

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 03 April 2023

Portfolio:	Leisure and Community
Subject:	Voluntary Community Support Services
Report of:	Director of Leisure and Community
Corporate Priorities:	Strong, safe, inclusive and healthy communities

Purpose:

To review the current support that the Council funds for the voluntary sector, consider alternative means of support that is available across the Borough and propose a new approach to securing this valued support for the period 2023-2026.

Executive summary:

Fareham Borough Council recognises the tremendous value of the voluntary sector throughout the Borough. To ensure local charities and voluntary organisations are thriving to the best of their abilities, the Council funds the provision of support around the 'Big 3' of governance, volunteering and funding. For the last 7 years One Community has provided this service on behalf of the Council.

One Community's current contract expires on 31st March 2023.

This report reviews the support that has been provided for the voluntary sector in recent years and proposes a new approach to securing this support for the period 2023-2026.

Recommendation/Recommended Option:

It is recommended that the Executive approves the following annual allocations and commitments for the next 3-year period:

- a) the allocation of £7,500 from the Community Fund budget to which local charitable organisations can apply to secure their first year's membership to Action Hampshire and/or access their specialist advice around a governance issue of particular concern;
- b) the award of a grant agreement to Communities First Wessex for £10,000 for the provision of support around securing and retaining volunteers;
- c) the development of a new Council webpage providing clear links to support around governance, volunteering and funding for charitable organisations,

with a one-off allocation of £2,000 for the development of the webpage and promotion of the new package of services; and

- d) the allocation of £2,000 for the planning and delivery by Communities First Wessex of an annual Community Showcase event, to celebrate the local voluntary sector and encourage networking between organisations that are located within the Borough and provide a service to the residents of Fareham.

Reason:

To enable the Borough's voluntary and community sector to access support to thrive to the best of its ability.

Cost of proposals:

The cost of this proposal is a total of £60,500 over the three year period 2023-2026.

Appendices: **A: Draft Criteria for Action Hampshire Membership Grant**

Background papers: **One Community Contract Extension, Report to the Executive 5th February 2018**

Reference papers:

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	03 April 2023
Subject:	Community Voluntary Support Services
Briefing by:	Director of Leisure and Community
Portfolio:	Leisure and Community

INTRODUCTION

1. This report reviews the support that the Council currently funds for the voluntary sector.
2. The report also investigates the alternative support channels already in existence for charitable organisations within the Borough and proposes a revised model of support that effectively meets the needs of this sector.

BACKGROUND

3. Fareham Borough Council has long-recognised the importance of a well-supported voluntary and community sector. A wide range of vibrant groups and organisations make up this essential part of the community across the Borough, offering a variety of valued services. These include, but are not restricted to, well-structured children's activities, access to team sports, support groups for residents with health conditions and the management of venues at which community activities can be held. These various opportunities enable residents to lead a full, active and empowered life and help to strengthen community resilience.
4. Traditionally, the support of this sector has been provided by a 'Council for Voluntary Service' or CVS and defined by a Service Level Agreement. Initially the CVS for Fareham was joint-funded by Hampshire County Council. In 2015, Hampshire County Council withdrew funding for the CVS, resulting in a need to clearly define the support that was required from this service by Fareham Borough Council. The decision was made to focus the support being provided on a set of local priorities, known as 'the Big 3'. These support priorities were identified specifically as governance, volunteering and funding.
5. A tender opportunity was developed for CVS support that would focus solely on these priorities. During the tender process, One Community demonstrated the best fit to the Council's identified needs for this service and in 2016 was appointed the new CVS for Fareham.

