

Resident Experience Board
22 September 2016

Update on the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) infrastructure in Surrey and the Volunteering Project

Purpose of the report: Policy Development and Review

(i) To provide the Board with an update on the performance and relevance of the general voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) infrastructure organisations co-commissioned by the County Council, Boroughs and District Councils and Clinical Commissioning Groups and the important contribution of the VCFS in general.

(ii) To share with the Board the work of the 'Driving Up Volunteering Across Surrey' project.

Introduction:

1. There are over 5,700 voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) groups in Surrey. Most of these are front line organisations, delivering services directly to our communities. They range in their size and purpose and can be large organisations like the Red Cross that cover the whole county, to much smaller organisations like neighbourhood watches or locally based befriending schemes. The voluntary, community (VCFS) and faith sector is hugely important to Surrey County Council supporting us to deliver key services, meeting the needs of the residents of Surrey and often reaching those parts of the community that are the most vulnerable.
2. As part of the sector, there are a small number of general infrastructure organisations known as Councils for Voluntary Services (CVSs). These are important organisations that assist and enable the wider sector to run effectively, through a range of advice and support services. Surrey County Council is committed to ensuring there is a strong VCFS infrastructure in place to support a vibrant and active civil society in Surrey and gives grant funding of just under £400,000 to the infrastructure organisations to achieve this outcome (see **Annex A** for the funding per organisation).
3. This report summarises the difference and impact made through commissioning the infrastructure organisations, highlights some of the

challenges that these organisations are facing and how partners are working together to maintain a sustainable and robust infrastructure base in Surrey.

4. This report will also provide an update on the work of the 'Driving Up Volunteering in Surrey' project, detailing some of the excellent activity both officers and wider partners have been involved in over the last twelve months, with a summary on future work in this area.

2015-16 Councils for Voluntary Services (CVSs) performance information

5. Surrey County Council, the District and Borough Councils and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) all jointly commission the majority of infrastructure organisations referred to in this report, i.e., the Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs). Each borough and district is covered by a locally based Council for Voluntary Service and there are eight in total as three CVSs cover more than one area. Partners jointly commission the CVSs through a shared Grant Funding Agreement which sets out the core functions and outcomes we expect the CVSs to deliver and these are attached at **Annex B**. These outcomes were co-designed and agreed with all stakeholders and tested with the users of the CVSs in 2012.
6. It is important the commissioners are all able to demonstrate value for money from the grants and this is done in a number of ways:
 - annual review meetings;
 - annual survey of front line organisations;
 - review of the funded organisation's business plans; and
 - primarily through the performance scorecards relating to each organisation.
7. Commissioners are working continuously with the infrastructure organisations to ensure the outcomes that are being commissioned remain relevant and appropriate to local needs. Also that any information collected through the performance reporting is useful, appropriate and where possible in line with the CVSs' own performance management, creating a proportionate reporting structure as far as this is possible.
8. The main areas of activity captured through the performance monitoring are the numbers of volunteers placed, key achievements of each quarter per organisation and through the annual survey, some real insights into how well the CVSs are used and the value derived from the support received.

CVS volunteering data:

9. Volunteering is a core element of local CVS functions, and one that is pivotal in fostering social capital and ensuring better outcomes for the communities of Surrey. Each CVS manages a Volunteer Centre function which acts as the main conduit for recruiting and placing volunteers. The CVSs have provided a full year of data from April 2015 to the end of March 2016 on a quarterly basis.

10. In total, the eight CVSs placed 1,933 volunteers through their Volunteer Centres. This was augmented by a further 2,668 volunteers who participated in one-off volunteering or one-off corporate events, giving a total of **4,601 volunteers in 2015-16**. This is an overall increase in the number of volunteers placed compared to the previous two years where the numbers were 3,518 and 3,640 respectively. Some CVSs have reported a plateau in general volunteer placements but a spike in corporate volunteering and placing volunteers with support needs.
11. All of the CVSs place volunteers with support needs and in some areas run projects to specifically support individuals with additional needs. This type of volunteering placement requires a lot more work and resource but the value derived is generally far greater than a normal placement as it can act as a gateway into employment as well as providing an opportunity to become a more active part of the community. See **Annex C** for a case study on this area of work.
12. Volunteering is just one core function of the CVSs. Over the year, the CVSs have supported the wider voluntary, community and faith sector with a range of services ranging from supporting with funding, governance, providing training and networking amongst other things. For commissioners, they have acted as a key conduit to the sector, supporting with a range of consultations, commissioning and shaping of services as requested.
13. For many VCFS organisations, these are challenging times. With budgets under increased scrutiny, such as the whole scale review of all VCFS grants and contracts by the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Adult Social Care, the support of good infrastructure is increasingly important for front line organisations. The CVSs have provided networking, training, funding advice and liaison with statutory bodies and the VCFS in ensuring changes are in line with best practice, mitigate negative impact and are managed effectively where possible.

