

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	11 th April 2017
Report of:	Mark Palethorpe, Strategic Director of Adult Social Care and Health
Subject/Title:	Connecting Communities – Connected to Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Bates, Communities and Health

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 On 8 November 2016, Cabinet agreed to a new exciting approach to how as a Council we engage with communities through our Connecting Communities Strategy.
- 1.2 This report sets out how we plan to connect with the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector across Cheshire East. Our focus is on how we can:
 - ensure that the VCF sector has a voice and can influence what the Council does
 - support the VCF sector to work with us to deliver services and activities to our most vulnerable communities and deprived neighbourhoods to prevent demand and intervene at an early stage
 - provide a clear understanding to the VCF sector on what our relationship with them is
- 1.3 The VCF sector is very diverse and incredibly vibrant. In Cheshire East, there are a range of different organisations that make up this sector from large national organisations such as Barnados who deliver services to people affected by domestic abuse and local organisations such as The Wishing Well which provide a range of services including supporting older people to come out of hospital and stay in their own homes. There is also a strong and well connected faith sector who provide services for the most vulnerable through foodbanks and somewhere for the homeless to get a shower and wash their clothes.
- 1.4 The key thing that all of our VCF sector have in common is a set of organisational values that are about making a difference. They are not for profit and in the main although they have customers they provide services for free or it's a nominal fee for using the services.

- 1.5 Cheshire East Council for Voluntary Services who are the umbrella body for the sector undertook some research with the sector in 2015 called Hidden Power. This showed that:
- 93% of the VCF sector have volunteers
 - the total estimated income of the sector in Cheshire East was over £200m per annum
 - the VCF sector employ about 5,000 people which represents 2.5% of the total workforce in Cheshire East.
 - on average, over 53,000 people volunteer in our community
 - each week volunteers contribute over 74,000 hours of their time. This is the equivalent to nearly 2,000 jobs.
- 1.6 This shows that the VCF sector is both a powerful economic partner and one that can help us as a Council achieve our outcomes in challenging times. We know that the VCF sector have faced increasingly tough times recently and the future continues to look challenging. This is partly, due to reducing levels of resources from national, local government and health partners as well as other funding sources which has made the access to resources incredibly competitive. This has been compounded by an increasing demand for services which is demonstrated in Cheshire East by an increasingly elderly population and areas of deprivation and need which are masked by the overall demographic of Cheshire East.
- 1.7 The focus of the work around Connecting Communities and Connecting to the VCF sector in particular is to provide support to the sector to enable us to achieve our shared outcomes together. Our key shared outcomes are as follows:
- Our Local Communities are Strong and Supportive
 - Our People have the Life Skills and Education they need to thrive
 - Our People Live Well and for Longer
- 1.8 To make these come alive we are committing to two key priorities for our engagement with the VCF sector as a Council:
- An approach to commissioning the sector that provides clarity around our expectations of what we want and how we will measure success
 - Commitment to supporting the sector to respond to what we want through infrastructure support which will:
 - help organisations get ready to deliver on our behalf
 - increase the number of volunteers to support building resilient communities
 - enable the VCF sector to create these opportunities and support volunteers
 - create a mechanism to enable us to engage with the sector and listen to their needs to influence, strategy, policy and service delivery where possible

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet agree to:

- (i) note that following a competitive process, a contract for VCF Infrastructure support has been awarded to Cheshire East Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for a term of three years commencing on 1 April 2017
- (ii) the development of a VCF Commissioning Framework which will be formalised following consultation and will be presented to Cabinet for final approval prior to implementation in September 2017.
- (iii) the VCF Commissioning framework being embedded into the delivery of commissioning frameworks across the Council.
- (iv) the promotion of the benefits of volunteering and the VCF sector and the recognition of the value it plays in building resilient communities
- (v) commit to working with the VCF sector and listening to their views about the needs of communities, especially protected characteristics to influence service provision

3. Other Options Considered.

- 3.1 Other options would be to not develop a corporate approach and infrastructure support for the sector. This would not fit with our strong commitment to connecting with the sector.

4 Reasons for Recommendation.

- 4.1 To update on progress and agree a corporate approach to Connected to VCF focussed on ensuring that there is clarity around our relationship with the sector and how we can connect with each other to achieve our outcomes.