6. Since 2016, the work of One Community within the Borough has been closely monitored. Twice per year, Monitoring Meetings are held at which information is requested on the groups supported with governance and funding, the volunteer placements that have been made and the projects that have been developed to provide support around the 'Big 3'. In addition, Council officers regularly meet with One Community employees to understand any challenges that are being faced, provide useful links and monitor the development of the service to make sure its focus remains true to the Council's priorities.
7. Over the past 7 years, One Community has developed several initiatives that have been of great benefit to the community and voluntary sector in Fareham. In 2016 they held the first Community Showcase which provided voluntary organisations and charities from across the Borough the opportunity to promote their service and the volunteering placements they have available to the community, in addition to enabling effective networking. Its success led to the Community Showcase becoming an annual event.
8. In 2017 One Community held the first Community Buildings Network meeting, which provided an opportunity for community building managers and trustees to share successes and frustrations and access support. These meetings currently take place quarterly and, in addition to One Community staff, are attended by the Council's Leisure and Community Officer and the Community Buildings and Enterprise Officer from Action Hampshire, who is able to provide any detailed guidance that may be required.
9. In 2022, three quarters of the way through a 4-year contract, One Community advised the Council that the £40,000 per year funding it received for the SLA was not sufficient to hold a Community Showcase that year.
10. At the same time, the monitoring of One Community's support of groups indicated a decline in the numbers of organisations benefitting from the CVS. Data from the September to March period each year which were provided revealed that in this period for 2019/20 137 groups received support, in 2020/21 this figure had dropped to 106 and in 2021/22 the figure from September to February was 63. A change in the reporting format makes it difficult to compare the same period for 2022/23. However, the information provided by One Community between April and December 2022 listed 35 cases where groups had received focussed 'governance and funding' support from the CVS during this time. Of these, 12 received support around volunteering, 6 were provided with connections to other charities or local services, 2 were supported to identify venues, 3 were supported with promoting their service, 5 received advice around funding, 2 were supported to develop effective policies and 5 received advice regarding the most effective charity structure.
11. One Community's current SLA with the Council ends on 31st March 2023.

TENDER PROCESS

12. In November 2022, the Council issued a competitive tender opportunity for the provision of support to the community and voluntary sector. To ensure the concerns expressed by One Community were addressed (that the previous funding was inadequate for a CVS to cover all the services that were being currently provided) the tender detailed the specific elements of the service that would be a priority to the Council. This offered any organisation wishing to deliver this service the opportunity to cease any non-essential elements, thereby reducing the cost of delivery. The tender for the period 2023 – 2025 was for the value of up to £40,000 per year, matching the existing level of funding.

13. The Council received bids from 2 CVSs, both submitting costings within the £40,000 per year parameter. One Community did not retender for the contract and was clear to point out that the funding available remained insufficient for them to deliver the service.
14. The 2 CVS that applied demonstrated sound experience with the community and voluntary sector and a good understanding of the needs of Fareham. However, this tender came at a time when the Council was focussing on funding only the most cost-effective options available. For this reason, alternative proposals were considered that would direct groups to existing expertise, while still funding specialist support around volunteering. Following research into alternative options, the decision was made not to award the tender.

EXISTING EXPERTISE

15. The community organisations within the Borough of Fareham are fortunate to have easy access to a wide range of support in addition to that which is currently provided by One Community. Prior to the 2016 appointment of One Community as CVS for Fareham, the contract was held by Fareham Community Action (which later merged with Communities First Wessex). Despite the end of their contract, this CVS continued to provide support to several volunteers and community organisations within the Borough, retaining their shopfront in West Street, Fareham.
16. Communities First Wessex continues to foster links with community organisations and potential volunteers across the Borough. They operate Fareham Shopmobility, which receives funding from the Council, and also run the Dial-a-Ride scheme within the Borough. Their recent focus in Fareham has been on health and wellbeing, and they have been very successful in securing funding for projects that support this important initiative.
17. An organisation that has been of particular value to Fareham's community and voluntary sector during recent years is Action Hampshire. This County-wide CVS has the four following key functions; sector support, member networking, partnership working and developing services. The organisation was established over 70 years ago and supports the District CVS through the Hampshire CVS Network.
18. Any charitable organisation within Hampshire can become a member of Action Hampshire. Membership fees are dependent on the income of the group, with fees from £30 per year for organisations with a turnover of less than £50,000 to £250 per year for those with a turnover between £100,000 and £250,000 per year. Organisations with the greatest turnover, in excess of £500,000, pay a membership of £350 per year. Member benefits include:
 - Access to an online membership platform to assist networking and enable members to seek the experience of other members
 - Bi-monthly themed members' events, in addition to ad hoc sessions where need has been identified
 - Promotion and support of members across social media channels and
 - Members newsletter and information sheets, including grant updates.
19. Several of the Borough's community organisations are already members of Action Hampshire. However, the County CVS exemplary support of the sector during Covid 19 hugely increased awareness of the high level of expertise and professionalism that was on offer from this organisation.

