

Agenda Item No: 9.1 **Report No:** 21/17

Report Title: Voluntary Sector Support

Report To: Scrutiny **Date:** 12 January 2017
Cabinet 8 February 2017

Cabinet Member: Cllr Tony Nicholson

Ward(s) Affected: All

Report By: Ian Fitzpatrick, Director of Service Delivery

Contact Officer(s)-

Name(s): Jo Harper
Post Title(s): Head of Business Strategy and Performance
E-mail(s): Jo.harper@lewes.gov.uk
Tel No(s): 01273 661374

Purpose of Report:

- 1 To report on the performance of those voluntary organisations funded by the Council in 2016/17 under a service level agreement and confirm arrangements for 2017/18.

Officers Recommendations (to Scrutiny):

- 2 To scrutinise the performance of those voluntary organisations that received funding from the Council in 2016/17.
- 3 To note the proposed allocation of funding to relevant voluntary organisations for 2017/18.

Officers Recommendations (to Cabinet):

- 4 To consider any recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the report on 12 January 2017.
- 5 To agree the allocation of funding to relevant voluntary organisations for 2017/18 as set out in para 34, in line with the Service Level Agreements agreed in 2015.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 6 The Council has historically provided support to a number of strategic voluntary sector organisations, which provide a range of direct services to our residents, in line with the Council's priorities. In 2015/16 this arrangement was formalised by the negotiation of Service Level Agreements with these key organisations.

Information

- 7 The Council recognises the significant contributions that the community and voluntary sector play in delivering services to our residents. Partnership working is a key priority for Lewes District, and the Council is committed to working with voluntary and community organisations through the giving of community grants. This helps support a thriving voluntary sector in Lewes District. In addition, the giving of funding to such groups can also provide a cost effective way of delivering the Council's objectives.
- 8 Historically, the Council has provided funding to a small number of voluntary and community organisations on a recurring basis, these being: the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), 3VA, Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) and Sompriti. These particular organisations have been funded because of the core role they play in enabling and supporting other parts of the community and voluntary sector (3VA and AiRS) or because of the unique advisory role they provide to those experiencing hardship or disadvantage (CAB and Sompriti).

Service Level Agreements

- 9 In February 2015, the Council agreed a three year Service Level Agreement (SLA) for each of the four key organisations which the Council has previously funded on a regular basis (CAB, AiRS, 3VA and Sompriti). These SLAs provide certainty to organisations for a three year period. This enables them to plan ahead and ensure consistent delivery of service. Having the security of a 3 year SLA with the Council can also assist voluntary organisations in the leverage of further funding from other sources.
- 10 The SLA also provides a mechanism for the Council to closely monitor the organisations' performance and delivery. The SLAs are agreements that specify the amount of funding, what activities it covers, legal requirements, monitoring and evaluation processes. It should be noted, however, that all SLAs contain clauses enabling review, termination and/or renegotiation of terms should the need for the service change or performance issues be encountered.
- 11 During 2015/16 a fifth Service Level Agreement has been negotiated. The SLA is with East Sussex Credit Union. This organisation has received funding in the past from the Council, through the Housing Revenue Account. In order to bring about greater consistency in the funding and monitoring of voluntary organisations an SLA has been agreed, initially for one year, from September 2015 to August 2016.

Performance in 2016/17

- 12 Regular quarterly monitoring meetings have been held with those organisations which receive larger awards. The lower level SLAs are subject to annual monitoring.

CAB

- 13 The CAB helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice. LDC currently provides the majority of their core funding, with the Town Councils across the district also

providing smaller contributions. LDC makes a specific contribution, through HRA funds, for specialist benefits and money advisors to be employed by the bureau, in recognition that many of the clients making use of this service will be LDC housing tenants.

- 14 In the past year the CAB has continued to provide advice services for a range of clients across the district. Most recent data indicates that the CAB is likely to have seen over 4000 clients at the Bureau's various locations by the end of the year. Benefits (44%) and debt (16%) and housing issues (7%) forming a significant proportion of the enquiries.
- 15 One of the key measures used to determine the success of the Bureau is the financial outcomes for clients (in terms of income gain, debts written off or repayments rescheduled) resulting from the help provided through CAB advice. This is expressed as an 'annualised value'. The total value for the second quarter of 2016/17 was £603,072 which compares with £471,492 in the same quarter of the previous year.
- 16 The Bureau is reaching clients from across the district with the largest numbers coming from Seaford (27%), Newhaven (18%), Peacehaven (14%) and Lewes (21%).
- 17 A significant development in the past year has been the decision by the CAB to move their main offices to Newhaven, supported and enabled by the Council. It was agreed by Cabinet in September 2017 to approve capital investment of up to £175,000 at Newhaven Square, Newhaven, to refurbish premises to enable the relocation. The refurbishment works are currently underway and it is hoped that the move will take place later in the year. Once the main office is relocated to Newhaven, the CAB will continue to operate a service in Lewes from Southover House, making use of part of the LDC main reception area.