Family, Friends and Community Support (FFCS)

14. 2015-16 has been a productive year in targeting some of the wider work in areas of priority, such as work around the family friends and community support programme. For example, CVSs have been working with health bodies and Adult Social Care to enable social prescribing and befriending schemes. The CVSs have been pivotal organisations in some areas in setting up Timebanks and developing locally based initiatives in partnership with the commissioners. This support is critical in supporting vulnerable communities and preventing individuals from spiralling in to greater health and social care dependency. This work has been done in addition to the core activity of the CVSs, with no increase in funding. See **Annex C** for some excellent examples of work relating to this. The basis of the 'Driving Up Volunteering Project' detailed in paragraphs 26-34 below is also fully aligned to the FFCS ethos.
15. Some Member Champions have been involved closely in the asset based work taking place in their areas. They have been working with partners profiling what resources and special features their community has and how

communities can support each other, particularly vulnerable individuals. For example, in Runneymede there have been a number of tea parties bringing members of the community and relevant stakeholders together. The gatherings have helped set up a vision for the area, exploring what resources and skills there are, defining needs and think about which activities would make a difference to residents. This has been proactive, on the ground work with a view to embedding the FFCS culture in Surrey's communities.

Working with businesses:

16. A couple of the CVSs have both experience and expertise in working with corporate organisations, matching the business's desire to give something back to their communities with suitable projects that demonstrate a real need within the voluntary, community and faith sector. The CVSs facilitated around **a hundred events last year with over 1,600 individuals from businesses engaging in volunteer activity**. There are huge benefits for both the business sector and the VCFS and a case study on this can be found in **Annex C**.
17. The County Council has an obligation under the Social Value Act to draw in as much value as possible for the communities of Surrey through its procurement processes and has been involved in a number of activities to ensure this is effective. The Council has exceeded the minimum requirements of the Act and made considerable effort over the last year to look for any opportunities to encourage collaborations and improved ways of working between the sectors. Some examples of this are as follows:
 - Working with partners a **toolkit** has been developed to help charities engage with businesses. This is a useful free guide and the CVSs continue to promote this with the frontline organisations.
 - An **on-line brokerage** site, linked in to the Supply to Surrey website has been developed. The CVSs are working closely with the Council to populate the site with identified needs in the VCFS. Businesses will be able to select which of these needs they are able to support as part of their social value offer when applying for a contract and this will be looked upon favourably when awarding contracts.
 - The Council will be hosting a **'We are Surrey'** event on 28 September. The aim of the event is to engage and inspire businesses to support their local communities. Many of the charities, Council based services and partners will be showcasing opportunities at the market place, there will also be a series of short films and discussion points to develop ways of working together.

VCFS annual survey:

18. The annual survey took place in September 2015. This was an independent survey conducted by Surrey County Council on behalf of the commissioners. All of information was returned directly to the Council for analysis.
19. 646 frontline groups responded, which is a significant sample from the sector. Some of the headline findings from the survey are as follows:

- 92% of the respondents highlighted they used the funded infrastructure organisations and where they had used services, there was a high satisfaction rate.
 - The VCFS groups who responded, collectively estimated that they benefited from **1,539,277 volunteering hours** over the past year, which if paid for would equate to approximately **£12m in staff time**.
 - Over **£27.5m in additional funds** were secured by the responding organisations in Surrey.
20. The results from the survey give a snap shot of the added value the sector brings. The number of people responding to the survey, albeit significant, is a small fraction of the total sector meaning the actual value the sector creates in both volunteering and income generated for the benefit of Surrey is potentially huge.

