

# Support for Infrastructure Organisations

## APPENDIX 1

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<b>Links:</b>	<i>Community Grants Policy</i> <i>Cross Sector Working Group Good Practice Guidelines</i>

## 1. Summary

This Policy details how Cheshire East Council intends to support infrastructure organisations, which assist the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS), across Cheshire East to achieve their aims and objectives from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

Previous grant funding has enabled organisations to deliver a wide range of actions for the benefit of local communities. For example :-

Community and Voluntary Services Cheshire East (CVSCE) has been able to;

- Support 352 existing and 11 new organisations with their development
- Carry out over 1690 advice sessions
- Deliver 24 separate training sessions
- Hold a good practice conference with 90 attendees from a range of agencies and organisations

- Develop and implement the GRIPP good practice toolkit to help benchmark performance within organisations, identify areas for improvement, and focus help and support. Support 44 organisations with 51 funding bids worth £2.4 million
- Facilitate the Cross Sector Working Group and develop a stronger voice for the sector
- Email the fortnightly 'Voice News' to over 2200
- Support volunteering good practice and encourage volunteering, advertise volunteering opportunities and handle over 1000 applications from interested volunteers

Cheshire Community Action (CCA) has been able to;

- Focus work in priority rural areas of Audlem, Brereton Rural, Bunbury, Haslington, Odd Rode, Sutton, Wrenbury and Wybunbury and develop an informed network of support
- 34 registered volunteers have supported over 100 people with issues related to accessing services due to rural isolation
- Recruit volunteers to support delivery of the Community Agent project, and train them in specialist areas such as befriending
- Register 5 volunteers as Digital Learning Champions

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background

Infrastructure organisations are those organisations that act as an 'umbrella' organisation for a wide membership and are a first point of contact for partner organisations. Organisations have been in receipt of annual grant funding to support their core objectives since at least 2010.

The Partnerships and Communities Manager manages the Council's budget for supporting infrastructure organisations.

### 2.2 Purpose of Grant Funding

Grant funding has supported organisations to deliver a core provision of services, thereby enabling CEC to fulfil its corporate objectives. Funding has been provided to increase the capacity and capability of the VCFS 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. Outcomes have been achieved through the provision of advice and guidance, targeted support, outreach services, training and development and other agreed activities. Benefits to date include:-

- Large number of member organisations supported with development advice and funding bids
- Delivery of specialist training sessions on wide range of subjects
- Knowledge sharing across the VCFS and with partner agencies through good practice conferences
- Development and implementation of the GRIPP good practice toolkit
- Facilitation of the Cross Sector Working Group

- Fortnightly 'Voice News' emailed to over 2200
- Support with volunteering good practice , encouraging volunteering and advertising volunteering opportunities with
- Access to skills and expertise relating to rural issues such as community planning, neighbourhood planning, village hall developments, community land trusts
- Developing informal support networks
- Targeted work in priority rural areas

Infrastructure Organisations are able to support and enhance the valuable grassroots work of their members in local communities, and thereby add significant value to the work of the Partnerships and Communities Team through positive contact and direct action, networking and provision of valuable social assets. Providing support for infrastructure organisations is vital to ensure that the VCFS remains strong and can achieve their aims.

## 3. Delivery

### 3.1 Funding Criteria and Eligibility

Funding is only available to infrastructure organisations that can support the VCFS to achieve their aims and outcomes.

Within the Cheshire East area it has been determined that both Community and Voluntary Services Cheshire East (CVSCE) and Cheshire Community Action (CCA) meet the eligibility criteria for grant funding. These organisations provide high quality specialist and localised support and services to the broad VCF sector across the geography of Cheshire East, and strategic support to partner agencies and organisations in both the statutory and private sector.

In order to be successful it is expected that infrastructure organisations will:

- **Identify and fill the gaps** – equipping the VCFS 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 have the knowledge, skills and resources they need to support the local community.
- **Enable communication and collaboration** - encouraging the VCFS 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 to the Councils (Borough and Local) and other public bodies. Promote and facilitate two-way communication and consultations so that the VCFS can contribute to discussions and decision-making at a local level.
- **Promote strategic involvement** – encouraging the VCFS 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 a commissioning approach** - to ensure that infrastructure organisations can be funded to meet the needs of their members and in the best way using the resources available.

There are no further infrastructure organisations operating within the Cheshire East area that are able to meet the above criteria.

### **3.2 Funding Process**

The budget is managed by the Partnerships and Communities Manager in the budget year 2016/17. Changes to funding have been decided by the Partnerships and Communities Manager as the budget holder, in consultation with the Department's Portfolio Holder.

Grant funding from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 until 31 March 2017 has been agreed as £163,000. This will be divided between Infrastructure Organisations who have been previously funded as follows: -

- £147,000      CVS Cheshire East
- £16,000      Cheshire Community Action

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.

### **3.3 Funding Agreement and Monitoring**

Organisations in receipt of funding will be required to sign an annual funding agreement, which will set out expected outputs and outcomes up to 31 March 2017 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.

## **4. Development in 2016 and support from 2017**

### **4.1 Key Issue**

Cheshire East Council needs to determine what we require from the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector in order to meet our corporate objectives and how they can best support us.

There are challenges to be addressed in terms of understanding the varied contracts that these organisations will hold from differing areas of the council, and how Cheshire East Council can take steps to reduce unnecessary duplication, save costs and thereby commission more effective and streamlined services.

This is a long term piece of work that will need scoping out and consideration. It is therefore recommended that this policy is agreed for one year whilst a number of policy reviews are carried out on some existing strategies and work is underway to develop new policies. This will allow us

to improve on good work and remove policy that is no longer relevant or fit for purpose, so that we can meet our corporate priorities in more effective ways. Reviews include the Sustainable Community Strategy, and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This policy will be subject to review as will the funding

#### ***4.2 Additional Requirements***

During 2016 it is proposed to develop and agree a VCF Sector Commissioning Framework that will recognise the skills and expertise provided by infrastructure organisations, and enable a transparent approach that will provide funding over a 3 year period and in compliance with any State Aid restrictions. In addition, it is proposed to develop and agree a Cheshire East Social Value Strategy that will provide an additional rationale for providing funding to infrastructure organisations and the VCF Sector.

#### ***4.3 Evaluation and Review***

In order to move forward effectively it will be crucial to consult widely with all stakeholders so we have an understanding of what Cheshire East Council expects from the VCF sector and what in turn they are able to deliver in terms of our ambitions.

Working with infrastructure organisations, we will hold a consultation workshop in 2016 with representatives from the VCFS to outline our strategic approaches and to ask them to start consider ways in which they can add value to our key priorities, through tendering their services when we commission for pieces of work.