

LEICESTERSHIRE STRATEGIC SENIOR OFFICERS' GROUP
14TH FEBRUARY 2007

REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR
INFRASTRUCTURE

REPORT OF THE VCS INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

Purpose of Report

1. To report on progress in reviewing Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure in Leicester Shire and, in particular, to seek the views of SSOG members on an assessment of future infrastructure options produced by a joint VCS Infrastructure Working Group.

Background

2. Prompted by the Government's ChangeUp programme work has been undertaken to review VCS Infrastructure in Leicester Shire. The latest stage of the review has involved the carrying out of an 'Assessment of Models of Future Infrastructure Support Provision for frontline voluntary and community groups in Leicestershire'. The report of this assessment, produced by a VCS Infrastructure Working Group, is attached as Appendix 1.
3. Earlier stages of the review are summarised in paragraphs 1.2 to 1.5 of the attached report. They have been characterised by joint collaborative consideration of issues and future options by representatives of both the Voluntary and Community Sector and of funders (actual and potential) of VCS infrastructure.
4. The work has been jointly overseen by the Leicester Shire VCS Consortium and by the Leicester Shire Funders Panel (which existed until recently to consider ChangeUp funding bids developed by the Consortium). Following workshop events and a study carried out by Sheffield Hallam University, the Consortium and the Panel agreed to set up a joint working group to consider models of future infrastructure provision. The working group included representatives of Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs), Volunteer Centres, the Rural Community Council, Leicestershire Ethnic Minority Partnership, Leicestershire Community Foundation, the County and City Councils and a district council.
5. The Leicestershire Together Board and SSOG have previously received updates on the review.

The Assessment of Models of Infrastructure Provision

6. The report of the working group summarises an assessment of three broad models of infrastructure provision. Each model assumes the 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
7. Each model is assessed against a number of criteria including cost and ability to deliver key functions required of infrastructure organisations.
 8. The models were developed to assist understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of adopting three different approaches to future infrastructure provision. They are not the only options available and each could, and probably would, need to be adjusted if implemented in the future. The assessment is broad brush and sets out the perceived overall advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Paragraphs 1.9 to 1.12 of the attached working group report set out some further caveats about the assessment.

Next Steps & Recommendations

9. The purpose of the review of VCS infrastructure has been to inform the future development of infrastructure organisations in the light of new guidance, pressures, circumstances and opportunities. Increased emphasis on the strengthening of communities and on ‘third sector’ delivery of services are two key drivers. Further influences relate to financial pressure being experienced by local authorities and other actual and potential funders of VCS infrastructure.
10. In light of the attached assessment SSOG members (and their constituent organisations) are asked 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.
11. It is further recommended that the views of key partner organisations (some of whom are funders of VCS infrastructure) be sought as part of this exercise, including the Big Lottery, Arts Council East Midlands, the Sports Partnership, and the Community Foundation. It is also important that the views of all district councils be sought.
12. It is recommended that all partners submit their views (to Tom Purnell, Leicestershire County Council, tpurnell@leics.gov.uk) by Monday April 30th, to enable a report to be produced for the next SSOG meeting on May 9th.