

## CABINET

16 November 2021

# VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

### Report of the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Care

Strategic Aim:	Vibrant communities	
Key Decision: Yes	Forward Plan Reference: FP/200821	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Cllr A Walters, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Care	
Contact Officer(s):	John Morley, Strategic Director for Adult Services and Health	01572 758442 jmorley@rutland.gov.uk
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Ward Councillors	N/A	

### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the recommendation to award an interim 12 month contract for infrastructure support whilst undertaking mapping and development work with the Voluntary and Community Sector in Rutland;
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for Adult Services and Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care to approve of plans for delivery, and any resulting commissioning.

## 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the potential options for future support of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Rutland and makes recommendation for the future delivery of that support.

## 2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) encompasses a range of organisations

from small informal community groups through to local and national charities and social enterprises.

- 2.2 A strong VCS can enhance the lives of local people and their communities through localised support and services, which are meaningful to their communities and deliver against local issues and priorities.
- 2.3 The support of an effective local infrastructure organisation is key in building and sustaining the sector through advice, capacity-building, brokering alliances and partnerships between local groups, and providing a collective voice to local authorities and the wider public sector. A good infrastructure body will offer the right mixture of support, challenge, leadership, resource, skills and knowledge. It will also help to foster relationships between the local voluntary sector, public bodies and local business. They also promote social action and make sure local communities have a voice.

### **3 NATIONAL CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector has faced a challenging time over recent years: nationally there has been an overall reduction in funding, and an increase in the use of contracts rather than grants. Latterly the Covid pandemic has put the sector under further strain – although equally, there have been some significant developments on the role of the sector and its ability to deliver quickly and flexibly which have about as a result.
- 3.2 The increased pressures on organisations through less overall funding have reduced capacity for strategic planning, and having to spend more time on funding applications and recruiting volunteers. It has also meant less capacity to get involved in local decision-making and policy design.
- 3.3 The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) set out the role of local infrastructure organisations as follows:
  - i. identifying needs and facilitating improvement in service provision;
  - ii. assisting local organisations to function more effectively;
  - iii. facilitating effective communication, networking and collaboration amongst local groups;
  - iv. supporting local organisations to influence policies, plans and practices that have an impact on their organisations and beneficiaries.
- 3.4 The County Councils Network Councils & Communities in Partnership report 'How counties can support a post-pandemic recovery for the voluntary and community sector' (August 2021) highlights that the traditional dividing lines between the VCS and the public sector have blurred substantially over recent decades. Both sectors have become more closely intertwined than ever before as VCS providers deliver more and more public services.
- 3.5 It should be recognised that the VCS is a sector in its own right and that public sector authorities should not direct the sector, but rather use their experience and knowledge to guide and provide resources to facilitate development, as well as supporting the sector's understanding of the wider strategic priorities and aims to achieve common goals.

3.6 The implementation of the Integrated Care System for Health and Social Care where the VCS is expected to act as an equal partner is also significant. Although, it is important to recognise that the sector has a far wider role in the development of Rutland priorities, including leisure, the environment, and children and families. It should not be seen solely within the context of the ICS.

#### **4 LOCAL CONTEXT**

4.1 The number of voluntary and community sector organisations in the County is estimated to be in the region of 300, including 160 registered charities; estimates are, however, challenging because a large proportion of organisations are small, local and not formally constituted, and there is no central record in the County. The VCS Network which has been established now for 3 years and is led by Citizen's Advice has 81 members.

4.2 During Covid there has been an increase in community support networks at a more grass-roots level, and a number of local voluntary sector organisations stepped up their work (with some Council support). RCC officers helped co-ordinate and mobilise many of the Covid-related projects that emerged alongside VCS colleagues, capacity from the Council that was only available due to the significant reallocation of resources during Covid. The Council has now stepped back from this support as it returns to business as usual.

