

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

### **AGENDA ITEM**

### **REPORT TO CABINET**

**19 JUNE 2008**

### **REPORT OF VCS TASK AND FINISH GROUP – CORPORATE, ADULT SERVICES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION SELECT COMMITTEE**

## **CABINET DECISION**

**Corporate and Social Inclusion – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Terry Laing  
Regeneration and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Robert Cook**

### **Scrutiny Review of Voluntary and Community Sector**

1. Summary (expanded report summary)

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group that has been examining the Borough's Voluntary and Community Sector. Members have taken the opportunity to examine several issues facing the local VCS and have made recommendations in order to secure further improvements and greater understanding where necessary. The review has 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.

2. Recommendations

The Group recommend:

#### **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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.
17. That following evidence received during the review regarding the concerns of a number of organisations surrounding the former SVDA and the lack of confidence which ensued, the Group recommend that an investigation takes place.

### 3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

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. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**19 JUNE 2008**

**REPORT OF VCS TASK AND FINISH  
GROUP – CORPORATE, ADULT  
SERVICES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION  
SELECT COMMITTEE**

**CABINET DECISION**

**SCRUTINY REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

**SUMMARY**

This report presents the findings of the Task and Finish Group that has been examining the Borough's Voluntary and Community Sector. Members have taken the opportunity to examine several issues facing the local VCS and have made recommendations in order to secure further improvements and greater understanding where necessary.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Group recommend:

**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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.**
- 17. That following evidence received during the review regarding the concerns of a number of organisations surrounding the former SVDA and the lack of confidence which ensued, the Group recommend that an investigation takes place.**

## **DETAIL**

1. The attached report presents Cabinet with the findings of the review of the Voluntary and Community Sector undertaken by members of the Task and Finish Group made up of members of the Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee between January and June 2008. Members have taken the opportunity to examine several issues facing the local VCS and have made recommendations in order to secure further improvements and greater understanding where necessary. The review has 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.
2. Following consideration by Cabinet an action plan will be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how approved recommendations will be implemented detailing officers responsible for action and timescales.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3. Recommendations 1 and 5 would be subject to further work which would entail consideration of the costs involved. Recommendation 12 could lead to a reduction in costs for the Council and the organisations concerned should they feel attaining charitable status is appropriate. Recommendations 13 and 15 may lead to a review of the arrangements for specific contracts where appropriate.
4. A separate review of the Voluntary Sector Support Fund is due to take place.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5. There are no new legal implications arising from the report.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

6. This Voluntary and Community Sector report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk. The recommendations are intended to build upon previous work in relation to improving the standards of governance within the sector, and to bring about further safeguards in relation to the use of public money.

## **COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

7. VCS organisations contribute towards the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy through representation on Renaissance. Recipients of the Voluntary Sector Support Fund contribute towards the following themes in a number of ways (as outlined in the main report):

Economic Regeneration and Transport  
Safer Communities  
Children and Young People  
Healthier Communities and Adults  
Liveability

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8. An assessment would need to be made on the actions contained within the recommendations.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

9. The Group received evidence from a range of internal and external stakeholders including representatives from the eleven core funded organisations. An all-Members Survey was conducted for the purposes of the review.
10. Senior officers within DNS and the Cabinet Members responsible for Corporate and Social Inclusion, and Regeneration and Transport, were consulted on the scope of the review and the findings and recommendations.

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**Membership of the Task and Finish Group:**  
Councillor Suzanne Fletcher (Chair)  
Councillor Aidan Cockerill  
Councillor Mick Eddy  
Councillor Andrew Larkin

Background Papers None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward specific

Property None specifically. Reference is made within the main report to discussion surrounding the transfer of assets.