

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Performance, HR and Partnerships
Date:	18 March 2022
Title:	Annual Core Infrastructure Grants to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
Report From:	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Adults' Health and Care

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - i. provide an update on the return on the County Council's investment of core infrastructure grant funding to both the Hampshire Councils for the Voluntary Sector Network, and Citizens Advice Hampshire during 2020/21.
 - ii. recommend the allocation of ongoing funding for 2022/23.

Recommendation(s)

2. This report recommends that the Executive Member for Performance, HR and Partnerships:
 - i. gives approval to award a grant of £495,990 to Community First to support the Hampshire Councils for Voluntary Sector Network, for the year 2022/23, and;
 - ii. gives approval to award a grant of £63,000 to Citizens Advice Hampshire for the year 2022/23.

Contextual information

3. The County Council continues to recognise the vital contribution of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to delivering its Strategic Plan and, in particular, preventing and managing demand for County Council services. To support a vibrant and sustainable sector within Hampshire, the County Council sees an ongoing 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, and single front door to, the sector.
4. The importance and value of the work delivered by the VCS in Hampshire has been very visibly demonstrated during 2020/2021, due to the essential role they have played in directly helping residents throughout the COVID-

- 19 pandemic and in the recovery from it, as well as working with the County Council to ensure the most vulnerable residents continue to be supported during this time.
5. In addition to specific funding for demand management or individual projects, issued separately via departments, the County Council corporately supports the vibrancy and sustainability of the VCS in Hampshire through infrastructure support funding. Infrastructure support is concerned with:
 - identifying needs and facilitating improvement in service provision across the Sector – to promote efficiency and reduce duplication;
 - assisting local organisations to function more effectively – so that they 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, in so doing, ensuring there is a strong voice for the Sector.
 6. The County Council supports the infrastructure of Hampshire's VCS through funding to the Hampshire Councils for the Voluntary Sector (CVS) Network. This comprises eight organisations which cover the whole of the county. In the current year Community First has been funded by the County Council as the lead organisation. Community First has then worked in partnership with the other seven CVSSs, passing on funding and working with them to achieve specific outcomes set out in the grant agreement.
 7. The County Council also has a longstanding partnership with Citizens Advice Hampshire (CitAH). CitAH delivers training and development to around 250 paid employees and 500 volunteers across 14 local Citizens Advice offices. It also provides specialist advice lines on employment and welfare and maintains a single point of contact between local Citizens Advice and wider strategic partners. It should be noted that since Covid CitAH volunteer numbers have dropped by approximately 50%.

Performance

Hampshire Councils for the Voluntary Sector Network

8. The County Council has had a close working relationship with the Hampshire CVSSs for some time, and they remain significant and highly valued partners.
9. The importance of these organisations to the wider VCS, and to Hampshire residents, has been vividly demonstrated during the response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The infrastructure funding has enabled the Hampshire CVS network to work 'hand in glove' with the Authority and

ensured the coordination of the voluntary sector 'effort' across the county in support of residents most in need. In the recovery phase the Hampshire CVS Network has coordinated and supported the voluntary sector to make a phased and appropriate return to business as usual activities to help communities and residents most in need to get going again.

10. The County Council's infrastructure funding has enabled the Hampshire CVS Network to:

- sustain (in partnership with the County Council and district partners) the District Local Response Centres to support individuals who were shielding or isolating during the second wave of the pandemic;
- sustain both formal and informal volunteering across Hampshire's communities, and with County Council services;
- engage with the County Council's welfare response to provide support throughout the year for some of Hampshire's most vulnerable residents;
- contribute to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum as active partners;
- provide support and guidance on the recovery/restart of voluntary and community organisations forced to close during lockdown; and
- help the VCS secure approximately £1.4 million in funding;
- Centralised support for voluntary sector organisations with funding and operation of a funder finder service;
- Development of "volunteer passport" concept to allow volunteers to support multiple organisations more easily

11. Appendix A provides headline figures on the impact of work delivered by the Hampshire CVS Network, supported by the County Council's infrastructure funding.

Citizens Advice Hampshire

12. The County Council values the role that CitAH plays in enabling its local services to continue to meet the needs of some of Hampshire's most vulnerable residents. This support has been vital in helping the Authority to deliver its welfare response to the pandemic during the year.