4.3 The current provision of VCS infrastructure support is commissioned as part of the Community Wellbeing Service (CWS). The contract requirements are:

- i. Provision of support to local voluntary and community organisations to ensure continued community based local provision.
- ii. Development and support of volunteering across the county, including specific cohorts of volunteers where needs are identified.
- iii. Development of community capacity, supporting local people to develop and run groups and networks which support themselves.
- iv. Support broader skills and capacity building for prevention, health and wellbeing, to enable independence and resilience in individuals, families and communities to live well and care for themselves.
- v. Work co-operatively and constructively with the Council to represent the wider VCS within Rutland and identify additional resources and funding that can be brought into the county to enhance Rutland's provision for vulnerable people.

4.4 The contract for the Community Wellbeing Service ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and consequently there is an opportunity to consider what support the sector needs in Rutland, and how such support might best be provided in the future.

#### **5 CCG POSITION**

5.1 The Clinical Commissioning Groups currently provide a contribution towards the VCS Infrastructure Contracts in both Leicester City and Leicestershire County. They do not do so for Rutland, and this is historical from when the CCGs operated separately. Discussions have now taken place with the CCG as to how this might be addressed in

the future.

- 5.2 The CCG have reviewed their current position relating to VCS support for this financial year as part of the wider work on the ICS, and will undertake an options appraisal for their future support. The intention is for this to be completed by April 2022.
- 5.3 Given the varying positions of the three local authorities (Leicestershire's and Leicester's positions are set out in Section 6 below), the CCG are considering how best to ensure future provision which both enables a system-wide approach but which takes into account each local authorities' particular needs, and the development of the wider ICS.
- 5.4 The CCG budget for any health infrastructure provision for 2022/23 is not yet confirmed. It is anticipated that the funding will remain at the same level as this financial year, but used across the three local authorities.
- 5.5 Plans for the CCG's model from 2022/23 have not yet been developed, and therefore are not set out in this paper. Should there any further information from the CCG on future plans prior to the Cabinet meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November, a verbal update will be provided in the meeting.
- 5.6 The CCG have recently been awarded funding from NHS England for the development of a VCSE Alliance, a strategic leadership group aligned to the ICS. The VCSE Alliance will lead work to embed the VCSE sector into the ICS. It is anticipated that all three places across LLR will contribute to this programme which will also support VCS development at place and neighbourhood levels across LLR.
- 5.7 A system strategy/framework for improved working with the VCS is currently being considered. Any such strategy will be developed in consultation with system partners including the local authorities and the wider VCS across LLR. The Strategy should provide clarity on how health see the role of the VCS within both the ICS and the Place-Based Plans, accepting that this will continue to develop as the ICS embeds.

## **6 WIDER LEICESTERSHIRE AND LEICESTER CITY PLANS**

- 6.1 Leicestershire County's contract ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. They are undertaking a formal procurement exercise in mid-November for a new contract to start 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. The current contract includes the CCG contribution for health specific infrastructure support.
- 6.2 Leicester City's plans are less clear currently. They have given notice on their current contract with Voluntary Action Leicester-Shire, which ended on 30<sup>th</sup> September. It is understood that a strategy is being developed, although timescales for this are currently unknown. The CCG have commissioned Voluntary Action Leicester-Shire directly for the remainder of this financial year to deliver health specific infrastructure support in the City.

## **7 OPTIONS**

- 7.1 The sector in Rutland has the potential to become more stable and sustainable, delivering more local support services, and potentially bring additional funding into the county (which the Council cannot access). Informal mutual support networks also have the potential to develop and grow. Without infrastructure support in place, progress and momentum gained during the pandemic would most likely be lost.

7.2 Where the sector is able to thrive, it brings benefits across the County, and can support the Council's wider strategic priorities. Voluntary and community groups add value to individuals and communities and bring enhancements to place and the economy.