20. Action Hampshire officers are also able to offer in-person support for individual charitable organisations on more in-depth issues. This targeted support is costed at £372 per day.
21. In addition to the local support available through the various CVS, a huge quantity of information is available nationally online from reputable sources such as the Charity Commission, the Fundraising Regulator and the Information Commissioners Office, which all help to guide trustees of the best practices for running a charitable organisation.
22. One further invaluable source of online information is Basingstoke Voluntary Action's GRANTFinder Service. This is funded by the Hampshire CVS Network and enables charitable organisations from across the County to register their details to benefit from a tailored grant search.

PROPOSED SUPPORT

23. Fareham Borough Council continues to recognise the value of the community and voluntary sector and remains committed to a focus on the Big 3 of governance, volunteering and funding. The proposed option for support, detailed below, considers all three of these priorities:

Governance

24. This report proposes to establish a grant stream of £7,500 per annum from the Community Fund, made up of £5,000 in a fund to enable membership to Action Hampshire and £2,500 in a fund for urgent governance support. It is proposed that this grant stream is only able to be accessed by organisations with a turnover of less than £250,000 per year. The proposed fund for membership of Action Hampshire could fund a minimum of 33 community and voluntary organisations to become members. This figure increases to 166 organisations able to be supported if all of those in need have annual turnover of below £50,000.
25. The cost of membership and therefore the size of the grant would be dependent on the income of the organisations making an application. The grant awarded would pay for membership to Action Hampshire for the applicant group for one year. The payment of any following years' membership would then be met from within the charitable organisation's own accounts.
26. This 'urgent governance support' element of this grant stream would fund up to 6 voluntary organisations per year in particular need to access tailored, specialist support from Action Hampshire, to assist with complex governance concerns. This support would only be required in the very few cases where qualifying organisations weren't able to resolve their concerns through the information and advice available through the membership of Action Hampshire or in the wealth of guidance available online.
27. Applications to this grant would be via a simple online form with only key documents required to enable a swift decision on the award of funding. The criteria for this grant are detailed in Appendix A. To ensure groups would not be disadvantaged, any organisation not able to submit an online form would be able to meet in-person with an officer from the Leisure and Community Team, who would submit an application on their behalf. It is proposed that applications to this fund are considered quarterly, according to need. to ensure that swift support is available to qualifying organisations.
28. It is also proposed that, to ensure Fareham's Community Associations remain well-

supported, the Leisure and Community Team continue to hold Community Building Network meetings, although their frequency would reduce to 2 times per year. It is anticipated that Action Hampshire will continue to attend these meetings.

Volunteering

29. The two CVS that expressed an interest in the Community Services tender were also approached to provide quotes for the provision of support around volunteering and for the planning and delivery of an annual Community Showcase. Only Communities First Wessex felt able to provide quotes for these elements.
30. This report proposes the award of a grant agreement of £10,000 to Communities First Wessex for the provision of support around volunteering to charitable organisations located within the Borough and prospective volunteers for these groups. This support would include:
 - maintaining records of current volunteering opportunities
 - widely promoting volunteering opportunities and the various benefits of volunteering across the Borough
 - matching potential volunteers to opportunities
 - providing advice and assistance to voluntary organisations wishing to attract and maintain volunteers
 - seeking out and co-ordinating corporate volunteering opportunities
 - having an accessible location in Fareham Town Centre in which in-person advice around volunteering can be accessed
 - providing 6-monthly figures to the Council on the numbers of volunteers matched and volunteering opportunities advertised.
31. Further to this, it is proposed that £2,000 per year is awarded to Communities First Wessex for the planning and delivery of an annual Community Showcase, which would provide charitable groups located within Fareham the opportunity to promote the good work they do, attract new volunteers and network with other organisations.