13. During 2021/22, this funding has enabled CitAH to

- support 42,041 clients, addressing 117,564 issues;
 - 30% of issues were related to benefit claims and universal credit);
 - 54% of clients had either a disability or long-term health condition

Grant Process

14. For 2022/23 the approach to grant allocation was reviewed to ensure transparency and robustness as we enter this new uncertain era of recovery and financial pressures. The grants were advertised on the County Council Website and all organisations that met the eligibility criteria were welcome to apply.
15. Following the closure of the application period, all applications for both grants were considered at a grant panel within the context of the set grant criteria and against an objective and quantifiable scoring system developed specifically for this 2022/23 grant round. The grant panel consisted of senior County Council officers and the Adult's Health and Care Assistant Director for Transformation and Digital.
16. Following the panel and scoring, it is recommended that Citizens Advice Hampshire receive a grant of £63,000 to support the local Citizens Advice services in Hampshire. Further the panel recommend that Community First receive a grant of £495,990 as the lead organisation for the Hampshire CVS Network.

2022/23 Funding

17. The voluntary sector has been a crucial partner to the County Council throughout the pandemic, and their support to the residents of Hampshire has been enabled by the ongoing provision of an infrastructure grant. Based on evidence of impact to-date, it is proposed that core infrastructure grant funding continues throughout the 2022/23 financial year.
18. It is recommended that, for the year 2022/23, the funding remains at the same level as 2021/22 for both CitAH and Community First which would be £63,000 and £495,500 respectively. These grant levels are within the budgeted cash limit for 2022/23, a budget which includes a reduction of 10% since 2021/22 required as part of the wider savings programme.
19. It is also proposed that both grants are allocated for the period of 2022/23. This one-year allocation reflects the uncertain financial context in the which the County Council is currently operating. As such, it is recommended that the allocation of the infrastructure grant is reviewed on an annual basis.
20. 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. 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.

Monitoring arrangements

21. The County Council maintains ongoing, open dialogue with both the Hampshire CVSs and CitAH regarding delivery against the agreed grant purpose documents. This includes regular monitoring meetings between the Assistant Director of Adults Health and Care and representative CEOs from the Hampshire CVS Network and the CEO of CitAH.

Consultation and Equalities

22. 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.
23. These recommended infrastructure grant awards seek to maintain the existing level of funding for community infrastructure, which by the nature of the activities supported by the grant are broadly intended to have a positive impact in terms of equality. Further to this, the regular monitoring meetings between the Assistant Director of Adults Health and Care and the representative CEOs from the Hampshire CVS Network and the CEO of CitAH will provide the opportunity to discuss the progress of the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty between the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector and the County Council. These monitoring meetings can also be used to raise specific issues as and when they arise, such as in recent discussions as to how the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector has engaged minority ethnic communities (amongst other at-risk groups) around COVID-19 issues.

Climate Impact Assessment

24. 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.
25. 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 and carbon emissions due to the nature of this report being a financial one, providing infrastructure funding and will be operated from premises not owned by the County Council. It is however recognised that individual projects and grant activity utilising this funding may need a separate assessment using the decision-making tools or equivalents agreed as part of the governance arrangements.

Conclusion

26. This report demonstrates that the Hampshire CVSs and CitAH continue to deliver a very positive return on the County Council's investment. They play a vital role in the provision of infrastructure support to Hampshire voluntary sector organisations and local Citizens' Advice services, which, in turn, support some of Hampshire's most vulnerable residents.
27. It is recommended that an infrastructure support grant be made to the Hampshire CVS Network, via Community First, and to Citizens' Advice Hampshire to enable them to continue this valued work.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:
Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

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.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. 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 under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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

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

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Service Affected

This EIA pertains to the proposal to continue Hampshire County Council funding to the Voluntary Sector Network (CVS) and Citizens Advice Hampshire (CitAH) for an additional period of 12 months. This Executive Decision Day proposal will maintain the funding of the current service provision for an additional year under the terms of the Corporate Infrastructure Grant.

Description of the service/policy/project/project phase

The proposal within the Executive Member Decision paper seeks funding for 12 months which will allow The County Council to corporately support the ongoing vibrancy and sustainability of the CVS and CitAH network in Hampshire through infrastructure support funding. Infrastructure support is concerned with:

- Identifying needs and facilitating improvement in service provision across the Sector – to promote efficiency and reduce duplication;
- Assisting local organisations to function more effectively – so that they 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, in so doing, ensuring there is a strong voice for the Sector.

