

**LEICESTERSHIRE TOGETHER (LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP)**  
**BOARD**

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2005**

**REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**  
**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**REPORT OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To report to the Board on progress with the Review of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure in Leicester Shire.

**Background**

2. In March 2005 the Board received a report which noted progress in establishing a Voluntary and Community Sector Consortium and a Funders Panel. In September 2005 an update on progress was provided to the Board as part of the Work Programme update report. The Consortium and Panel have respectively been involved in developing and scrutinising bids for Government funding being made available as part of the ChangeUp programme. This national programme aims to strengthen VCS Infrastructure to increase the contribution the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can make to the development of stronger communities and civic renewal, and to public service delivery.
3. VCS Infrastructure is a general term covering bodies such as Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs) and Volunteer Bureaux and more specialist organisations such as the Rural Community Council (RCC) and Leicestershire Ethnic Minority Partnership (LEMP).
4. £850k of ChangeUp funding has been allocated to Leicestershire and Leicester: The funding is time-limited, needing to be spent by June 2006. Funding bids are developed by the VCS Consortium (in the context of a previously agreed investment strategy) and scrutinised by a Funders Panel (chaired by a County Council officer) before GOEM makes the final decision. To date the funding has been used to improve support services (ICT and HR), support rural developments and good practice, support BME developments, facilitate mergers, and provide new/ improved buildings. A list of projects funded to date is attached as Appendix A.

**Study of VCS Infrastructure in Leicester Shire/ Workshop 9<sup>th</sup> November 2005.**

5. There has been a consensus amongst VCS and funding organisations that greater clarity is needed on what the shape of VCS Infrastructure should be in the long term. A research team at Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned by Leicestershire County Council (on behalf of the Consortium

and Panel with funding provided through the ChangeUp programme) to produce a study of the current structure of VCS Infrastructure in Leicester Shire, including levels of investment and to propose options for the future. The Executive Summary of the Study is attached as Appendix B.

6. The research indicated current levels of investment in VCS infrastructure in Leicester Shire, as follows:
  - Leicestershire County Council: £950,023
  - Leicester City Council: £344,086
  - Primary Care Trusts: £273,025
  - Six District and Borough Councils: £176,534
  - Learning and Skills Council: £87,298
  - DEFRA: £80,000
7. The Study identifies 3 broad alternatives for the future provision of VCS Infrastructure; the status quo, operational change (changing the way organisations work and how they work together), and structural change (meaning radical change both in the number of organisations and in the distribution of functions and services between organisations). The Study indicates that structural change could range from fairly straightforward pooling and sharing of back office functions, through selective mergers, to strategic reconfiguration. Whilst not coming down firmly in favour of any one detailed blueprint for future provision the Study signals that change of some sort will be necessary.
8. Following publication of the Study a workshop was held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2005 to consider its findings and appropriate next steps for the VCS Infrastructure Review in Leicester Shire. A note of the workshop, summarising key messages from the vent and next steps, is attached as Appendix C. There was a general consensus that change is needed but a variety of views on what form that change should take.

## **Recommendations**

9. **It is recommended that the Board:**
  - **the Board notes the progress made in reviewing VCS Infrastructure in Leicester Shire; and**
  - **expresses its support for the continued work on the Review as set out in section 4 of Appendix C, in particular the establishment of an extended working group which will develop a firmer proposal for future VCS Infrastructure arrangements.**

## **Officers to Contact:**

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