

10th March 2016

Wokingham Voluntary and Community Sector briefing paper

1. Context

Wokingham Borough Council benefits from a strong voluntary and community sector with over 1000 organisations supporting a range of community activities with over 800 registered charities. Almost 200 of these organisations receive £13M of Wokingham Borough Council funding through a range of arrangements, both grants and contracts. There are also 20 organisations which Wokingham Borough Council nominate members to support through board membership.

The Council Executive is recognising the importance of the voluntary and community sector by

- Designating a lead member for the voluntary and community sector to ensure improved visibility of the voluntary and community sector. The lead member has already initiated a round of informal engagement with individual organisations to understand the sector better;
- Establishing a single register of Wokingham Borough Council funded voluntary and community organisations;
- Establishing a more coordinated resource decision approach with a pause on proposed voluntary sector grants reductions for 2016.

2. Our approach - Building a team of the Voluntary and Community sector

We are committed to a council wide approach to securing the value that the voluntary and community sector brings to the residents of Wokingham.

To achieve this *we want to build a team of the voluntary and community sector* with Wokingham Borough Council as equal partners.

Our principles in developing this approach are:

- **Increasing the money donated to Wokingham charities** by residents. We know that the majority of donations of Wokingham residents are made to charities outside the Borough to national charities. We have had some success in building collaborative fundraising models – for example Wokingham for Children;
- **Making Wokingham taxpayers money go further**; ensuring that we are achieving value for money when using our resources to fund the sector. Where appropriate using consortia models and partnerships, encouraging mergers and collective approaches, consistently considering the local voluntary and community sector as a commissioned provider of first choice;
- **Using our assets to promote community and voluntary sector delivery**; buildings and people (including volunteers) are community assets which should be used wisely and where we believe this will make greatest impact

- **Working as a team to increase community resilience and neighbourhood responsibility;** in austere times as the Council and other statutory partners do less we want to ensure the local voluntary and community sector are well placed to help build communities. We have local examples already such as the Community Navigators.

3. Next steps

We have established four key next steps

We will establish clear priorities for investment; building on the informal consultation led by the lead member over the past year, we are undertaking a six month consultation on the priorities for investment in the voluntary and community sector. It will be crucial to take this opportunity to understand better the priorities and offer of the voluntary and community sector (a range of different organisations) to ensure we are aligning our shared interests and objectives.

We will agree a Wokingham policy on grants or contracts we will consult with the sector on the best way to resource the voluntary and community sector; we are proposing a 12 month consultation on grants v contracts.

We will undertake a two year programme of reviews of current investments. We have completed a significant first segment of this with a review of voluntary and community sector contracts for adult social care services. We will take lessons from this approach and apply it to a two year programme of reviewing other grants and contracts in a published timetable. The approach we will take is appended to this paper.

Reviewing our assets and ensuring they are used to maximum community benefit. We will review over the next year all current arrangements for use of assets (both people and buildings) to maximise value for money and impact.