7.3 Rutland needs its VCS sector, the Council and other agencies to work collaboratively so that services are responsive and effective. To do this, the sector will require:

- i. Central facilitation to enable an empowered, self-sustaining and innovative voluntary sector.
- ii. Strong collaboration between all partners: the VCS, statutory, and private sector, as well as our communities themselves.
- iii. Capacity to provide a responsive infrastructure which supports the local offer available for communities.
- iv. Engagement with statutory partners' strategic direction and priorities, being sat around the table as an equal partner with a clear voice.
- v. Support to increase their affluence in order to reduce dependency on the public purse, and where local authority & Health funds might be utilised to greater effect on statutory services.
- vi. Ability to maximise community impact by:
  - identifying priority areas where collaborative working could support shared aims.
  - identifying actions together that help these aims to be realised.
  - continuing to facilitate and support informal community-based support where individuals that know their community help those around them; such a network would support effective social prescribing.
  - raising the profile and embedding the values and benefits of the sector.

7.4 It is suggested that Rutland's unique demography needs a solution that meets its specific needs, recognising the importance of support for Rutland coming from within Rutland.

## **7.5 Do nothing**

7.5.1.1 Allow the current contract for infrastructure support, as subsumed under the Community Wellbeing Service contract to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. This would leave Rutland without a specific infrastructure support service, other than anything commissioned by health.

7.5.1.2 There are two clear risks with this option.

7.5.1.3 The sector will not support itself and the work to facilitate collaboration and development of the sector will be lost. Prior experience tells us that without clear leadership and support, the sector operates as individual organisations without clear direction, and our ability to engage with the sector in a meaningful way is lost.

7.5.1.4 The Council's relationship with the CCG may be damaged, as the sector becomes reliant on the contract procured and funded by the CCG, and Health view the Council as renegeing on its responsibilities to support the sector as a partner within the ICS.

7.5.2 This option is not recommended.

## **7.6 Procure a contract for VCS Infrastructure Support**

7.6.1 A procurement could be run jointly with Leicestershire County Council's and the CCG. This will enable most efficient use of resources for both local authorities and the CCG. It will also lead to a synergy in the services commissioned – particularly important as the Integrated Care System (ICS) is developed and reflecting the wider work which is undertaken on a sub-regional footprint. It will allow organisations who might otherwise only bid for one or other of the contracts to potentially bid for both (due to overlap in the proposals) and reduce the risk of organisations only bidding for the larger more financially attractive Leicestershire contract.

7.6.2 Whilst Leicestershire County Council will lead the procurement exercise, Rutland would have its own specification and contract. This will ensure Rutland's needs are met by the new service whilst facilitating synergy with the wider infrastructure support across LLR and help future alignment with the development of the Integrated Care System.

7.6.3 The risk with this approach is that the service would need to be sufficiently flexible to both deliver the clear outcomes needed to continue the development of the sector which has been undertaken thusfar, but also take into account developments from both the CCG VCS strategy when written and the requirement of the ICS as these are clarified nationally.

7.6.4 At this stage, Leicestershire may determine that Rutland's request to join would now delay their procurement timetable to the extent that the procurement becomes unviable.

## **7.7 Establish an interim contract and undertake mapping and development work with the VCS**

7.7.1 Rutland does not currently have a strategy for the VCS, and consequently some of the engagement with the sector is ad hoc and not coordinated. The value of the sector is not always realised.

7.7.2 The sector has developed considerably during Covid and consequently more organisations, including community groups, are visible than before. Rutland would benefit from building on the progress accelerated during Covid, through: mapping the extent of the sector in Rutland; better understanding the sector's needs and opportunities; and the continued development of volunteers.

7.7.3 A 'holding position' for 2022/23 is recommended: that is continued infrastructure support via the current provider, Citizen's Advice, so as not to lose the existing momentum, whilst undertaking a wider mapping and consultation with the sector on where it feels it could add most value and on the future type and level of support needed. From this, a clear VCS strategy could be developed.

