



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (ELMBRIDGE)

VOLUNTARY ACTION ELMBRIDGE (VAE)

03 MARCH 2008

KEY ISSUE

The value of infrastructure support for Elmbridge.

SUMMARY

Encouraging understanding of the work of Voluntary Action Elmbridge (VAE), so as to ensure the continuation of funding for VAE, an organisation which provides essential support for the well-being and future success of all Voluntary, Community and Faith organisations in Elmbridge as well as providing a strong, independent voice for the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector (VCFS) to Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC), Surrey County Council (SCC), Surrey Primary Care Trust (SPCT), and other regional and national agencies.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Elmbridge) is asked to agree that:

- (i) It values the work of the Council Voluntary Service (CVS), Voluntary Action Elmbridge, with its integrated Volunteer Centre, and that future support to develop the organisation should be encouraged.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 VAE is a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) with an integrated Volunteer Centre (VC), a model seen throughout the South East. Created in October 2005 on the appointment of Carole Ann Roycroft, Manager VAE, the Volunteer Centre has actually been in existence much longer and last September celebrated its 20th Anniversary. As part of the CVS Network in Surrey (there are 10 other CVSs) VAE is very active in maintaining the profile of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors (VCFS) in Elmbridge and in Surrey, as well as regionally. VAE also has a representational role at National Level with the 'Enhancing Volunteering in Health and Social Care' Project in conjunction with Volunteering England and the Department of Health. VAE is funded by a Tri-partite agreement with 88% of funding coming equally from Elmbridge Borough Council and Surrey County Council, and 12% from Surrey Primary Care Trust.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 Like many other Infrastructure organisations, it is sometimes difficult for VAE to show funding partners and other interested bodies, the value of the work that VAE does for Elmbridge and the VCFS. This report aims to help members and officers understand the work of VAE, its effectiveness and what value VAE brings to Elmbridge and its environment.
- It is only with an understanding of the value of the work that VAE provides for Elmbridge that it's future funding can be endorsed and in this challenging funding environment for all our statutory partners, VAE needs the support of the members of this Committee.

3 WORK OF THE CVS

- 3.1 There are 5 core functions of a CVS as laid down by the National Association of Voluntary and Community Action, NAVCA. This is the main umbrella body for CVSs and VAE holds full membership with them as well as with Volunteering England and also a quality standard called PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations, level 1). These functions are;

- DEVELOPMENT
- SUPPORT
- LIAISON
- REPRESENTATION
- STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WORK

4 DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 This is a very important aspect of the work of VAE and it is the area in which many organisations need ongoing and specific support. For example, discussions were held recently with a local group which goes

into schools providing musical training free to young people. They needed to find new funding as well as decide on a future structure for their work. VAE regularly provides access to generic policies and procedures, advising organisations about which they need and which are the best for them. There has also been increasing work with organisations looking to improve the management of their governance structures and obtain a quality standard to show funders that they have robust structures in place. VAE sponsored and ran a Surrey wide Quality Standards Awareness day in 2007, as part of the ChangeUp* initiative from Central Government.

5 SUPPORT

- 5.1 This refers to physical, practical and verbal matters. VAE provides a quarterly newsletter which informs its members about any matter that they need to know, for example, training opportunities, tips on Volunteer management as well as information about changes to volunteering law, changes to legislation that would affect them, and Best Practice. There is access to a low cost meeting room, recently refurbished by VAE, use of a power point projector and laptop, as well as a digital photocopier and IT support. VAE will also soon be able to offer information about Human Resources issues, again another initiative from ChangeUp* and one in which VAE was actively involved in setting up.

6 LIAISON

- 6.1 Most VCFS focus on their own needs and those of the agencies that affect them. VAE has the role of providing an overview of support and action which no other organisation has either the capacity or inclination to do. So, for example, VAE has been able to attend all the different Forums that meet in Elmbridge such as the Carers Forum, Children with Disabilities Forum, Older Peoples or Mental Health Forums and from this work raise their profile with Elmbridge Borough Council and the Elmbridge Community Partnership. VAE is actively involved with the Equalities and Diversity Forum of Elmbridge Borough Council and helped to draw up the vision and aims and objectives. VAE holds community events which enable organisations to meet with each other, access talks or training opportunities locally. Recently, VAE held a meeting for the car and care groups in Elmbridge and also held a Community lunch to publicise the COMPACT. Annually, VAE also helps Elmbridge Borough Council to hold a joint event for the VCFS. VAE has been able to help ENVISAGE, the town plan project for Cobham, Oxshott, Stoke D'Abernon and Cobham Downside with Payroll, recruitment and practical support.

