

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

Tuesday 22nd May 2007

**Review of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure in
Leicester Shire – Views of Stakeholders on the Report of the VCS
Infrastructure Working Group**

Background

1. On February 14th 2007 SSOG considered a report of a VCS Infrastructure Working Group which reported on progress in reviewing VCS Infrastructure in Leicestershire. The views of SSOG members were sought on an assessment of future infrastructure options produced by the Working Group.
2. Three broad models of VCS infrastructure provision in Leicestershire were assessed against a number of criteria in the report, with each assuming continued existence of a separate generalist infrastructure organisation in Leicester (currently Voluntary Action Leicester). The three models are as follows:
 - Model A - Retain changed structures in place from April 2007;
 - Model B - Seven district wide VCS infrastructure organisations supported by Central Hub functions; and
 - Model C – One county wide VCS infrastructure organisation
3. SSOG agreed In light of the assessment to ask SSOG members (and their constituent organisations) to consider:
 - What role they see VCS infrastructure organisations playing in helping them to achieve their corporate and partnership objectives;
 - Their preferences in terms of the future organisation of VCS infrastructure; and
 - What role they see themselves having in funding the future provision of VCS infrastructure.

Consultation Responses

4. Views were invited by April 30th 2007. A summary of the comments received is attached as Appendix A.
5. 15 responses were received, 10 from existing funders of VCS Infrastructure, one from the VCS Consortium, and 4 from other organisations. The following table summarises the preferences expressed for each of the models.

Model	No of organisations supporting the model	Existing funding associated with model preferences
A	3	£35,200
A moving to B	3	£108,900
B	2	£58,200
C	4	£1,275,500
No preference	3	£217,500

6. Subsequent to expressing its preference for Model A, the Leicester Shire VCS Infrastructure Consortium has worked up a proposal for a 'hub and spoke' approach to infrastructure provision similar to Model B. This proposal is attached as Appendix B.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board notes this report and considers the contents.

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APPENDIX A: Summary of Responses Received.

Current Funders of VCS Infrastructure

Name or Organisation	Comments Received	VCS Infrastructure Funding 05/6
Blaby DC	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Model A progressing through to Model B as/ if funding is made available and following further review of the newly established Voluntary Action Blaby District (VABD) within the context of the County</p> <p><u>Role VCS infrastructure organisations play in helping achievement of corporate and partnership objectives</u> Two key Blaby District Council corporate objectives directly link into the role performed by the voluntary and community sector in Blaby District:-</p> <p>(1) Being THE focus for listening to the community and taking action. (2) Supporting people in their communities</p> <p>The Authority is fully committed to supporting the most appropriate infrastructure in the District and this partnership arrangement is strengthening through the establishment of VABD at the new Community and Leisure Resource Centre at Huncote.</p> <p><u>Role of organisation in funding the future provision of VCS infrastructure</u> The case for consideration of additional funding by Blaby District Council, for the support of the voluntary sector in this District can be linked to the success or otherwise of the relocation to Huncote. Where enhanced community value is evidenced following a period of time it would be appropriate for the Authority to consider its funding position, with a view to potentially assisting a more progressive move to Model B - where the costs and benefits of further improved infrastructure are demonstrably favourable and in line with the corporate aims/ priorities of the Council.</p> <p>Models B and C require significantly enhanced funding at a time when resources are continuously</p>	£29,700

Name or Organisation	Comments Received	VCS Infrastructure Funding 05/6
	being challenged. Blaby District Council has no additional budgeted provision to be made available to support either of these models at the present time.	
Charnwood BC	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Model B – there is a strong link between the criterion for promoting stronger communities and the advantages of Model B. This alignment chimes with the increased drive towards neighbourhood level working. Local sensitivity and responsiveness is also better in B than C. On the other hand, recognised that the clearest disadvantages to Model C are the losses of local support in terms of funding, volunteers and goodwill, which would occur if there was no local organisation involved and saw no comparable gain from Model C to offset this loss. Benefits of Model C can be achieved through Model B alongside the other advantages of that model.</p>	£24,000
Harborough DC	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Model A</p> <p>Recent changes should be given time to ‘bed in’. Recognise role of the sector in meeting the needs of a large rural area, and its importance in relation to place-shaping.</p>	£32,700
Hinckley & Bosworth BC	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Model B</p>	£34,200
Leicestershire County Council	<p><u>Preference in terms of the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Model C – would bring following benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate the engagement of the VCS in strategic planning and partnership working at a countywide level ▪ Enable the investment in infrastructure to be based on an assessment of need to take account of changing objectives and priorities rather than the current historical basis of incremental growth ▪ Provide opportunities to deliver efficiencies arising from the larger size of a single organisation 	£903,700

