

Draft Brief for the future funding of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Organisations

This document contains the information that was in the slide deck we went through at our meeting on Friday 27 November 2015. We have updated this with the feedback we received at the meeting and we have put in some additional information as requested.

We would now like to invite you to make any further comments to ensure that we can take account of this feedback as we consider the way forward.

Thank you again for your participation in this process.

Could you please return your response to us by Friday 8th January 2016.

Email to greg.wilson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Section One: Introduction

Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) rationale for changing the approach to how it funds the VCS Infrastructure Organisations is:

- Ensuring that what is delivered meets the needs of CCC as defined by our recently agreed Stronger Together, Strategy for Building Resilient Communities;
- Seeing if there is a way of contracting with the VCS Infrastructure Organisations that maximises economies of scale, that relates more to 'place'¹ and helps build on the co-operation and the complementary offer of this network of organisations;
- Reducing the number of contracts CCC has with Infrastructure organisations across the county.

We are taking the opportunity to engage with the Infrastructure organisations to shape the future approach and to understand and respond to the strengths and weaknesses they experience when working with the county council

Current Funding to Infrastructure Organisations

Cambridgeshire County Council currently funds VCS infrastructure organisations as follows:

Current Grant arrangement	£
General Community and Voluntary Sector infrastructure (CVS) - £7,000 per district for the three CVS's. This is a partnership	£35,000

¹ Place can be defined as a practical area where communities can plan and organise action and activity

agreement with the Clinical Commissioning Group, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Fenland District Council	
Volunteering Infrastructure - split in variable amounts between the four Cambridgeshire volunteer centres and Royston Volunteer Centre	£57,980
Rural Development Infrastructure - to ACRE for general infrastructure support	£35,000
Parish Planning in Fenland - with match funding from Fenland District Council.	£2,000
TOTAL	£129,980

Currently these are all one year contracts with Service Level Agreements.

Voluntary Sector providers have expressed a view that they would like to have longer contract periods, and feel a grant would be more appropriate than a contract.

The County Council is in the process of setting its budget for 2016/17. The current budget proposal for the future funding of the VCS Infrastructure organisations is for a budget of £120,000 p.a., a reduction of £9,980 from this area of work or 7.6%.

This budget proposal goes back to General Purposes Committee in January 2016 before being forward to full Council in February 2016. The proposal will ask that the budget of £120,000 p.a. is retained for VCS Infrastructure Organisations and that we enter into a 3 year funding agreement with the organisation(s) that are successful in receiving funding through the revised funding mechanism that is currently under consultation.

It is the responsibility of full Council to set the budget for the County Council when it meets in February 2016.

Overall Aims of our support to the VCS Infrastructure Organisations

- To enable the VCS Infrastructure organisations to support the development and transformation of the VCS to meet the current and the future needs and aspirations of the sector;
- To nurture a sector that can support vulnerable adults, children and families to enable them to remain well and to live independently;
- To support the sector to enable social action/change that creates vibrant communities;
- To support the sector to make a positive contribution to the county's economic prosperity, the environment and the overall health and wellbeing of its communities;
- To be a voice for the sector in shaping public policy and strategy ensuring that the county's community offering is recognised and valued;
- To support the Council to deliver Stronger Together our Strategy for Building Resilient Communities.

Underpinning Values of our contract with the VCS Infrastructure Organisations

- To be inclusive
- To demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity
- To ensure people are kept safe from harm
- To take asset-based approach to working with communities

Do you have any comments on Section One?
For Clarification:
Feedback:

Section Two: Outcomes required of the Infrastructure Organisations through the contract with CCC

A) *To provide support, information, advice, training, mentoring, to the wider VCS on a range of issues such as:*

- Running an effective organisation – financial management & controls, business planning, marketing & promotion, governance
- Building a sustainable organisation – broadening the income base, generating new income streams, effective in using time, skills and experience as resources
- Being a good employer, staff policies and practice;
- Effective engagement and management of volunteers;
- Developing volunteering in Cambridgeshire;
- Developing networks to support community action and engagement;
- Board recruitment, training and development, including support for a board's role in strategic planning to ensure organisational sustainability;
- Harnessing links to the business community, working collaboratively with the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation to maximise their business networks;

Draft Brief for Cambridgeshire County Council's future funding of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Organisations

- Enabling organisations across the sector to be 'tender ready';
- Advice on how to set up an organisation / network and appropriate types of formal / informal organisational models;
- Advice on how to carry out community/neighbourhood planning, community asset transfer, community right to buy;
- Ability to support organisations to know how to include vulnerable people within their workforce and/or volunteer base;
- Ability to support organisations to train their workforce and volunteer base to be able to use asset based approaches to working with and in their communities, recognising that assets include our people, our spaces, our experience and our knowledge;
- Ability to promote and celebrate volunteering.

It is recognised that some of these services will be offered directly and others will be signposted to others for support.