Surrey Community Action (SCA):

21. Surrey Community Action is a county wide Council for Voluntary Service. It varies in its role to the local CVSs in that it works across the county and the primary areas of focus are different. It does not receive funding from the Borough or District Councils or the CCGs but does secure additional funding through other external sources. The following examples highlight just some of the areas SCA has been working on over the last year which are different to the work of the local CVSs.
- SCA is a Rural Community Council and has provided support to Surrey's rural communities, developing a strategy for rural activity and carrying out specialist work on affordable housing, working with the Parish Councils to research local need.
 - SCA has worked closely with the Local Enterprise Partnerships with a lead on getting the VCFS ready to access and link in with upcoming funding streams and opportunities.
 - SCA has engaged with the Gypsy and Traveller communities and continues to develop links with them. This support has helped them with health and social care, finance and housing.
 - It has provided support to over 90 of the 120 Voluntary Car Schemes in Surrey and continues to grow this. The voluntary car schemes drive people to hospital appointments, for shopping, prescription collections etc and this brings huge value to the residents of Surrey.
 - SCA continues to administer the Surrey Community Buildings Grant Scheme and in 2015-16, 12 community buildings were supported through the Scheme leveraging in over £3million of additional funding to community buildings in the county. The Scheme is unique in that it is tripartite and any grant the County Council gives has to be matched by both the Borough or District Council in which the community building resides as well as the applicant organisation. The County Council annually commits £150,000 to the Scheme which makes a real difference to communities of Surrey as active and accessible buildings often sit at the heart of thriving, socially active communities. This money is not for Surrey CA to use but just

administer in behalf of the Council. A separate report on this has gone to the REB Finance Sub Group prior to this meeting.

- SCA has also acted as an advocate and conduit for the sector on key strategic partnerships, engaging on agendas such as family friends and community support, Joint Strategic Needs Analysis, and health commissioning.
22. SCA has carried out an in-depth research piece to give an insight in to the current needs of the VCFS and the findings will be presented at a conference in September. This work supports its commissioned outcomes to ensure the sector has an evidence-based understanding of needs, is able to respond effectively by adapting services, is able to innovate and is informed by and informing partners in the public sector.

Communities Engagement Team (CET) working with faith groups and Community Foundation Surrey (CFS)

23. The Communities Engagement Team (CET) and Community Foundation Surrey are also funded through the general infrastructure budget. County Council Commissioners have maintained regular contact with both of these organisations to monitor delivery and the difference being made.
24. The CET has worked over the year to primarily link faith based organisations and build capacity to create community cohesion. Work has included focus on priority areas of the Council, supporting families with complex needs and refugees amongst other things. There has been active engagement of wider faith groups that seem less connected such as those from Sikh and the Buddhist communities and again engaging them on priority areas of work, for example, mental health linking them with statutory bodies and other faiths as needed. All the activity is in line to the commissioned outcomes of 'community cohesion, removing misconceptions, challenging stereotypes and raising awareness'. There has been some valuable work with health providers where the CET has delivered training around cultural and religious awareness, enhancing the experiences of both the patients and staff.
25. The small grant the Community Foundation Surrey receives from the Council goes towards core funding. The outcomes they deliver are far-reaching, often enabling opportunities for the most vulnerable communities. Over the last financial year, approximately 2,000 grants were distributed worth over £1million to the VCFS in Surrey. The grants they provide help support and strengthen local communities and are often the seeds for much greater value and social benefits. This year, the Council is looking to transfer a number of inactive Trust Funds to the CFS and work is ongoing to enable this.

Creating a sustainable VCFS infrastructure:

26. The CVSs have also been impacted by the changes in the financial climate over the last few years. Various funding streams that had been secured through the Lotteries and Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) have come to an end and the CVSs have reported real issues around sustainability and delivering services at the same level, particularly alongside depleting resources. They have been looking to find efficiencies by sharing and merging officers, functions and organisations where possible and all the CVSs

have reduced the number of staff. Despite this, some CVSs are still working on deficit budgets leading to an unsustainable future.