Name or Organisation	Comments Received	VCS Infrastructure Funding 05/6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve a more appropriate balance between local and county wide focus (as noted earlier the current configuration is imbalanced toward the local focus), whilst recognising that local presence will be important for the delivery of some VCS infrastructure functions ▪ offer opportunity to improve the quality and consistency of standards of service and performance at a local and county wide level ▪ increase the potential benefits that may accrue from the effective use of ICT ▪ strengthen the capacity of the VCS by enabling it to become more competitive in the labour market <p><u>Role VCS infrastructure organisations play in helping achievement of corporate and partnership objectives</u></p> <p>The County Council provides funding to VCS infrastructure organisations to deliver 3 broad objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) volunteering brokerage – recruitment, training, placement and support of volunteers b) development and support of local voluntary and community organisations c) enabling VCS organisations to engage in strategic planning and partnership working. <p><u>Role of organisation in funding the future provision of VCS infrastructure</u></p> <p>Given existing financial constraints facing local authorities and other public service agencies it is not considered that the models involving enhanced funding (of approximately an extra £1m) are feasible or realistic.</p>	
Leicestershire Learning & Skills Council	The Learning & Skills Council wishes to consider the viability of Options B and C further before finalising its view.	£217,500 (to CVS Community Partnership)
Leicestershire County & Rutland PCT	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u></p> <p>Model C</p> <p>On balance the PCT supports model C specifically because of the capacity and capability enhancement this would deliver as set out in paragraph 2.16 in that it would enable:</p>	£371,800

Name or Organisation	Comments Received	VCS Infrastructure Funding 05/6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support to local communities • developing capacity to win tenders and enhance voluntary sector supply and robustness • ability to influence the development of policy and practice. <p>This is not achieved in the other models. An effective matrix working would need to be developed to ensure a locality focus is maintained.</p> <p>The PCT remains committed to working within this sector.</p>	
Melton BC	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Model A in the short term with a move to Model B over the medium/ long term.</p> <p>Need to allow the initial change to bed in, but merit seen in option B in due course.</p>	£38,900
North West Leicestershire DC	<p><u>Preference in terms of the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Initially Model A progressing to Model B through a progressive transformational programme. As a result of the significant change agendas of other associated agencies i.e. PCT and the Police it is considered more effective to take a transitional approach over the next 9 months.</p> <p><u>Role VCS infrastructure organisations play in helping achievement of corporate and partnership objectives</u> There is a strong and successful relationship here with the CVS. The sector's involvement is fundamental to our partnership working within the LSP, through service delivery and also neighbourhood management.</p> <p><u>Role of organisation in funding the future provision of VCS infrastructure</u> The funding role depends significantly on the localised arrangements and the extent the sector becomes a delivery agent for this Council.</p>	£40,300

Name or Organisation	Comments Received	VCS Infrastructure Funding 05/6
Oadby & Wigston BC	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u></p> <p>Model A is supported - To retain the changed structures in place from April 2007. The reason for this is that Voluntary Action Oadby and Wigston have already made the necessary changes to its operation. It provides an invaluable resource to the community of O&W. It is our opinion that a further change would lead to a reduced service to local people, the main beneficiaries of VAOW services.</p> <p>Model B - 7 district wide VCS infrastructure organisations supported by Central Hub functions. We understand that the Hub would act as the specialist advice centre, we are not entirely clear what the role of the 7 'spokes' would be. The feeling of the group was that the 'spokes' would have a diminishing role, resulting in a lack of accessibility by the very people who need these services most.</p> <p>Model C - One county wide VCS infrastructure organisation. For the reasons given above, we do not favour this proposal. We are of the opinion that this is driven by the need to make efficiency gains, but is likely to be at the expense of users of the service. As the 3rd sector is of growing importance nationally, we do not feel that this proposal fulfils the Government's ambitions, or contributes to the growing importance of building sustainable communities.</p>	£2,500

Other public sector agencies

Name or Organisation	Comments Received	VCS Infrastructure Funding 05/6
Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure Model C</u></p>	
Big Lottery	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> No preference expressed</p> <p>Support moves to increase collaboration and improve the strategic performance of VCS infrastructure. The work on the future of VCS infrastructure will be very useful to Big when it comes to future decision-making on our grants. For this reason, we would like to be kept informed about what emerges from the consultation, and which model the county adopts, as we would like to support this as a guide to where to place our funding in future.</p>	
Job Centre Plus	<p><u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> No preference expressed</p> <p><u>Role VCS infrastructure organisations play in helping achievement of corporate and partnership objectives</u> We work in Partnership very closely with the Voluntary and Community Sector to support customers into employment. Voluntary and Community groups support us in our objectives in providing work for those who can and support for those who need this.</p> <p><u>Role of organisation in funding the future provision of VCS infrastructure</u> With regard to funding, national mainstream funding provides services for all eligible customers to access benefits, programmes and services. We have currently no discretionary funding to fund any other service.</p>	

Leicestershire Constabulary	Model C – Centrally managed, locally delivered.	
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Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

Name or Organisation	Comments Received	VCS Infrastructure Funding 05/6
Leicester Shire VCS Infrastructure Consortium	<u>Preference for the future organisation of VCS infrastructure</u> Model A. The Consortium has subsequently developed a proposal for a 'hub and spoke' arrangement, in line with Model B. The proposal is attached as Appendix B.	

