



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (WOKING)

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL FUNDING OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR GROUPS IN WOKING

20 OCTOBER 2010

SUMMARY

Each year the Safer and Stronger Select Committee receives a report on the county council's funding and relationship with the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS). Select Committee Members suggested that Local Committees might find it helpful to receive similar information. The information presented in this report is mainly Surrey County Council's contribution to the VCFS in Woking, showing the grants and contracts by group. There is scope for presenting a fuller picture incorporating partner contributions of the borough council and NHS Surrey, should Members find this helpful.

The Woking Local Committee is asked to advise what information it would find useful and if future reports would be welcomed.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The VCFS are key to effective delivery of the government's Big Society Agenda. In Surrey we have a vibrant and active voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS), with over 6,000 groups and organisations offering a diverse mix of skills, strengths and local knowledge. The VCFS is not homogenous; groups vary in size and role, and some operate solely with volunteers whilst others also have paid officers. The county council spent over £21.5 million on services delivered by the VCFS during 2009/10. Over all for 2009/10 Surrey County Council did not make reductions to the voluntary sector funding in cash terms, though some grants did become contracts.
- 1.2 The County Council's relationship with the sector is important and valued and there has been a drive from senior managers, elected members and from the voluntary sector themselves for the County Council to become more consistent and coherent in to commissioning services from and working with the VCFS.
- 1.3 Surrey County Council will need to make savings in excess of £180m of both revenue and capital funding over the medium term financial strategy. (This figure is growing). The County Council is trying its utmost to protect the VCFS however, the extent of the necessary savings means having to find innovative ways of delivering desired outcomes, and this will mean making difficult decisions in all service areas.

2 FUNDING TO WOKING VOLUNTARY SECTOR GROUPS

- 2.1 Surrey County Council and its partners are committed to building a strong and fair society by reforming public services and encouraging personal, local and community responsibility as part of the Big Society agenda. Working with the VCFS is key to this approach, as it is well documented that the sector delivers value for money, reduced cost services that are of a high quality. The County Council is also working with other partners to enhance delivery at a local level to better meet local needs. For example to build capacity and ensure frontline voluntary, community and groups are well supported, Surrey County Council, Woking Borough Council and NHS Surrey jointly fund Woking Association for Voluntary Service (WAVS).
- 2.2 In Woking the County Council spent £ 2,110,954 with the VCFS in 2009-2010. Woking residents benefited from three types of funding:

Funding for services delivered only in Woking (shown in Appendix A)

Contracts	£425,293	grants	£385,665	total	£810,958
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Funding which covers services delivered in Woking and one or more boroughs (also shown in the second table of Appendix A)

Contracts	£308,954	grants	£82,202	total	£391,156
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Notional countywide funding for services which also benefit the whole county. Woking's share (one- eleventh) of countywide services and funding (shown in Appendix B)

Contracts	£610,206,	grants	£298,634,	total	£908,840
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2.3 The Community Buildings Grants Scheme

This scheme has been providing funding to renovate community, village and church halls. For 2010/11 Woking Borough and County Council Members approved grants of £47,738 capital grants to improve community buildings. Old Woking & District Community Association was allocated £22,800 joint funding for a £34,200 project, and Sutton Green Village Hall was allocated £24,938 for a £34,407 project.

Although the scheme will not be funded from April 2011, Surrey County Council has agreed to continue its share of funding for the Halls Advisor post to maintain some level of support to community centres and village halls. Woking currently contributes £2,000 pa to the post and continuation of this contribution from April 2011 is to be decided by Woking Borough Council.

2.4 In kind support to the VCFS

This is provided in a number of ways, predominantly through premises. County Council policy is to charge a market rent because of the obligation under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to achieve the best consideration reasonably possible in respect of all transactions. However, the VCFS organisation can then apply separately for a grant or other financial support to cover the rent or their other outgoings. The table below gives an overview of the extent and type of letting arrangements with VCFS organisations in Woking. The table below shows the position at end of August 2010.

Leases/Licences – Community and Charitable Occupiers - Woking

Property	Unit	Tenant	Rent	Use
Horsa Hut at West Byfleet Junior School, Camphill Road, West Byfleet.	Horsa Hut	Girl Guide Association Trust Corporation	£750	Girl Guides
Playground at Maybury Infant School, Walton Road, Woking.	Playground	Trustees of the Maybury Centre (Mr T Cook)	£4,000	Car Park
Playing Field, Bishop David Brown School, Albert Drive, Sheerwater.	Part Playing Field	Kiddiwinks Child Care Ltd	£16,500	Private Day Nursery

2.5 In addition to grants and in-kind support, elected Members often use their personal allocations to support voluntary organisations.

3 COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK FOR WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

3.1 Surrey County Council has not always been consistent in its approach and working relationships with the VCFS. Whilst all services follow some methodology and system when engaging with and funding the VCFS, the style, quality and format varies and is often dependent on service specific processes. There has therefore been a drive from elected members and senior managers for the council to improve its approach to commissioning services from the VCFS and its partnership working with the sector.

3.2 A framework has been developed for working with the voluntary sector, in conjunction with key partners. The framework builds on the Joint Interim VCFS Strategy agreed with NHS Surrey in 2008 and sets out a more consistent and coherent approach with service users, carers and the voluntary sector, as well as allowing for service and local flexibility to achieve high quality outcomes and value for money. This commissioning framework's principles are linked to the Surrey Compact and are set out around the four phases of the commissioning cycle - analyse, plan, do and review. The framework's main themes are:

- Being more consistent to improve partnership working
- Addressing identified needs
- Securing improved outcomes
- Being more service user focused
- Ensuring quality services and value for money
- Ensuring transparency and fairness
- Promoting innovation and sustainability

3.3 There is further positive change underway within the County Council. There are a number of Public Value Reviews taking place which will result in outcomes focused funding for innovative, value for money services at both county and local level.

4 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Voluntary groups are funded and their performance is monitored against agreed outcomes. Monitoring can include reports and visits to the groups. When services are delivered through the VCFS, service users benefit from the added value that the sector offers. Appendices A and B show that county council grants and contracts to

voluntary groups in Woking in 2009/10 were £ 2,110,954. The voluntary sector is particularly concerned about funding from April 2011, and is concerned that if decisions are made in isolation within funding organisations and between funding partners these could have a cumulative impact on groups and unintended consequences. Surrey County Council's Leader, Cabinet Member and Chief Executive have been meeting with voluntary sector representatives and have committed to regular dialogue with them.

5 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 VCFS groups are often working with groups who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. Their services promote inclusion and address inequality, which support councils' statutory equality duties.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The work of effective voluntary, community and faith groups helps to build more cohesive, resilient and stronger communities.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Information provided in this report will be included in the annual report on voluntary sector funding for 2009/10, which will go to the County Council's Safer and Stronger Select Committee on 2 December. The report will include developments and current issues that might impact on the voluntary sector.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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