B) To be a voice for the VCS

- To ensure the voice of the VCS is heard in shaping public policy and strategy recognising the role the sector plays in developing innovative practice and its ability to take risks and to pilot new approaches;
- To be an advocate for and a challenger of the Stronger Together the County Council's Strategy for Building Community Resilience, and other key strategies such as Transforming Lives (a strategy to transform the way adults and older people's services are delivered)
- To be a representative voice for the sector with demonstrable mechanisms to deliver this including effective two-way communication between the infrastructure organisation(s) and the wider sector

Do you have any comments on Section Two?
For Clarification:
Feedback:

Section Three: Requirements of the County Council in its relationship with the VCS Infrastructure organisations

The County Council will undertake to

- Promote and celebrate volunteering and the contribution of the VCS to the life of the county;
- Develop and deliver a consistent approach to how we deal with the VCS
- Consider the promotion of county champions for the VCS;
- Recognise that the VCS, including the infrastructure organisations, require support for research and development of new innovative practice;
- Assist with liaison with District, City and Parish Councils;
- Assist with harnessing business support;
- Recognise that we need to draw the VCS into our policy and strategy development from the outset.

Practice to be displayed by the successful Infrastructure Organisation(s)

- To be progressive and entrepreneurial in its vision and its practice (e.g. sharing economy, trading);
- Able to demonstrate its own effectiveness, sustainability, breadth of income base, good practice as an employer of staff and volunteers;
- Able to demonstrate leading edge practice that is recognised and acknowledged by others;
- Having an effective online presence with a depth of knowledge about the role of online tools and processes in furthering its aims and those of the wider sector;
- Able to show how it can empower and enable organisations to generate ideas, to harness resources and find new and imaginative ways of developing and delivering solutions to local needs;
- Ability to demonstrate that they are a learning organisation;
- Ability to know how to enable others to listen to their communities and to build local responses to help people, and groups, to find solutions to needs;
- Well networked in all sectors and with good knowledge and experience of regional and national examples of good practice;
- Ability to harness the support of local businesses (linking to the Community Foundation);
- Demonstrating a depth of understanding about online and offline communities and how this is reflected in how orgs operate (for themselves and others);
- Effective in partnership working, with a track record in collaboration and co-production;
- Aware of and engaging in new and emerging models of practice;
- Ability to provide challenge to organisations they support / nurture, able to mentor / support others through change.
- Ability to identify opportunities for productive partnership, broker relationships between different sectors to bring this to fruition.

Lead organisations would be expected to demonstrate how they are addressing or moving towards the practice described here. Partner organisations, who may be engaged to deliver specific aspects of the brief, would be expected to demonstrate good practice in relation to their specific areas of delivery.

The determination of key performance indicators, and the mechanisms and frequency measurement against these indicators, would be worked through with the successful organisations following the award of the grant(s).

It is recognised that the CCC grant will only contribute to aspects of that the successful infrastructure organisation(s) will be delivering. The practice above is intended to be a descriptor of the whole organisation, its ethos, the way it delivers its services and the way it supports its staff and volunteers.

Issues that need to be addressed in the agreements between the County Council and the Infrastructure organisations it supports in the future

In an arrangement which as lead and partner organisations it needs to be clear where the responsibility lies for non-delivery. There needs to be clarity about where the risk is held.

It is important that the County Council is realistic in its expectation of organisations given the level of resources available for this work.

Do you have any comments on Section Three?
For Clarification:
Feedback:

Section Four: Future Funding Proposal

To tender a new 3 year grant (or contract?) for Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Services setting out how infrastructure organisations can support the delivery of the Council's Community Resilience Strategy, Stronger Together, through their support to the wider Voluntary and Community Sector.

Options

1. One countywide agreement with single lead organisation (with or without rural development included);

2. District wide agreements based on fair funding formula (with or without rural development included)
 - 5 agreements, one for each District
 - 4 agreements, where South Cambs and Cambridge City are combined;
3. A blend of 1. and 2. above where the county wide requirements are delivered through an agreed and complementary arrangement by each of the lead District/City infrastructure organisations.
4. In recognition that the county wide rural development remit provided by ACRE is distinctive, to continue to contract with ACRE separately with the expectation that ACRE works with the leads of either options 1. 2. or 3.

In all options the lead organisation could lead in partnership with a consortium or federation of other organisations that together deliver the requirements set out here. The lead organisation would be the single point of contact for the County Council.

The intention of this approach is that it would be more streamlined and would build on the collaborative practice already evident across the infrastructure organisations.

Process / Timetable for the introduction of this new arrangement

ACTION	DATE
Return of feedback on this Draft Brief from Infrastructure Organisations	08/01/2016
Provider Forum	10/03/2016
Advert about this opportunity published (Contracts Finder)	05/04/2016
Advert emailed to identified prospective providers	05/04/2016
Tender goes live	05/04/2016
Tender return date	09/05/2016
Presentations	16/05/2016
Preferred supplier(s) identified and approved	20/06/2016
Award letters issued	01/07/2016
Contract Award Notice published (Contracts Finder)	04/07/2016
Contract start date	01/09/2016

Do you have any comments on Section Four?

For Clarification:

Feedback (please indicate your preferred funding option(s)):