Note: VCS Funding figures taken from Appendix I of the VCS Infrastructure Working Group's Assessment (March 2007). Some non-cash contributions are not accounted for in these figures.

Report to Leicestershire SSOG, May 9th 2007

Proposal to develop by 2010 the Leicester Shire VCS Hub and spokes model

Maximising district-owned and delivered
Support services for front line, very local,
Voluntary and community organisations

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This proposal follows on from consultations on the Voluntary and Community Sector, VCS, Infrastructure Review Working Party report, in which three theoretical options for improving and sustaining the support provided to front line voluntary and community organisations were appraised. Each has its merits, and could be worked up into sufficient detail to justify support.
- 1.2 In the subsequent consultations, funders were asked to indicate which option they wanted to see worked up into actual proposals, with full details. The results of the consultations are being reported to SSOG and are not known at the time of writing this report.
- 1.3 Many members of the Leicester Shire VCS Infrastructure Consortium felt that Model A, which reflected the desire to concentrate on local delivery, was their preferred option in the short term. However, they clearly recognised the essential need for developing and strengthening VCS infrastructure at sub-regional level.
- 1.4 It is believed that District Councils decided to support Model B, whereas Leicestershire County Council stated their preference for something similar to Model C. (Details about the models available on request.)

2 VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) Infrastructure Consortium

- 2.1 In this financial year the consortium is likely to receive, (subject to contract), £110,000 from Capacity Builders to develop the consortium. “Capacity Builders” is the new national funding for VCS Consortia, which follows on from the Home Office Change Up programme, which brought almost £900k into Leicester Shire, 2005-2007.
- 2.2 Voluntary Action Leicester has been commissioned from April to June 2007, to write a draft action plan to develop the Consortium in 2007-8. This will be submitted for formal assessment in June, and include a :-
- Business Plan 2008-2011
 - Strategic Development plan 2008-2014
 - East Midlands region-wide Consortia collaboration
- 2.3 Discussions in May and June will consider whether the VCS Consortium should seek to become a sub-regional hub incorporating, in some form, CVS Community Partnership, and to provide agreed joint or specialist services supporting local delivery.
- 2.4 The new proposal will balance local delivery with central co-ordination, and ensure the advantages desired by the County Council, expressed by the Cabinet on 3rd April 2007, are achieved.

3 Voluntary and Community Sector

The VCS is also progressing the hub and spokes idea in other ways:-

3.1 CVS Community Partnership (CCP)

The Board of CCP, whose membership includes service providing organisations as well as infrastructure organisations, has proposed that they play a key role in discussions about the development of a sub-regional hub. The Board will be reviewing the structure and finances of the organisation to see what is possible.

3.2 Countywide (specialist) Infrastructure Organisations

Four Countywide (specialist) Infrastructure Organisations, CCP, the Rural Community Council, Leicestershire Ethnic Minority Partnership and Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Youth Services, have already

met twice to discuss collaboration as countywide or sub-regional bodies. A third meeting will be convened to specifically discuss the contribution each can make in developing a sub-regional hub.

3.3 Leicestershire Voluntary Actions' (Centres) – formerly CVSs

The 7 Voluntary Action Centres will be holding a meeting in June attended by each Chief Officer with up to 2 of their trustees to discuss what each Voluntary Action could *put in to* a sub-regional hub and what they would expect to get out.

3.4 The result of these activities will be brought together at a meeting of the Infrastructure Consortium towards the end of June.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 There is a lot to celebrate about the VCS Infrastructure in Leicestershire. Compared to other parts of the UK, there is a lot of VCS Infrastructure, thanks in the main to officer support and funding from the County Council.

4.2 Consultations are likely to have resulted in useful responses, and much agreement about the functions that are needed from a central hub and local spokes.

4.3 The new challenge is to revisit the balance between central co-ordination and control with local responsiveness.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The SSOG notes that VCS is seeking to devise a proposal for a hub and spokes model, maximising the best possible support for VCOs at local level

5.2 Funders of VCS Infrastructure organisations engage in discussions with the VCS Infrastructure Consortium about the functions and form for the hub and spokes

Neil Lambert
May 2nd 2007