

Agenda Item No: 6 **Report No: 196/12**
Report Title: How the Council works with the voluntary sector
Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date: 22 November 2012**
Cabinet Member: Councillor Rob Blackman
Ward(s) Affected: All
Report By: Corporate Head – Communities and Enterprise
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Purpose of Report:

1. To consider the scope of a possible future scrutiny review on how the Council works with voluntary sector.

Officers' Recommendations:

1. To consider the proposed scope of the scrutiny review as set out in Appendix A.
 2. If the Committee wish to proceed with a scrutiny review, to consider the appointment of a Scrutiny Panel to oversee the work and to ask officers to provide a further report setting out a proposed work programme, timescale and resources required for consideration by the Panel.
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Reason for Recommendation:

1. To provide a focussed programme of work which will enable the District Council to consider any changes to its existing policies which maybe necessary to improve how the Council could work with voluntary bodies in Lewes District.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 A scrutiny review on the Council could better work with voluntary bodies is very timely in light of;
- 1.2 The recently achieved regeneration strategy: Building a Brighter Future. The regeneration team are currently drafting work programmes to ensure the strategy delivery and the roles of community organisations are part of that process.
- 1.3 Government Localism Agenda
- 1.4 Reduction in officer resources dedicated to community engagement function at Lewis District Council

- 1.5 The current economic climate; voluntary organisations can support these most affected by economic downturn e.g. homeless, unemployed. The voluntary organisations are a big employer, 60,130 volunteers are involved in voluntary and community organisations across the country, the voluntary and community sector in East Sussex has an estimated income of £476 million (VSS).
- 1.6 There are three main voluntary groups that Lewes District Council support through grants and funding these are;
- 1.7 The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) provides independent advice to a growing number of individuals across the district on a wide range of concerns relating to public and private sector services. It also provides specialised services such as debt and money advice which tend to be funded by specific grants for fixed periods, whether from the Council or successful grant applications to funding agencies.
- 1.8 Lewes District Council work closely with Action in Rural Sussex (AIRS) to deliver individual and collective targets within the Countywide Sustainable Community Strategy. They increase the capacity of rural communities to manage change for the benefit of all their members and Inform and amplify the voice of rural communities to influence public policy.
- 1.9 3VA supports and develops the voluntary and community sector in Eastbourne, Lewes District and Wealden. They do this by helping new groups to set up, find funding, improve their governance, and by providing training. They also provide networking opportunities that enable groups to share experience and expertise, and support the sector to have a say in policy and local decision making.
- 1.10 LDC also provides support through – building
- 1.11 Policy on business rates
- 1.12 Other services support such as the nature reserve groups

2.0 Financial Appraisal

- 2.1 This report merely scopes out the matters that could be covered in a scrutiny review on how the Council could better work with voluntary bodies; it does not seek to assess in detail the resources necessary to carry out the review, which will be a task for the Scrutiny Panel appointed to carry it out. It is, however expected that most of the cost associated with the review would be staff time, particularly in the Property, Regeneration and Enterprise department.
- 2.2 There is a specific budget set aside to conduct Scrutiny Reviews held within the Democratic Services budget.

Financial Appraisal

- 3 There are no specific financial implications resulting from this Report.

Risk Appraisal

- 4 There are no risk management implications arising from this Report.

Sustainability Implications

- 5 I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is an Information Report.

Equality Considerations

- 6 As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact assessment is not required.

Appendix A

Proposed Scope of Scrutiny Review and Provision of the Council working with Voluntary Bodies

Scope of Review	Existing Information Sources	Further Work Required
<p>1 Establish baseline Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Level Agreement 2011- 2013 between Lewes District Council and the Lewes District Citizens Advice Bureau • Lewes and Seaford Citizens Advice Bureau – Business and Development Plan 2011- 2014 • Valuing the Voluntary Sector – Economic Value Added (EVA) report 2011 • Action in Rural Sussex – Business Plan 2012 – 2014 • House of Commons Library - Voluntary Sector Statistics (VSS) • Funding • List of community and voluntary organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The view of stakeholders on existing policies, and delivery arrangements e.g. customers of community organisations. • Views of the organisations about current arrangements. • Identify what is done well and what could be improved • Assess Lewes District Council's relationship against other Districts in the county

Scope of Review	Existing Information Sources	Further Work Required
<p>2 Delivery against Council Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment rates in the UK rose by 129,000 in the three months to September and now stands at 2.62 million • Building a Brighter Future – A regeneration Strategy for Lewes District Council 2012 – 2015 • Corporate Plan • Voluntary income from donations and grants, increased by 28% to £12.9 billion in 2011 • Informal volunteering at least once in the last year was higher in the South East (61%) and in the South West (60%) than any other region (between 47% and 53%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View of stakeholders needs for services in the voluntary sector
<p>3 Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localism bill – The Localism Act (Nov 2011) • Within the economy the most vulnerable groups need more support • Community groups may provide services that the public sector cannot afford • Impact of Local Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the new policy and financial initiatives and their implications for provision of services in the voluntary sector • Identifying which of the new ‘rights’ have most impact in Lewes District Council • Identify resources necessary to further support the voluntary sector