27. The Trustees of the CVS organisations met with Cllr Richard Walsh (Cabinet Member for Localities and Communities) in June this year to highlight the risks around sustainability and that any further reduction in resources would mean they are no longer viable. Similarly, conversations have been ongoing between the commissioners and the CVSs to create opportunities and mechanisms to enable a more resilient infrastructure landscape in Surrey.
28. There is clear agreement amongst commissioners that it is important Surrey maintains a strong infrastructure base to support the wider VCFS. Many of the commissioners' plans and work programmes rely heavily on the support of the VCFS and whilst most commissioners are unable to increase funding to the organisations, work is being done to maintain funding levels where possible and work with partners to find local solutions that protect service delivery. This could be through finding areas where the infrastructure organisations work better together, investigating further collaboration and mergers where possible.

Driving up volunteering in Surrey

29. Volunteers make a huge contribution in Surrey and play an integral role in the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy. As demand for services rises and financial resources decline, volunteering will play an increasingly important role in helping to meet the needs of residents. Through the Family, Friends and Communities (FFC) Programme, the Council is looking at how it can work as one team with residents and partners to build capacity in our communities. As part of this, the Council has refreshed its strategy for supporting volunteering in Surrey. Examples of how volunteers are contributing to delivery of the Corporate Strategy, as well as the council's strategy for driving up volunteering, are set out in **Annex D**.
30. In May 2015, the Council introduced a two year project to drive up volunteering in Surrey, sponsored by the Leader of the Council. The project is led by the New Models of Delivery Team and has three main workstreams: 1) promoting the use of volunteers to enhance services; 2) supporting volunteering in Surrey communities; and 3) embedding a culture of volunteering in Surrey County Council. **Annex D** sets out key achievements in the first year of the project and below are some highlights of how the project is enabling better use of volunteers to support the Council's priorities.
31. Volunteering reflects and promotes our values as an organisation and the main focus during the first year of the project has been on **embedding a culture of volunteering** in the Council by supporting staff and those pre-retirement to volunteer. Through regular communications with colleagues, engagement with managers, and the creation of a number of resources to make it easier for staff to volunteer (such as employee volunteering ideas booklet and a mailing list for those interested in volunteering at one-off events), there has been an increase in uptake of the employee volunteering scheme. In 2015 colleagues used 354 volunteering days compared to only 269 in 2014 and by the end of July 2016, 268 volunteering days had already been taken representing over 1900 volunteering hours in the first seven

months of the year. Many colleagues also volunteer outside of work hours, giving up significant amounts of time for the benefit of their communities. Although this is hard to capture, it is important for this to be recognised and celebrated and this is something we are looking to do, by encouraging managers to talk to their teams about volunteering and share any examples of their own volunteering.

32. A key focus in the last year has been to make better use of the Employee Volunteering Scheme for sharing skills with VCFS organisations. In the current financial climate, there is very limited free training available for VCFS organisations and in response to this, a number of council teams have offered to run training workshops for VCFS organisations, using their employee volunteering leave. The workshops have focussed on areas identified by the sector as ones in which they would like further training and in the last year colleagues from HR, Information Governance, Property Services, the Community Partnerships Team and Finance have run workshops for a range of VCFS organisations. Sharing skills with VCFS organisations not only contributes to the sustainability of the sector but the workshops also provide a development opportunity for staff by giving them the chance to use their skills in a different environment. The case study in **Annex E** from the Finance Team highlights how they benefitted from the experience.
33. To **promote the use of volunteers to enhance services**, a Volunteering Network has been established to bring together all council services who work with volunteers. An increasing number of council services are working with volunteers including Surrey Countryside Partnerships, Libraries, Trading Standards and the Youth Support Service, as well as many others. In the past there has been limited sharing of information or resources across these services, with many colleagues unaware of how many other services work with volunteers. The Network, which meets every two months, provides a forum for services to share best practice on working with volunteers, develop solutions to common challenges and identify opportunities to collaborate around work with volunteers.
34. One example of the benefit of the Network has been sharing learning and collaborating around the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Recruiting and retaining volunteers has been identified as a key challenge for many services in the Network, with potential implications for the sustainability of their volunteering programmes. To support services with this, the New Models of Delivery Team interviewed colleagues to understand different services' approaches to recruiting and retaining volunteers, what works well and the challenges. The team also interviewed a number of external organisations and looked at academic research to identify best practice for recruiting and retaining volunteers. The research identified a number of learning points for how individual services can improve their recruitment and retention of volunteers. It also identified a number of opportunities to collaborate across services, including signposting potential volunteers to other services if they are not suitable for a particular volunteering opportunity, jointly targeting certain audiences (such as pre-retirees through pre-retirement courses) and improving how the council recognises and thanks its volunteers. These are now being taken forward by the Network.