7 REPRESENTATION

7.1 As a member of the CVS/VC network, VAE participates in representation with all the statutory bodies and is able to keep the VCFS informed of any matters that may affect them as well making sure that there is a two way dialogue. This work is very important and VAE is involved in many different meetings. Listed below is a small snapshot of this work;

1. Elmbridge Community Partnership – Vice Chair
2. One Elmbridge Partnership – Joint Chair
3. Information Provision Stakeholders Project – SCC
4. Community Learning Partnership and Surrey Lifelong Learning
5. ChangeUp* Implementation groups - 4 of these, chair of one

VAE participates in national and local campaigns; surveys to and for Surrey and Elmbridge residents as well as to the VCFS to help inform direction of work; comments on local documents which would have an impact on the VCFS.

8 STRATEGIC WORK

8.1 This is probably the most challenging work for VAE. It involves direct communication with statutory partners and ensuring that the VCFS in Elmbridge is kept up to date and involved in these important matters. Examples of this work are; ChangeUp*, Commenting on the draft SCC strategy for the VCFS in Surrey, responding to the documents for engagement from the Surrey Primary Care Trust and being a COMPACT Champion.

As part of the Implementation of ChangeUp*, VAE is a member of a group which is working to build closer links with both BME and Gypsy and Traveller communities in Surrey, and VAE will help bring this focus to Elmbridge. VAE has been active in responding to the consultation documents and events on the Surrey Strategic Partnership and through its work on the Elmbridge Community Partnership and the One Elmbridge Partnership, will hope to help provide the support and engagement from the VCFS in Elmbridge to enable SCC to meet its targets. VAE has also been a member of the State of the sector Panel for Central Government.

9 VOLUNTEER CENTRE

9.1 The Volunteer Centre is also about a lot more than just recruiting volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator (VCo) and her 5 duty officers, who are all volunteers themselves, interview many of the potential volunteers to ensure that they have the right placement and often assist them in contacting the organisation. They help organisations explain what they need and make sure that the opportunities are placed on the

Do-It website, a National website which directs potential volunteers to their appropriate area.

The VCo also promotes volunteering around the Borough and with the rest of the Surrey VC network has been very active in the LPSA on Volunteering, one of the few such agreements in Surrey which will meet its targets. The VC also helps organisations ensure that they manage volunteers sympathetically and legally so that volunteers are not lost due to poor support.

As part of the VC network the VCo works with the Surrey Criminal Justice Board actively promoting volunteering in Criminal Justice placements. Recently, the VCo participated in the campaign against the DWP not allowing volunteers to claim their lunch without losing benefit entitlement. You may recall that this national campaign successfully overturned the ruling. VAE has also set up a new project with the appointment of a Support worker to help volunteers with Learning Disabilities into secure placements.

- 9.2 VAE staff, volunteers and Trustees also work hard to ensure that VAE as an organisation has robust, legal and appropriate policies, procedures and working practices so that it can be held up as an exemplary organisation which can use its experience to help others in the VCFS in Elmbridge and Surrey.

10 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 VAE is an independent voice, working uniquely in Elmbridge, allowing any size of organisation to voice their concerns directly or through VAE and working independently to help them meet the challenges which face any Voluntary, Community or Faith organisation in Elmbridge or Surrey. In a challenging funding climate, VAE asks that this Committee would endorse its work as both a CVS and VC, recommend continuation and stability in its core funding, and where possible, an acknowledgement that the work it carries out is unique in nature and deserves recognition.

11 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 VAE is unique in Elmbridge, with increasing capacity to provide this essential service and support and should receive the endorsement of this Committee. Additionally, any opportunity to further enable the work of VAE should be encouraged.

** The Government's ChangeUp programme, now frequently referred to as Capacity Builders, funded the development of a Surrey Infrastructure Development Plan, which aims to improve the support provided to frontline voluntary, community and faith organisations over the next 10 years.*

LEAD OFFICER: Carole Ann Roycroft (Manager)
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01372 463587

www.surreycc.gov.uk/Elmbridge

E-MAIL: caroleann@vae.org.uk

CONTACT OFFICER:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

E-MAIL:

BACKGROUND PAPERS: