

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Younger Adults and Health and Wellbeing
Date:	19 March 2024
Title:	Annual core infrastructure grants to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
Report From:	Director of Adults' Health and Care

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for making a grant award to the voluntary and community organisations outlined in this report as part of the annual core infrastructure grants in support of the voluntary and community sector organisations.

Recommendation(s)

2. That approval be given by the Executive Member for Younger Adults and Health and Wellbeing for the following actions:
 - i) To award a grant totalling £350,000 to Community First Wessex for the financial year 2024/25 as part of the Infrastructure Grants programme in support of the Hampshire Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS Network)
 - ii) To award a grant totalling £63,000 to Citizens Advice Hampshire for the financial year 2024/25 as part of the Infrastructure Grants programme in support of the Citizens Advice Network.

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to...
 - Set out the background to the grants
 - Set out the reason for the recommendations
 - Consider the finance for the project and the management of outcomes and returns

Contextual information

Background

4. The County Council recognises the contribution of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to delivering its Strategic Plan and outcomes, in particular linked to the outcome of people in Hampshire enjoying being part of strong, inclusive, resilient communities. To support the VCSE sector within Hampshire, the County Council sees a role for effective local infrastructure organisations – for example, in providing advice, building capacity, attracting funding, supporting financial resilience, brokering partnerships and providing a collective voice for the sector.
5. In addition to current specific funding, such as those that have been provided via grant awards to individual organisations through various grant streams, the County Council corporately supports the VCSE sector in Hampshire through infrastructure support funding. Infrastructure support is concerned with but not limited to:
 - identifying needs and facilitating improvement in service provision across the Sector – to promote efficiency and reduce duplication;
 - assisting local organisations to function more effectively – enabling them to successfully meet their charitable objectives and secure sustainability;
 - facilitating effective communication, networking and collaboration amongst local groups and communities, including by promoting and developing voluntary action; and
 - supporting local organisations to influence policies, plans and practices that have an impact on their organisations and beneficiaries and, ensuring there is a strong voice for the Sector.
6. The County Council supports the infrastructure of Hampshire's VCSE sector through funding to the Hampshire CVS Network. This network comprises eight organisations which cover the whole of the county. Currently Community First is funded by the County Council (for financial year 2023/24) as the single contracted organisation to oversee the infrastructure grant award and associated requirements. Community First then works in close partnership with the other seven CVSs, passing on funding and working with them to achieve specific outcomes set out in the grant agreement.
7. The County Council also retains a longstanding partnership with Citizens Advice Hampshire (CitAH) in a separate Citizens Advice infrastructure grant (also funded through financial year 2023/24). CitAH delivers training and development to paid employees and volunteers across 12 local Citizens Advice offices. It also provides specialist advice lines on employment and welfare, maintains a single point of contact between local Citizens Advice and

wider strategic partners and helps source other funding for Citizens Advice activities in Hampshire.

8. Provision of Infrastructure Grants has taken place over a number of previous financial years with these grants advertised and awarded in line with the current grants process. A voluntary organisation may be considered for grant aid from the County Council only if its services, projects or activities are in compliance with the aims and objectives, priorities and policies of the County Council.
9. Organisations will not normally be eligible for grants where they hold balances of more than one year's running costs. Those organisations receiving recurring funding which hold of more than three months' running costs, and where they cannot demonstrate through their reserves policy that these reserves are justified, may receive a reduced grant. To establish the level of reserves, organisations are required to provide a set of their latest accounts and annual report with their application and before grant payment is made – in the case of organisations with an income of £10,000 or above, these must be independently examined or audited. If organisations have reserves of more than three months, we will apply the reserves policy which is in line with the Charity Commission's policy on these matters.

Finance

10. The grant proposals in this report will commit additional expenditure totalling £413,000 over one financial year (2024/25). Subject to approval of this report the total grants committed for payment will remain within the agreed, 2024/25 annual budget envelope for the Demand Management and Prevention Programme.
11. In recognition of the challenging financial context that the County Council is operating within, the funding suggested in this paper is reduced by £149,990 (26% reduction) on the 2023/24 grant award. Officers have worked with organisations in the past 12 months in order to identify efficiencies to continue to deliver the service despite the inflationary pressures seen in the previous 12 months.
12. The County Council is currently consulting on the adult social care grant schemes. This does not impact on the award of the infrastructure grants for 2024/25.
13. The suggested reduction in spend within this report comes from a reduction in the infrastructure grant in support of the CVS Network. This reduction will affect the extent of the ability of the CVS network to develop new initiatives, but the funding recommended will maintain existing support for the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. The infrastructure grant recommendation in support of the Citizens Advice Network remains the same as in 2023/24, acknowledging the role Citizens Advice is playing to support Hampshire residents with current cost of living pressures.

14. Payments will be made in 2 instalments for all grants approved in this report. All Grant Agreements have conditions that enable the County Council to require repayment of the award or any part of it if it remains unspent at the end of the grant period, or if there is a material breach of the grant agreement.

Performance

15. The provision of grants to voluntary and community sector organisations by statutory bodies always presents a degree of risk. Specific risks that statutory bodies are required to manage include voluntary and community organisations accepting funding without providing any activity; organisations not delivering the service as expected; and there being an under spend on the expected activity. This applies to all grants however larger grants represent a potentially higher risk to the County Council.
16. A number of mechanisms have been employed successfully over a number of years to mitigate and alleviate these risks. These include nominating a liaison officer from the County Council whose responsibility is to monitor how the grant is spent, specifying within the grant agreement that the grant is 'restricted' funding for the provision of the specified activity only and phasing the payment of grants over the course of the award duration.
17. Both organisations being suggested for award are longstanding partners of Hampshire County Council and were the recipient of the respective grants in the previous financial year. A good working relationship exists between the liaison officer and the organisation in both instances, and it is envisaged that this will continue in the event of the grants being approved for the next financial year.
18. All organisations awarded a grant sign a declaration stating they accept that grant funding can only be awarded for the given period and no commitment exists from the County Council to continue funding after this time, or in subsequent years.
19. The County Council maintains ongoing, open dialogue with both the Hampshire CVS network and CitAH regarding delivery against the agreed grant purpose documents. Monitoring includes regular monitoring meetings with representative CEOs from the Hampshire CVS Network and the CEO of CitAH with additional reporting requirements outlined below;

Hampshire Councils for Voluntary Services Network

- Reporting will be delivered on a quarterly basis, with updates focussed on the support provided within the sector and outcomes on support previously given.
- Regular meetings will be held with the lead CVS organisation to discuss performance.

- A separate quarterly meeting will be held with the heads of all 8 CVS organisations to discuss sector issues and opportunities and evaluate how the grant is performing in terms of support across the network.

Citizens Advice Hampshire

- Quarterly reporting pack will be delivered outlining performance against a number or pre agree metrics, including but not limited; number of clients supported. and the amount of additional benefits income realised as a result of support given.
- Quarterly meetings to be held to discuss performance against expectations and issues/ opportunities seen.

Consultation and Equalities

20. It is for the Executive Member as decision maker to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
21. All grants included for consideration in this report represent additional facilities and services for those they serve, and a full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed to capture the benefits for each group. Given the work the infrastructure organisations do to support organisations that in-turn support residents, the grants recommended for award are expected to have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of age and disability, particularly for those impacted by poverty.

Climate Impact Assessment

22. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
23. A full assessment of climate change vulnerability was not completed as the initial vulnerability assessment showed that the project is at minimal risk from the climate vulnerabilities because the projects delivered will be operated from premises not owned by the County Council.

Conclusions

24. The continued funding of the Core Infrastructure Grants will enable to respective organisations to continue to offer local organisations the support

they need to continue to provide services valuable to residents across Hampshire. The grants proposed in this paper will fund, for an additional year the services outlined and ensure that's local voluntary and community organisations are supported through the increase in cost of living, inflationary pressures and associated increases in demand for their services.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	no
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The award of grants to the voluntary and community sector to support people to live long, healthy and happy lives with the maximum possible independence, as part of the demand management and prevention programme and in-line with Adult's Health and Care Strategy 2018. Infrastructure Grants provide direct support to organisations, who in turn support other voluntary and community organisations in delivering services to residents of Hampshire and ensuring a strong voice for the sector.