5 Background / Chronology.

5.1 An approach to commissioning the sector that provides clarity around our expectation of what we want and how we will measure success

5.1.1 The Strategic Director for Adults, Public Health and Communities led an event with the VCF sector in December 2016 which set out in broad terms our future ambitions against a set of key priorities linked to our shared outcomes – Early Intervention and Prevention; Health and Wellbeing; Increasing Community Resilience and Employment and Skills. This gave the sector a great opportunity to articulate how they could add value to these priorities and outline any ideas and opportunities for the future.

5.1.2 A clear outcome from this was that the sector welcomed some clarity about how the approach to VCF commissioning would be one that was clear and consistent. As part of our desire to connect with the VCF sector a VCF and Council planning group has been established which will look at a draft commissioning framework and a future event will be held which will engage the

wider sector to develop a VCF Commissioning Framework that feels fit for purpose. The ambition is to have a co-produced framework for consideration by Cabinet by September 2017.

5.1.3 Moving from demand led to prevention and early intervention, Adult Social Care is wanting to ensure the VCF Sector are at the centre of the redesign which aspires to empower communities in a sustainable way which is co-produced and resilient.

5.1.4 Therefore, this section of the report sets out a draft outline framework for discussion with the VCF sector as outlined above. The purpose of the VCF Framework is to set out the Councils priorities and future plans for commissioning the VCF sector. Given the increasing pressures on resources, the framework aims to ensure the best use of funding available through a fair and transparent process.

5.1.5 Suggestions for considerations for the sector in relation to the commissioning process include:

- Consortia approaches are the preferred method for making larger contracts accessible to smaller providers.
- Decisions made about the best funding channel (contract or grant funding) will clearly demonstrate full consideration of costs and benefits and take into account the impact on local providers and the sustainability of provider diversity
- Use Participatory Budgeting principles to ensure that communities can influence commissioning especially at a locality level
- Encourage the use of our connected community centres that have signed up to our community franchise models by the VCF sector
- The relationship between Council and VCF will be outcome focussed and based on partnership working.
- Innovative approaches to creating alternative delivery models, especially in shaping the adult social care market

5.1.6 To provide further clarity, we are proposing using a three Tiered approach to VCF commissioning. As there are reduced resources and an increased demand for services, there has to be a realisation that there will not be enough funding to cover everyone's needs and wants. We are proposing using our outcomes as an overarching theme and specific funding priorities identified within each theme.

5.1.7 Organisations that would be commissioned would have to demonstrate how their work will address these priorities.

5.1.8 The suggested approach to the Tiers is set out below:

Tier One – Community Wellbeing

These services are aimed at people who have no particular social care needs or illness. These are universal services that build the skills and capacity of the community to do more for themselves and prevent them from needing more intensive services. It also covers infrastructure support services for the VCF sector in which we expect to see the diversification of the market of providers and the development of consortia to respond to our commissioning needs.

Tier Two – Early Intervention and Prevention

These targeted services will identify those people at risk, in adults this could be to slow down any deterioration to their independence, or those at risk of domestic abuse. It could be young people who are at risk of reoffending.

Tier Three – Reablement (Specialist)

These are services aimed at enabling safe and rapid discharge from hospital and rehabilitation and reablement services for adults. There will be an emphasis as well on preventing seasonal deaths.

5.2 Commitment to supporting the sector to connect with the Council

5.2.1 Cheshire East CVS have been funded by Cheshire East Council through a grant award for a number of years to provide infrastructure support and a voice for the sector. As a snapshot in a year this enabled:

- Over 1,100 information and advice sessions were delivered
- 49 training sessions covering topics such as project management, income generation and equality and diversity were held
- 13 new VCF groups were established
- 23 groups completed a Diagnostic Health Check

5.2.2 However, Cabinet agreed last year that we would move to a procurement process for a three year period. Cheshire East Council for Voluntary Services in partnership with Cheshire Community Action have successfully won the tender and have been awarded the contract. The scope of the contract covers:

- Facilitating, shaping and supporting a diverse, sustainable and quality market of VCF providers
- Creating mechanisms to consult and engage with communities of interest
- Providing information and support to voluntary, community and faith groups
- Contract Holder to be representative of all sectors within VCF and establish effective working relationships
- Promoting and increasing volunteering opportunities across the whole of Cheshire East
- Developing a strong VCF sector

- Encouraging collaboration between large and small VCF providers and actively developing approaches to create efficiencies and opportunities in the sector

5.2.3 The Council recognises that the VCF sector is independent with its own set of core values and principles and is clear that it wishes to connect and work in partnership with the sector. This approach is one offer of support for the sector which deals with the Council's proposed deal and is one element of the work of the VCF sector who access funding and advice from a whole range of places.