This same amount of grant funding was awarded in the last financial year under the Corporate Infrastructure Grant and this paper seeks to continue this funding in light of the value the CVS and CitAH networks provide across Hampshire.

The additional funding provided under the Corporate Infrastructure Grant will allow for the maintenance of vital infrastructure that has a positive impact on equality and enables Hampshire County Council to fulfil their duty to promote equality of opportunity across the county.

However whilst the funding proposed in this Decision Paper is matched to that of the grant coming to a close, Hampshire County Council seek to leverage connections to and engagement with the CVS and CitAH providers to advance further the benefits to enhance the diverse community and voluntary sector which we have here in Hampshire. This will include but is not limited to, increasing and promoting inclusive networks, ensuring accessibility on an equal basis to council run services and the adaptation of existing services to take account of post-covid realities.

Please explain the new/changed service/policy/project

This Executive Decision Day proposal seeks to providing funding for the Hampshire CVS network and CitAH, under the banner of the Corporate Infrastructure Grant for an additional period of 12 months. The amount of money provided is matched to that provided in the 2021/2022 financial year and seeks similar provision and outcomes as the last award under this grant stream. The maintenance of funding for community infrastructure supports the broad intentions of their work to have a positive impact in terms of equality.

Geographical Impact: Countywide

Equality Considerations

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

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? **Yes**

If 'yes' or 'no but intend to or planned', describe the consultation/engagement, such as who was engaged or consulted and how, what the outcome of the consultation/engagement was and how these have influenced the proposal. If 'no', please explain why.

Throughout the period of the last grant awarded under the Corporate Infrastructure Grant (2021/2022) monitoring was undertaken to assess the benefits, outcomes and value which this funding delivered, both for the County Council and for users of services across Hampshire.

Through consultation with the County Council Local Teams, Public Health and Health Partners, the value which the Corporate Infrastructure Grant has provided through the last 18 months of the Covid-19 pandemic has been demonstrated which is why we seek to continue this for an additional period.

The County Council's infrastructure funding has enabled the Hampshire CVS Network and CitAH to:

- Establish (in partnership with the County Council and district partners) the District Local Response Centres to support individuals who were shielding during the first wave of the pandemic;
- Facilitate an increase in both formal and informal volunteering across Hampshire's communities, and with County Council services;
- Engage with the County Council's welfare response to provide support throughout the year for some of Hampshire's most vulnerable residents;
- Contribute to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum as active partners;
- Provide support and guidance on the recovery/restart of voluntary and community organisations forced to close during lockdown; and
- Help the VCS secure over £1.2million in funding
- Increase the amount of financial advice and support given to residents of Hampshire in light of Covid driven financial difficulties.

From this monitoring and evaluation of the current grant, coupled with consultation and discussion with partners, another Corporate Infrastructure Grant for the financial year 2022/23 will provide much needed support, particularly to older adults, people with disability and people with a minority ethnic background in the UK who are likely to have experienced a great impact during COVID-19, as Hampshire seeks to rebound from the pandemic.

Consultation and engagement between Hampshire County Council and CitAH/ CVS will continue throughout the duration of this grant, as part of the regular monitoring meetings between the various Chief Executives and the County Council Deputy Chief Executive. These meetings determine progress of the grant against the Public Sector Equality Duty and will be used to raise specific issues as they arise - ensuring that this provision is responsive to changing situations and the needs of individual groups.

Appendix A: Headline information on the work of the Hampshire CVS Network 2020/21 to date

2021-22 Year to Date - Headlines

(Figures in brackets show data captured during this period in 2020/21)

Hampshire Organisations Supported

- **£1,395,089 (£1,279,939)** funding secured by Hampshire VCSE with CVS support.
- **2,742 (2,787)** VCSE organisations have been supported by their local CVS including:
 - **413 (274)** supported with governance and policy
 - **794 (268)** HR (paid staff and volunteers)
 - **70 (75)** new groups or projects developed

Volunteering

- **1,137 (490)** Volunteers have been placed into local VCSE organisations including
 - **55 (22)** placed into Hampshire County Council settings
- **2,529 (2,464)** Opportunities advertised

Training & Workshops

- **306 (195)** training sessions delivered to **2,304 (2,920)** learners