Grants in this paper:

Core Infrastructure Grants which deliver provision on a county-wide basis, period April 2024 – March 2025. Total Pot: £413,000

Geographical impact: Grants in this paper are recommended for award on a county-wide basis.

Proposed Change: The funding of the two infrastructure grants proposed in this report for an additional year. This will enable the continuation of services which have been in place for the previous financial year (2023/24)

The Core Infrastructure Grants, whilst funding 2 specific organisations will, through the outcomes envisaged, support a diverse range of organisations across the county in a variety of ways. The Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant, whilst not only directly supporting the district level Citizens Advice organisations will also directly support those in financial hardship poverty.

The Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) Infrastructure Grant is seeking recommendation to award £350,000, which is reduction of grant of £149,990 from 2023/24. This reduction will affect the extent of the ability of the CVS network to develop new initiatives, but the funding recommended will maintain existing support for the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

As a result of the proposals contained within this Executive Member Decision report we do not anticipate any changes to service provision, rather these are a continuation of existing services provided in the previous financial year.

Will the proposed project/service change affect people in the protected characteristics groups or any of the other groups for consideration? No

Who does this impact assessment cover?: All

Has engagement or consultation been carried out?: Yes

Describe the consultation or engagement you have performed or are intending to perform:

Both of the grants detailed in this report were awarded in the previous financial year. Engagement undertaken includes but is not limited to, discussions with local organisations throughout the year on the level of support they have seen from the lead organisations, discussions with Adults Health and Care Teams around the value the grants have to the work they undertake and regular monitoring which measures the monetary value to residents that both grants deliver.

Age Public Impact: Positive

Age Staff Impact: Neutral

Assessment Rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year. Whilst this is a continuation of provision, awarding the grants within this paper will enable Citizens Advice and the CVS Network to offer support and advice to new organisations and individuals across the County.

The CVS Network support a diverse range of organisations but many of these support older adults to remain independent and connected to their communities. The continuation of this grant will enable the associated support to continue, with a focus being on supporting older adults organisations with the challenges of

rising costs and inflationary pressures, ensuring they are sustainable and able to continue to operate.

Disability social impact: Positive

Disability staff impact: Neutral

Assessment Rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year. Whilst this is a continuation of provision, awarding the grants within this paper will enable Citizens Advice and the CVS Network to offer support and advice to new organisations and individuals across the County.

Citizens Advice Hampshire and the wider Citizens Advice network work closely with a large number of residents with disabilities, supporting them to get the financial and benefits support they are entitled to. It is anticipated with the rise in the cost of living that there will be an increase in the number of clients with disabilities that the network will supporting in the coming year and the awarding of the grants within this paper will enable that work to continue and scale to meet the demand.

Sexual orientation public impact: Neutral

Sexual orientation staff impact: Neutral

Assessment rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.

Race social impact: Neutral

Race staff impact: Neutral

Assessment Rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.

Religion or belief social impact: Neutral

Religion or belief staff impact: Neutral

Assessment Rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.

Gender reassignment public impact: Neutral

Gender reassignment staff impact: Neutral

Assessment Rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.

Sex public impact: Neutral

Sex staff impact: Neutral

Assessment rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.

Marriage or civil partnership: Neutral

Marriage or civil partnership: Neutral

Assessment Rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.

Pregnancy and maternity public impact: Neutral

Pregnancy and maternity staff impact: Neutral

Assessment rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.

Poverty public impact: Positive

Poverty staff impact: Neutral

Assessment Rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year. Whilst this is a continuation of provision, awarding the grants within this paper will enable Citizens Advice and the CVS Network to offer support and advice to new organisations and individuals across the County.

Citizens Advice Hampshire and the wider Citizens Advice network work closely with residents across the county, supporting them with financial and debt management and access to benefits where they are entitled to them. It is anticipated with the rise in the cost of living that there will be an increase in the number of clients seeking support from the Citizens Advice in the coming year and the grants outlined in this report will support the local Citizens Advice organisations to be able to meet this demand.

Rurality public impact: Neutral

Rurality staff impact: Neutral

Assessment rationale: The grants recommended for award within this paper represent a continuation of services provided over the previous financial year.