6 Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1 The Strategy applies across the whole borough.

7 Implications of Recommendation

7.1 Policy Implications

7.1.1 The Strategy sets out ways to meet Outcome 1, Our Communities are Strong and Supportive and Outcome 5 People Live Well and for Longer. It underpins the Sustainable Community Strategy, Ambition for All and supports the delivery of many other policies.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 In November 2016 Cabinet approved the Connecting Communities Strategy which involved both engagement with communities and the third sector and proposals to deliver projects. That Strategy is a statement of the Council's intentions and so the Council's actions can be compared against the Strategy (and potentially challenged). Development of the VCF framework must therefore be carefully framed to reflect the Strategy and be reviewed over time and in conjunction with review of and changes to the Strategy to ensure it continues to reflect the Council's strategic aims.

7.2.2 The VCF framework proposals include the Council procuring services and so any commissioning will need to be compliant with the Council's own Finance and Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

7.2.3 The VCF framework proposals include grant funding organisations. The Council has developed a Grant Funding Protocol which sets out guidance on grant funding, consideration of state aid implications, the process for allocation and the limited conditions that should apply to any grant funding (Constitution Finance Procedure Rules E.26). Grant funding within the VCF framework will need to be compliant with the Constitution and the Protocol.

7.2.4 Development of the VCF framework will include a VCF and Council planning group to look at draft framework proposals and consultation will take place with wider stakeholders (VCF organisations) as part of the overall process. Consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.

- The proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to enable intelligent consideration and response. Those consulted should be aware of the criteria that will be applied when considering proposals and which factors will be considered decisive or of substantial importance at the end of the Consultation process
- Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
- The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising proposals.
- Consideration should be given the scope of the consultation. If the proposals alter existing ways of working and/or delivery of services which impact more widely (i.e. on service users) then this may lead to challenge if those affected have not be consulted (and their views given consideration) as part of the development of the proposals.

7.2.5 In developing the VCF framework the Council must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Public Sector Equality Duty as set out at S149 of the Equality Act 2010, states:

“(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it... “

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed to assist Cabinet in making its decision to adopt the Connecting Communities Strategy in November 2016. The Council must have regard to the PSED and consideration need to be to the contents of that EIA and whether to complete a fresh assessment when considering whether the VCF framework as finally developed meets its equality duties.

7.3 Financial Implications

7.3.1 There are no further financial implications arising from this report. The resource implications were included in the report on the Connecting Communities Strategy on 8 November 2016.

7.4 Equality Implications

7.4.1 There are no specific equality implications and due regard has been taken to our Equality Duty. The scope of the contract covers how we will ensure that the views of groups with protected characteristics are afforded due regard in influencing strategy, policy and service delivery. The EIA will be reviewed once the VCF Commissioning Framework is formalised.

7.5 Rural Community Implications

7.5.1 Cheshire Community Action as part of the contract have a specific role to reach the more rural areas and ensure that voices are heard. The consultation with the VCF sector in developing the commissioning approach will take into account how we shape service delivery in rural communities. A key issue will be how we develop and promote volunteering in some of our more rural areas as we know that volunteers can be the lifelines for some people to enable them to access services and get to the shops and hospital appointments. Our excellent example of care for older people by the VCF sector in Audlem is one that the Council would wish to learn from and utilise in other areas as appropriate

7.6 Human Resources Implications

7.6.1 There are no specific HR implications.

7.7 Public Health Implications

7.7.1 This has significant positive public health outcomes. Public Health are very keen to remain fully engaged in community based commissioning at a locality level and to ensure co-production and design of local services. The VCF work commissioned on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on behalf of Public Health in the community with those hardest to reach is a good example of how the Council working with the sector will use this information to influence service delivery.

7.8 Other Implications

7.8.1 None

8 Risk Management

8.1 Risks are identified through the Partnerships and Communities Business Planning process and are logged, reviewed and monitored.

9 Access to Information/Bibliography

9.1.1 Connecting Communities Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 8 November 2016.

10 Contact Information

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