3VA

- 18 As a Council for Voluntary Service, 3VA provides support for voluntary and community organisations across the Eastbourne, Lewes District and Wealden areas of East Sussex. They provide a range of practical support to charities and community groups including start-up support, funding advice, help with governance and training. Their services help to inform, sustain and develop the voluntary and community sector in the area.
- 19 In the past year 3VA has continued to provide valuable up-to-date information to local groups through its digital newsletter, 3View, which currently reaches 1,824 groups, organisations and individuals. In the first half of the year, 11 Lewes based organisations received one to one help and advice from 3VA and 2 local training courses were delivered. The service's local Community Development Officer (CDO) for the Lewes area has started to operate out of Southover House reception during the past year. This has been welcomed by local groups as being a more accessible, central location than their previous office base. The CDO also meets with groups at other locations across the district as needed, depending on the group being supported.

Funding provided by LDC in addition to the core grant has enabled 3VA to work with the council specifically on a Dementia Friends project. This has been successful in supporting the development of two local Dementia Action Alliances as well as providing a range of training and advice. The project has run over two years, but will end in March 2017, with the last few months being focused on ensuring the on-going sustainability of the Alliances into the future.

AiRS

- 20 AiRS is the Rural Community Council for Sussex. The organisation's purpose is to provide practical help and support to rural communities across both East and West Sussex enabling them to be vibrant, living and working places. The funding provided by the Council is specifically to support the organisations work with village halls and community buildings.
- 21 Over the past year, AirS has provided regular e-newsletters to subscribers to the Village Halls and Community Buildings Service, alongside the Village Halls Advisor offering face to face and phone advice where appropriate. If questions need a legal answer these are referred to the Village Halls National Association (ACRE) who have a retained specialist charity lawyer for these services. There have been an average of 6 email or telephone questions each week to this service.
- 22 AirS has worked in particular with hall management committees at Barcombe, Cooksbridge, Newick, Kingston and Ringmer. AirS has also worked with Newhaven, Rodmell, Wivelsfield and Firle Village Halls on specific initiatives mainly relating to developing new activities in the hall. At the request of Lewes District Council AirS contacted Newhaven Town Council with regard to Shakespeare Hall offering advice and services.
- 23 AirS has organised 2 village halls seminars this year focusing on understanding health and safety issues and with speakers from Insurers, Police and Fire Services and PAT testing services. Two more workshops are also scheduled for January and February.
- 24 In addition AirS has worked with Wave Leisure to bring exercise activities to village halls in Lewes District. The 'Strength and Balance' classes have been organised with the village hall in 2 locations – Rodmell and Firle and there are now discussions about the same activities being provided in Wivelsfield. This pilot that lasted for 6 weeks in Rodmell is now completely self financing and has produced very positive results with participants reporting improved health and the village hall benefiting from the increased income and service provision. In Newick AirS has supported the development of a new lunch club in the community run from the church hall. The AirS Village Agents regularly attend activities in village halls, whether they are subscribers or not, and have assisted in more informal ways in providing information and advice and have support the halls to provide new activities.

Sompriti

- 25 Sompriti is a project run by Sussex Community Development Association that supports black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and individuals across

East Sussex. They work with people from a range of different backgrounds, organising community events and provide bilingual support to residents in a variety of community languages.

- 26 In the past year the project has provided bilingual advocacy to 10 clients and their families. Support was provided in five languages this year – Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin, Romanian and Turkish – and included assistance with issues such as housing, benefits, council tax, children and health.
- 27 Sompriti also runs support groups for local BME women and businesses. The women's group has 24 members representing 12 different nationalities, and 3 well attended meetings were held in the past year. The meetings included activities such as health walks, dementia information sessions, and promotion of council services. Ongoing support was provided for the BME business forum and outreach work to promote the group and increase membership was undertaken. The group held two meetings and a training session on health and safety. Sompriti focused their engagement with older BME community members on running an IT workshop at the Phoenix Centre in Lewes. The Centre is run by SCDA and this gave a good opportunity for members to find out more about what is on offer there. Members were taught the basics of computers, how to send emails and attachments and how to get on the internet to search websites. Lunch and transport were provided, which encouraged attendance.
- 28 Conversational English language courses were run in Peacehaven and attended by 8 residents from Kurdish, Palestinian, Bengali and Romanian backgrounds. Crèche facilities were provided so those with young children could also attend. Feedback from the sessions was good, with attendees saying it increased their confidence to speak to people from different backgrounds.
- 29 Sompriti also ran two community events. One celebrated the use of light in by communities when marking special occasions and included story-telling and lantern-making in the Newhaven Community Space Garden. The other was marking the Chinese New Year at St Leonards Church in Seaford, which included Chinese brush painting demonstrations, tea tasting and paper crafts, along with traditional food and sweets.
- 30 Supporting this organisation assists the Council in fulfilling its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. We are required to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between groups of people with protected characteristics. Sompriti helps us to achieve this in a number of ways. The bilingual advocacy service helps improve access to Council services for BME communities, the support groups enables the Council to communicate and engage with potentially harder to reach groups, and the outreach activity and community events help foster integration and good relations within the wider community.

