

TITLE OF REPORT: Provision of Support, Development, Networking and Representation to the Voluntary and Community Sector in Gateshead from April 2017

REPORT OF: Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for:
 - Implementation of the extension clause in the current Agreement between the Council and Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS) to provide support, development, networking and representation to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Gateshead up to September 2017
 - To agree to the Council leading a joint procurement exercise with Newcastle City Council as partners to secure an infrastructure support service for the VCS across both authorities from September 2017

Background

2. Following a Review of Funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) by the Council, Cabinet agreed on 19 January 2016 to implement a review of how the Council commissions an infrastructure organisation in Gateshead to support the Voluntary and Community Sector (Minute C138 refers).
3. The Council maintained its commitment to supporting access to advice, guidance and representation for Gateshead's groups and organisations for 2016/17 with the commissioning of Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS), following Cabinet approval to enter into an agreement with NCVS in April (minute 227 refers). This was an interim arrangement whilst the Council considers options for providing these services from 1st April 2017 onwards and includes conversations with Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Gateshead CCG, as well as capturing views from the VCS.
4. An online survey was carried out with community groups and organisations in August and September 2016 to capture views on the need for infrastructure support services, and the type of advice and support likely to be required by the Borough's VCS over the next few years.

Proposal

5. A thriving and vibrant voluntary and community sector is a vital characteristic that helps ensure the Borough's residents enjoy a higher quality of life with opportunities to improve their own health and wellbeing, together with their fellow residents and the communities they live in. To achieve this, the Borough's VCS needs to:
 - be effectively represented
 - be engaged in influencing and delivering services

- be engaging in key decision-making processes
 - be championing excellence, continuous improvement and innovation, and
 - move towards greater self-sustainability where possible
6. Council officers have been in discussion with colleagues at Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group, exploring the potential for a jointly procured VCS infrastructure service, or services, available to community groups and organisations across the two local authority areas. The key drivers for considering this partnership approach are:
- the shared ambitions and objectives that the two Councils have for a strong, vibrant and sustainable VCS that continues to contribute to the health and wellbeing of local residents and communities
 - a recognition that many organisations provide services and activities in both Newcastle and Gateshead Council
 - builds on the existing cross-river working relationship, and
 - provides the potential for a more efficient use of financial resources
7. Subject to Cabinet approval, a tender specification will be jointly drafted that will invite submissions from either a single organisation or a partnership collaboration for the provision of support, development, networking and representation to the voluntary and community sector. The successful submission would need to demonstrate that the services and representation of the VCS would be provided in a manner that reflects the respective characteristics of the VCS in each area. Newcastle City Council has indicated that it is amenable to Gateshead Council acting as the lead commissioner for the procurement process. Newcastle Gateshead CCG has indicated its interest in the joint procurement process but is not in a position to provide financial support at this time.
8. A further report will be presented to Cabinet in due course to seek approval for a final tender specification, and to seek approval to commence the procurement process.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Cabinet:-
- Agrees the implementation of the extension clause in the current Agreement between the Council and Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service to provide support, development, networking and representation to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Gateshead up to September 2017
 - To agree to the Council leading a joint procurement exercise with Newcastle City Council as partners to secure an infrastructure support service for the VCS across both authorities, with the ambition of implementing the new arrangement from September 2017 subject to further Cabinet approval and budget considerations

For the following reasons:

- To enable the discussions regarding the potential for jointly commissioned support for the VCS in Newcastle and Gateshead to continue towards procurement
- To build capacity and sustainability in voluntary and community organisations in Gateshead

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Policy Context

1. The recommendations in this report are consistent with the Council's vision and medium term objectives as set out in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan as follows:
2. Council Plan
Live Love Gateshead – a sense of pride and ownership by all
 - A confident and more aspirational population acting as Gateshead's strongest advocates
 - Gateshead people who care about their local area and share responsibility for making and keeping our environment the best it can be
 - A community who take pride in Gateshead the place and enjoy and engage in world class culture and heritage that contributes to a sense of belonging and wellbeing
 - Increasing Community, Individual and Council Resilience
 - Supporting people to help themselves, whilst making sure that we work with our partners and residents to help and protect those most in need.
 - Supporting economic growth will enable the Council to be more financially sustainable, allowing us to redirect resources to those most in need, in addition to the beneficial effects of people having sufficient money to prosper.
3. Vision 2030
 - Active and Healthy Gateshead
Gateshead to have one of the healthiest communities in the country with the building blocks in place to support and encourage people to take up opportunities to improve their health and lifestyle.

Background

4. The Gateshead Compact with the VCS
Providing an over-arching framework to the Review is the Gateshead Compact with the voluntary and community sector. The Compact, covering 2014-2017, is an agreement between the Council and the VCS to work together to agreed standards and shared objectives. It formalises a set of shared priorities which recognise the value and role of the VCS and includes a series of actions to deliver the priorities. The current Compact priorities are:
 - Strong, sustainable voluntary and community sector
 - Long term planning and transparency in commissioning
 - Valuing and enabling volunteering
 - Gateshead Communities Together

Consultation

5. The Cabinet Members for Communities and Volunteering, and for Culture, Sport and Leisure have been consulted on the proposals.

Alternative Options

6. The Council could decide not to support the provision of services to voluntary and community organisations. This would prevent the Council meeting its priorities in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan.

Implications of Recommended option

7. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that support for the provision of a CVS function of £160,000 is included in the Council's revenue budget
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – Nil
- c) **Property Implications** – Nil

8. Risk Management Implication – Nil

9. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The services provided under the Agreement with Newcastle CVS helps support the voluntary and community sector to deliver services to vulnerable groups and communities of interest across Gateshead.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications – Nil

11. Health Implications – Nil

12. Sustainability Implications - Nil

13. Human Rights Implications – Nil

14. **Area and Ward Implications** - All wards – the report recommendations impact upon communities and the VCS across the Borough.

15. Background Information – Nil

Summary of Findings from VCS Survey 2016