35. The final part of the project has focussed on working in partnership with the Councils for Voluntary Services and other local partners, to **support volunteering in Surrey communities**. A countywide ‘Time to Volunteer’ communication campaign from January – March 2016, resulted in 8,455 views of the council’s ‘Be a Volunteer’ webpage, compared to only 681 views in the same period in 2015. The theme ‘Time to Volunteer’ was chosen based on the findings of independent research with residents which highlighted lack of time as the biggest barrier to volunteering. The campaign promoted the message that volunteering does not always need to involve a significant time commitment and highlighted flexible volunteering opportunities, including promotion of the recently launched network of Timebanks in Surrey. An evaluation of the campaign highlighted it had a positive impact on attitudes to volunteering although it has proved difficult to identify the extent to which the campaign translated into people taking up volunteering. Work is underway with the Volunteer Centres to improve mechanisms for doing this in preparation for running a second campaign in Spring 2017.
36. A key challenge identified by the Volunteering Network, as well as VCFS organisations, has been engaging more young people in volunteering. Through the Driving up Volunteering Project, we are piloting a number of different approaches to engage more young people in volunteering. One pilot currently being developed is a Volunteer it Yourself (VIY) project, where young people aged 14-25 volunteer alongside local trades people to fix community buildings in need of repair. The programme is targeted at young people not in employment, education or training and as part of the project young people work towards an accreditation from City & Guilds, helping them to build skills in an area where there is a known skills gap. VIY projects are run in partnership with Wickes who provide all the building materials for the projects and offer young people who complete the programme an interview at their local store. A pilot will be running in Woking in Autumn 2016 and discussions are taking place with local partners, including Woking Borough Council and Woking Action for Voluntary Services, to scope the project and identify ongoing opportunities for young people to volunteer beyond the end of the project, including through Woking Timebank.
37. The Driving up Volunteering Project is now over halfway through and the expected outcomes for the second year of the project are detailed in **Annex D**, including delivering a second countywide volunteering campaign, exploring the role of volunteers in supporting young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and developing better links with community groups such as Rotary Clubs to join up some of our initiatives to support communities. A key focus over the remaining seven months of the project will be on ensuring there are sustainable mechanisms in place for the council to continue to support volunteering beyond the end of the project, recognising the vital role volunteers will play in delivering the corporate strategy in the years ahead.

Conclusions:

38. The voluntary, community and faith sector organisations remain important partners for the Council. Through the ongoing conversations with partners and stakeholders and taking into consideration the future plans, priorities and ways of working of the Council, it is increasingly important there is a strong

and sustainable VCFS infrastructure in Surrey to support the wider VCFS to thrive. The monitoring information collected from the infrastructure organisations and through the VCFS Annual Survey demonstrates the commissioning with these organisations delivers value for money, generating both added value and excellent outcomes for the residents of Surrey.

39. Commissioners and infrastructure organisations will work together over the next year to create a sustainable VCFS infrastructure base and refine outcomes so they meet local needs.
40. Volunteers play a vital role in delivering the Council's Corporate Strategy and the Council is committed to supporting volunteering in Surrey. This is currently taking place through the Driving up Volunteering project which is looking to find sustainable mechanisms for supporting volunteering beyond the end of the project in May 2017.

Suggested recommendations:

41. That the Resident Experience Board:
 - a) Endorses the direction of travel in creating a sustainable infrastructure base in Surrey.
 - b) Recognises the achievement of the Driving up Volunteering Project to date.
 - c) Requests an end of project report on the Driving up Volunteering Project.

Next steps:

- Commissioners will be meeting at a local level with the infrastructure organisations to create structures which are sustainable and meet the needs of the area.

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Sources/background papers:

Annex A: 2015/16 Funding Profile for VCFS Infrastructure Organisations

Annex B: Co-designed outcomes for VCFS infrastructure.

Annex C: Case study supported volunteering/Case Study working with businesses and Examples of FFCS

Annex D: The role of volunteers in supporting the Corporate Strategy 2016-2017

Annex E: Case study on Finance Workshops for VCFS organisations

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