7.7.4 It is recommended that such mapping and development work would be undertaken

jointly between the Council and an identified organisation within the sector. It is important for sector engagement that the Council is not seen to be directing the sector for its own aims – it must remain independent – but the knowledge and experience of this type of work which the Council can bring would add value.

7.7.5 The further Future Rutland work planned would feed into the consultation and strategy development. This would also allow time for the CCG Strategy to be developed and for the ICS to be implemented, and the implications of both to be understood.

7.7.6 Such an approach would cost more for the initial 12 months, but should give a clearer direction for the future. It would enable clear, appropriate VCS infrastructure support to be commissioned for 2023/24.

7.7.7 This is the recommended option.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

8.1 Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee convened a working group who have commented on the proposals.

8.1.1 Although there was some disagreement as to whether Rutland had an existing vibrant voluntary sector, the Working Group expressed strong views that it would not be sensible to commission an infrastructure service at this time.

8.1.2 They recommended that mapping be undertaken to understand the range and spread of the sector currently, and consulting with the sector as to whether they would welcome infrastructure support.

8.1.3 There were conflicting views as to whether this would be better undertaken by the Council, or whether it should be a VCS organisation which led this.

8.1.4 The Working Group also noted that there was currently no VCS Strategy in Rutland and this hindered future development.

8.2 The Portfolio Holder has been consulted.

8.3 The work to develop options took into account the responses to the Future Rutland Conversation. The feedback from residents show that there are areas of strength in the VCS, but also significant challenge in different areas of the community, noting both the proliferation of community activity, clubs and groups offering a wide range of activities, and also the concern about the decreasing pool of volunteers, especially as the population is ageing.

## **9 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

9.1 The alternative options are set out in Section 6 above.

## **10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The sum of up to £40,000 per annum is proposed for the interim infrastructure service which it is believed would be sufficient for viable delivery. This level of funding is within the General Fund allocation for the current Community Wellbeing Service which ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

10.2 The CCG contribution when confirmed will allow a view to be taken as to whether this is in addition to the proposed figure, or whether this is used to off-set the Council's contribution. This would be somewhat dependent on the level of CCG contribution.

10.3 The additional funding to undertake the mapping work would identified from funding available to address Health Inequalities under the Place-based Plan (currently in development), and from the Public Health Grant.

## **11 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

11.1 Any infrastructure provision would be commissioned in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and with the Public Procurement Regulations as appropriate.

## **12 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has been completed. No adverse or other significant risks/issues were found. There is no direct collection or storage of personal data as part of the work proposed.

12.2 A copy of the DPIA can be obtained from Karen Kibblewhite, Head of Commissioning.

## **13 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed. No adverse or other significant issues were found. A copy of the EqIA can be obtained from Karen Kibblewhite, Head of Commissioning.

## **14 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are no specific community safety implications arising from the proposed work.

## **15 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 Support to create and sustain a vibrant VCS in Rutland will enable residents to access services and activities which improve their overall health and wellbeing. The contribution of funding from the CCG will specifically enable the VCS to address this.

## **16 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

16.1 Rutland's VCS provides opportunity to provide support and services to communities across the county. Infrastructure support will assist the sector to develop and remain sustainable in the future, and in particular to support the increased grass-roots community groups which developed during Covid.

16.2 Rutland currently doesn't have a VCS Strategy nor a complete picture of the sector locally and therefore of the types of support the sector might want or need.

16.3 Using the next year to map and understand Rutland's VCS will enable a clear strategy to be developed in the future and ensure resources are directed to have most benefit. The timescale will also allow the bedding in of the new ICS and understanding of how the VCS plays its part within that. There is a need, in the meantime, to retain existing support to the sector.

16.4 It is therefore recommended that an interim contract is awarded to the current VCS infrastructure provider for 12 months, and alongside further work to understand the

local VCS is undertaken. This position will also provide time for the CCG plans and implications for Rutland to become clear.

## **17 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

17.1 There are no additional background papers to the report.

## **18 APPENDICES**

18.1 There are no appendices.

**A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.**