Funding

32. As mentioned previously, the Hampshire CVS Network funds Basingstoke Voluntary Action's GRANTfinder, able to provide a free, tailored funding search for any charitable organisation in the County. This report proposes that a new Voluntary Sector Support webpage is created on the Fareham Borough Council website, providing clear links to this funding support alongside other useful links to advice and assistance for charitable organisations. The suggested key categories for this online resource are; accessing funding, recruiting volunteers, local help and national support. A proposed budget of £2,000 would cover the initial costs of creating an online resource and promoting the various support that would be available to the voluntary and community sector.

33. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

A summary of the various forms of support and their associated costs is provided in the table below:

Voluntary Sector Support	Cost Per Year
The establishment of a 'Voluntary Sector Support' Community Funding stream to enable a maximum of 166 community and voluntary organisations to become members of Action of Hampshire and provide a maximum of 6 community and voluntary organisations access to specialist in-person support by Action Hampshire per year.	£7,500
The delivery of a community showcase in Fareham	£2,000
The provision of support around volunteering to charitable organisations and prospective volunteers	£10,000
Promotion costs and webpage development	£2,000 (only for first year)
Total	£21,500 for first year £19,500 for subsequent years
Previous CVS Service Level Agreement	£40,000
Potential Saving	£18,500 for first year £20,500 for subsequent years

34. This arrangement is proposed for a 3 year period, from 2023 to 2026. Monitoring of the effectiveness and delivery of each element will take place regularly, providing an opportunity to review and adjust funding distribution accordingly.

CONCLUSION

35. The proposals contained within this report consider the valuable support that is already accessible to the Borough's voluntary organisations. The recommendations make use of great services that are already available, offering a cost-effective method of providing support to the voluntary and community sector.
36. This report recommends that the following annual funding is approved for the period of 2023 to 2026;
37. £7,500 for the establishment of 'Voluntary Sector Support Fund' from the Community Fund.
38. £2,000 grant to Communities First Wessex for the planning and delivery of a Community Showcase.
39. £10,000 grant to Communities First Wessex for the provision of support around volunteering.
40. a one-off allocation of £2,000 towards the cost of promoting this change in service and

the development of a Voluntary Sector Support webpage.

41. The provision of this package of support will ensure the community and voluntary sector in Fareham remains well-supported

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Emma Watts, Leisure and Community Manager on 01329 824440 or Claire Benfield, Leisure and Community Officer.

APPENDIX A

DRAFT Criteria for Governance Support Grant

The Council recognises the importance of access to good quality advice around governance for community organisations. To ensure that charitable groups within the Borough can tap into the most effective advice, information and training, the Council has made an allocation of £7,500 per year to provide those community organisations in need of support:

1. One year's membership to Action Hampshire.

This membership gives the applicant access to:

- A membership platform to assist networking and enable members to seek the experience of other members.
- Bi-monthly themed members' events, in addition to ad hoc sessions where need has been identified.
- Promotion and support of members across social media channels.
- Members' newsletter and information sheets, including details of funding opportunities.

The size of the grant will be dependent on the income of the organisation. The grant awarded will pay for membership to Action Hampshire for the applicant group for one year. Payment of following years' membership must be met from within the organisation's own accounts.

2. Specialist tailored support and advice to resolve particularly complex concerns.

To be able to apply for this grant, the organisation applying must meet the following criteria;

- The group is located within the Borough of Fareham and provides a service to its residents.
- The group is able to supply the constitution and annual accounts for their organisation.
- The group is able to demonstrate the need for specialist advice, if appropriate.
- The group is **not** a profit-making organisation
- The group has turnover of less than £250,000
- The requested funding is to pay for one year's membership to Action Hampshire, to enable the group to access appropriate support around governance and funding, or to pay for one session of specialist advice from Action Hampshire.

All applications must be made via the online form on the Fareham Borough Council website, with all documents that are requested scanned and submitted.