

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on Wednesday 22 April 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Adult Social Care and Health - Matt Pope
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services - Charles Margetts

**PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)**

Following extensive consultation and engagement with Wokingham residents, we are seeking approval for the Council to adopt the Adults Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy (VCSS). The Council currently has no strategy in place.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive approves Wokingham Borough Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The (draft) Corporate Plan sets out the Council's promises to residents, business and partners across a number of priority themes. Those that impact on the sector are:

- Promote a strong and vibrant voluntary sector that enable children, young people and vulnerable adults to be supported as early as possible
- To prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal care and support
- Create resilient communities by empowering all of our people through education, art, culture, leisure and wellbeing opportunities.

The VCSS establishes the Council's strategic vision for the VCS that will help promote health and well-being and enable people with care needs to live independently and reduce the need for long term care. It sets out how we want to deliver services, and the role of the VCS to improve the quality of life of the borough's communities. It is the beginnings of a corporate approach to redefining how we will work alongside the VCS to deliver effective early intervention services that reduce the need for long term care and enable people to live more independent fulfilling lives.

The Voluntary Sector sits alongside statutory support provided by the Council, and often reduces the need for the latter. This strategy articulates the Council's priorities and sets clear expectations as to how the Council will work with the VCS and the outcomes the Council wishes to achieve through its funding to VCS organisations.

The Council currently spends over £49.6 million per annum on support and care for people, which is 37% of the council's budget. £1.25 million is spent on the VCS. This is to 22 voluntary sector organisations through 27 separate contracts.

Investing in services which offer effective early intervention makes sound economic sense as well as enabling people to live more fulfilling lives. This strategy looks at ways to do this as well as how the Council can strengthen and redefine our relationship with the VCS and support communities in a way that is flexible, responsive and meets local needs whilst demonstrating value for money. The strategy articulates the Council's desire to explore the development of community hubs that will facilitate better working arrangements between partner organisations.

Our vision is to have an independent, sustainable and diverse voluntary and community sector, working with the community, Council, and partners to meet the needs of local people

The strategy is for a period of five years, 2020 – 2025. Once agreed by Executive we will work with our partners to deliver the priorities set out. Our priorities and the outcomes we hope to achieve from the delivery of the VCSS are:

**Prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal care and support**

- Providing information and advice as a universal service to everyone, taking into account their specific needs.
- Providing the right support at the right time in a place where people need it
- Enabling residents to maintain independence for longer to minimise their need for ongoing support
- Applying a Council wide approach to addressing loneliness and isolation and we look at the role of wider partners
- Addressing the emotional well being of residents
- Ensuring community assets and transport services are local, accessible, flexible, responsive and appropriate to the needs of the community.

**Work in partnership and build the capacity of the Voluntary Sector**

- Having a set of principles to govern the relationship between WBC and the VCS
- Applying a collaborative approach that will enable the Council to develop and build on the existing strengths and resources of the community and the VCS
- Sharing Council resources with the VCS to assess trends and anticipate future demand
- Monitoring service provision, and where there are any gaps, work with the VCS to deliver and develop such provision, including investment in the VCS
- Building the capacity and connectivity of the sector, for it to be responsive and effective to meet the diverse needs of the borough
- Engaging hard-to-reach communities so that they have an equal opportunity to influence decisions and help shape and design services
- Business planning to aid income generation, including help in accessing external funding and build the expertise of the sector to monitor and evaluate their impact
- Reviewing assets (buildings) to support the VCS including scoping the use of community hubs

**Commission services in line with our strategic priorities that deliver quality and value for money**

- Ensuring future opportunities are clearly linked to identified community need, aligned to Council priorities and services
- Developing a new bidding framework for future allocation of funding to achieve ASC outcomes
- Providing clarity on how provision is contributing to outcomes
- Working with the sector to support the transition to commissioned services rather than grants
- Working closely with and recognise the experience and expertise of the VCS
- Improve governance and scrutiny of funding by developing arrangements for grant decision making and scrutiny that are open and transparent
- Provide multiyear funding to assist business planning for VCS
- Supporting innovation, allowing flexibility and enabling risks to be taken

## **BACKGROUND**

The Care Act 2014 sets out the statutory framework for providing support to people with disabilities and long term illnesses who need care to manage their basic daily living needs.