- 31 The East Sussex Credit Union is a not-for-profit savings and loans co-operative. It helps customers to save money and offer cost effective and flexible loans which meet individual needs. It also works in partnership with local communities and other agencies to provide joint solutions to money related issues. There is a particular emphasis on those who are disadvantaged, marginalised or poorly served by mainstream financial providers.
- 32 The funding that has been provided by the Council was specifically for the Credit Union to work with LDC tenants affected by welfare reform and those on low incomes. This included providing basic banking facilities for those who were unable to access mainstream banking and providing training in money management.
- 33 Funding for this project started in September 2015 and was granted for 18 months, up until August 2017. Given that the East Sussex Credit Union was committed to becoming a financially self-sufficient organisation, it was decided that funding would not be ongoing beyond this time.

Proposed Funding for 2017/18

- 34 It is proposed that core funding for CAB, 3VA, AiRS and Sompriti be granted in 2017/18 at the same level as for 2016/17. This is detailed in the table below.

Org	Funding £ (16/17)	Proposed Funding £ (17/18)
CAB	140,340 (HRA benefits advice) 13,400 (HRA money advice) <u>13,465</u> <u>167,205</u>	140,340 (HRA benefits advice) 13,400 (HRA money advice) <u>13,465</u> <u>167,205</u>
3VA	28,000 (Dementia Friends: 1 yr only) <u>3,500</u> <u>31,500</u>	28,000
AiRS	3,500	3,500
Sompriti	10,000	10,000
East Sussex Credit Union	(HRA Apr16 – Aug16) 11,663 (HRA Sept 16 – Mar 17) <u>8,330</u> <u>19,994</u>	0

Financial Appraisal

- 35 The core elements of funding for 2017/18 proposed in this report are consistent with the agreed SLAs and can be met from base budgets.

Legal Implications

The Legal Services Department has made the following comments:

- 36 Since the proposed allocation of council funds specified in paragraph 23 above constitutes public funding, regard must be had to EU rules on State Aid. The purpose of the State Aid regime is to prevent governments (including local government) within the EU from giving financial advantages to certain organisations in a way which distorts or could distort competition between Member States.
- 37 Public funding of any organisation up to a maximum of 200,000 euros over a rolling period of 3 years is classed by the EU as “de minimis aid” (subject to certain other qualifying criteria). The EU considers that this amount of aid has a negligible impact on competition and trade, and does not need notification or approval by the Commission. The level of proposed funding to 3VA, AiRS, and Sompriti falls within the scope of de minimis aid.
- 38 The proposed funding to CAB exceeds the de minimis aid threshold. However, the nature of CAB’s activities means that local public support measures (such as local authority funding) can be granted without prior Commission approval. Guidance issued by the Commission in April 2015 indicates that public support to purely local operations do not involve state aid within the meaning of EU rules, because they are unlikely to have a significant effect on trade between Member States.
- 39 CAB’s advice is aimed only at the local population, competition for which only exists at local level. Further, language issues, and features of the local health, benefits and debt systems (the principal topics dealt with by CAB) make cross-border competition unlikely.
- 40 Accordingly, it is considered lawful – in terms of State Aid – to proceed with the funding as proposed, without the need for prior EU Commission notification or approval.

(Lawyer consulted: OD 1.12.16)

Risk Management Implications

- 41 I have completed a risk assessment. No new risks will arise if the recommendations are not implemented. The following risks will arise if the recommendations are implemented, and I propose to mitigate these risks in the following ways:
 - a) Close monitoring of voluntary groups to ensure services are delivered.
 - b) Funding only provided to groups if satisfied with relevant evaluation.

Equalities Analysis

- 37 Equalities screening was undertaken on 6 November 2014. As only positive implications were identified, a full equalities analysis was not required. The

nature of the services provided by the organisations referred to in this report have not changed since the screening was undertaken and therefore a new impact assessment is not required.

Background Papers

- 38 The performance monitoring reports relating to each of the organisations funded are held by the Business Strategy and Performance Team.