Local Councils to share resources and to work collaboratively, by providing opportunities to network, and enabling them to share good practice and expertise.
- **Provide a voice** – acting as a conduit and represent the diverse views of the VCFS and Local Councils to the Councils (Borough and Local) and other public bodies. Promote and facilitate two-way communication and consultations so that the VCFS and Local Councils can contribute to discussions and decision-making at a local level.
- **Promote strategic involvement** – encouraging the VCFS and Local Councils to engage in strategic partnerships and actively work with representatives from partner organisations to ensure they are able to identify and seek joint measures to resolve key local issues.
- **Prepare for Commissioning** - to ensure that they maintain a high quality offering and are well positioned to tender to deliver these services in the future.

### **3.2 Funding Process**

The budget is managed by the Partnerships and Communities Manager in the budget year 2015/16, with annual grants agreed with infrastructure organisations. Annual changes to funding are decided by the Partnerships and Communities Manager as the budget holder, in consultation with the Department's Portfolio Holder. It should be noted that we are moving towards a commissioning approach and that a competitive process will be followed in future.

Equality Impact Assessment Screening is carried out annually on all funding changes and if necessary full Equality Impact Assessments undertaken in line with the Council's policy.

Infrastructure organisations will be required to sign an annual funding agreement, which will set out expected outputs and outcomes and provide clear monitoring and reporting arrangements for the financial year.

Funding is paid half yearly, with 50% of the annual allocation being paid from April (as long as ongoing monitoring reports are up to date) and the remainder paid from October. This is upon receipt of satisfactory half yearly reports, or as soon as possible after the receipt of the necessary reports.

### **3.3 Policy recommendations**

To approve the approach to providing support for infrastructure organisations as detailed above.

## 4. Performance and evaluation

### 4.1 *Monitoring, evaluation and Review*

This Policy will be monitored and evaluated annually as part of the Council's business planning process and any changes made will be approved by the Council's Cabinet.

## 5. Further information

Further information is available from Kirstie Hercules, Partnerships and Communities Manager.

### **POLICY APPROVED:**

Portfolio Holder Signature: .....

Date: .....