Under the Act the Council is obliged to ensure that people with disabilities who need support:

- Receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs
- Get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support
- Have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from
- Are provided with coordinated services across the NHS and social care

The Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy (VCSS) will support the Council in discharging its statutory duties under the Care Act. The strategy sets out the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) as an essential partner in shaping and delivering services and building stronger, resilient communities. In particular there is a distinct role where they can help to deliver preventative and wellbeing services to achieve partnership priorities and play an active role in responding to the challenges faced by statutory organisations.

Data from The Charities Commission suggests that there are 765 registered charities operating in Wokingham Borough. This is only a partial picture considering registered charities -many VCS organisations are not registered charities. The VCS is made up of a diverse range of socially driven, not-for profit, voluntary and community groups that have a unique role in supporting the borough at a neighbourhood or community level. The diversity of the borough includes small grassroots organisations to well established larger ones that provides a wealth of services. It includes faith groups, as well as those involved in the arts, leisure, sports, the environment and other activities.

The Council currently spends over £49.6 million per annum on support and care for people, which is 37% of the council's budget. £1.25 million is spent on the VCS. This is to 22 voluntary sector organisations through 27 separate contracts.

Funded activities include information and advice services (such as general adult social care advice, advocacy, outreach) Practical Support (handyperson services, home from hospital, carer sitting services and housing related support) Social and emotional support (dementia café, drop in and befriending services to reduce isolation and loneliness) and infrastructure support (to build capacity support in the sector and develop volunteers).

In 2018/19 approximately 2,025 new clients made 4,345 requests to WBC. 69% (2970) of these led to signposting to universal services or no service provided and 11% (460) led to long term care. It is imperative therefore that we work with the VCS to ensure that when people make a request for services they get the information, advice and support they need.

The VCSS will be critical in helping support the Council's Adult Social Care Strategy and plan for this demand by managing the costs over the next 5 years, particularly in terms of preventing, reducing and delaying the need for formal care and support. It will drive the development of commissioning and spending plans that ensure:

- Value for money
- Spending is managed within the Council's resource limits
- Effective and efficient markets are developed and managed for support and care
- Improved and better outcomes are delivered for people needing support and their carers

## **BUSINESS CASE**

The demand for services is increasing as is the demographic profile of Wokingham and the challenges presented by budgetary pressures. Within this context the Council must understand and plan for the changing demand for services. Where appropriate the Council will prevent, reduce and delay the need for people to access formal care and support.

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The VCSS will allow the Council to strengthen its relationship with the VCS and support communities in a way that is flexible, responsive and meets local needs whilst delivering high quality and demonstrating value for money. As budgetary pressures increase, the need to target investment in key priority areas is essential. Through the delivery of the VCSS we will find new, innovative and efficient ways to make best use of the resources we and our partner have available.

This approach and the principles outlined in the strategy will be applied corporately across all directorates. It is hoped that during the lifetime of the strategy there will also be a coordinated corporate approach to commissioning with the VCS and working together to ensure a continuing thriving VCS, with a broad community offer improved community cohesion and the foundations of wellbeing and resilient, empowered, supportive communities.

We will work with the community, Council, and partners to deliver better outcomes for all residents in Wokingham Borough.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures including an increase in demand for our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

These challenges require a shift in the way that the Council delivers Adult Social Care and an opportunity for the Council to refocus its resources.

Achieving our priorities will require a process of continuous improvement and innovation.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£1.25 million	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£1.25 million	Yes	Revenue and Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£1.25 million	Yes	Revenue and Capital

<b>Other Financial Information</b>
The capital and revenue bids required to support changes identified in the strategy will be factored into the council's medium term financial planning process which will be reviewed annually. The costs associated with the strategy for 2019-20 will be accommodated within existing budgets.
Where growth or investment is required to meet demand, this will be dealt with via the MTFP process and/or separate business cases taken to Executive.

<b>Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation</b>
As stated above

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
An equality impact assessment is attached to the report

<b>Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</b>
During the life time of the strategy some services will be recommissioned due to procurement regulations and to ensure they are in line with our strategic priorities, offer high quality to residents and provide value for money. As such a time we will ensure that any environmental considerations are taken into account.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Contact</b> Iftkhar Ahmed	<b>Service</b> Adult Social Care
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b> iftkhar.ahmed@wokingham.gov.uk