

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting19th June 2008

1. Title of Item/Report

Scrutiny Review of Voluntary and Community Sector - Final Report of the VCS Task and Finish Group

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group that had been examining the Borough's Voluntary and Community Sector.

It was explained that Members had taken the opportunity to examine several issues facing the local VCS and had made recommendations in order to secure further improvements and greater understanding where necessary. The review had examined relationships with the Council and LSP, the core funded organisations including the new strategic body 'Catalyst', governance issues including member representation, volunteering, and community centres.

It was explained that following consideration by Cabinet an action plan would be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how approved recommendations would be implemented detailing officers responsible for action and timescales.

Cabinet agreed to remove recommendation 17 as they considered that there was insufficient evidence in the report to warrant an investigation. However, assurance was given that an investigation would be carried out if sufficient evidence could be provided.

RESOLVED:-

Volunteering

1. That the Council undertake a feasibility study into encouraging employees to volunteer with accredited voluntary organisations, and the study's scope to include reference to allowing paid and unpaid time off, acknowledging and rewarding volunteers, pre-retirement information and use of volunteer champions;

2. That those organisations that receive core funding from SBC should provide a clear annual statement concerning the training and support they provide for their own volunteers, and that this should be written into funding agreements;

3. That an appropriate, willing core funded organisation be identified to have responsibility for provision of a 'volunteering bureau';

Community Centres

4. That the Corporate Directors of DNS and CESC should take forward a response to the Audit Report on Youth and Community Centres, including reference to the status of Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre and that a report should be prepared for CMT and reported back through the scrutiny monitoring process within six months;

5. The provision of a freephone to access Council services (as exists in Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre) should be examined as to whether it could be replicated elsewhere;

Governance

6. That the Council should continue to review and resolve governance issues including:

- to ensure that Members receive appropriate support to fulfil their roles on VCS bodies, including a review of guidance currently issued, and to consider how information regarding the activities of VCS organisations appointed to by this Council may be best brought to the attention of Members;
- reviewing which organisations should be required to complete the Governance Self Assessment documentation, and making sure that it is understandable for those which are, especially those organisations which no longer have Member representation;

7. That the Council should continue to ensure the governance compliance of 3rd sector partners when procuring services from them, and the maintenance of an up to date, central register of compliant organisations should be developed;

8. That, building on what information the Council already holds, a mapping exercise should be carried out in order to ascertain the full extent of the Borough's voluntary and community sector, where the Council has a funding or contractual relationship;

Core Funded Organisations

9. That all core funded organisations must have information readily available to the public giving details of trustees, the annual report and the accounts;

10. That there should be a memorandum of understanding between Council, SCRGA and Catalyst regarding the sharing of data of VCS groups;

11. That the following statement be included within the terms and conditions of future core funding and grant agreements: 'This grant/ funding is issued for the stated specific purpose. A condition of accepting the grant is that your organisation agrees to the Council having access to your records in order to demonstrate that funding is used appropriately';

12. That core funded organisations should consider the merits of attaining charity status, in view of the potential reduction of costs to the Council in relation to rate relief and themselves in reduction of energy costs;

13. That the council examine the issues in relation to funding and relationships (outlined on page 29-30) as part of future work in relation to the core funded organisations;

Procurement

14. That the Council should continue to examine opportunities to provide procurement help and advice to the sector;

15. That, where appropriate, funding from the Council to the VCS should be in the form of 3-year contracts in order to provide stability for organisations;

Catalyst

16. That the new Executive Director of Catalyst be requested to attend Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee within six months to provide information and clarity on the role and workings of Catalyst, including their role in allocating funding and procurement criteria, and progress in relation to building relations with all the Borough's VCS and refreshing the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The review topic was identified at a meeting of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum in January 2007 and confirmed within the scrutiny work

programme in May 2007.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillors Mrs McCoy and Nelson declared personal non-prejudicial interests in this item as they were Board Members of Stockton & District Advice & Information Service.

Councillor Mrs Beaumont declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in this item as she was a Board Member of Tees Active.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than Midnight on Friday 27 June 2008

Proper Officer
23 June 2008