

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Panel:	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
Date:	9 March 2021
Title:	Annual core infrastructure grants to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
Report From:	Assistant Chief Executive

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - 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, via Community First Wessex, and Citizens Advice Hampshire during 2020/21 to-date; and to
 - recommend the allocation of ongoing funding for 2021/22.

Recommendation(s)

2. This report recommends that the Executive Member for Policy and Resources:
 - approves the allocation of £495,990 infrastructure grant funding for the Hampshire Councils for Voluntary Sector Network, via Community First Wessex for the year 2021/22; and
 - approves the allocation of £63,000 infrastructure grant funding for Citizens Advice Hampshire for the year 2021/22.

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 2020/21, due to the essential role they have played in directly helping residents throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as working with the County Council to ensure the most vulnerable residents were supported during this unprecedented period.
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 seven organisations which cover the whole of the county. *Community First* is funded by the County Council as the single contracted organisation. *Community First* then works in close partnership with the other six CVSs, 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 220 paid employees and 1,000 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.

Performance

Hampshire Councils for the Voluntary Sector Network

8. The County Council has had a close working relationship with the Hampshire CVSs 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.
10. The County Council's infrastructure funding has enabled the Hampshire CVS Network 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.
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 2020/21, this funding has enabled CitAH to

- support 42,473 clients, addressing 123,805 issues (see appendix B);
 - 34% of issues were related to benefit claims and universal credit);
 - 34% of clients had either a disability or long-term health condition and the greatest demand for support came from those aged between 55 and 59;
- deliver an innovative pilot in partnership with the County Council to embed a Citizens Advice Advisor within an Adults' Health and Care mental health and substance misuse team;
- facilitate at pace the establishment of a winter fuel voucher scheme for families most in need, as part of the wider Connect4communities programme; and
- engage with the County Council's welfare response to provide support throughout the year for some of Hampshire's most vulnerable residents.

2021/22 funding

14. 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 2021/22 financial year

15. In recognition of the challenging financial context that the County Council is operating within, the funding would be at the slightly lower amount of £495,990 for the Hampshire CVS Network, and £63,000 for CitAH. This equates to a 10% reduction in funding, which is in line with the budget reduction for all County Council departments as part of the wider savings programme. Officers have liaised with both partners at an early stage about the anticipated reduction in funding for the coming year.

16. It is also proposed that both grants are allocated for the period of 2021/22. 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.

Monitoring arrangements

17. 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 Chief Executive and representative CEOs from the Hampshire CVSs and the CEO of CitAH.

Conclusion

18. 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.
19. It is recommended that an infrastructure support grant be made to the Hampshire CVS Network, via Community First Wessex, and to Citizens' Advice Hampshire to enable them to continue this valued work.

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

2020-21 Year to Date - Headlines

(Figures in brackets show data captured during this period in 2019/20)

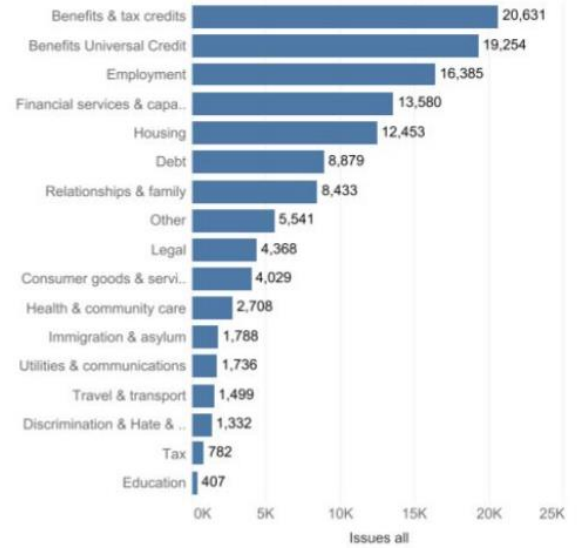
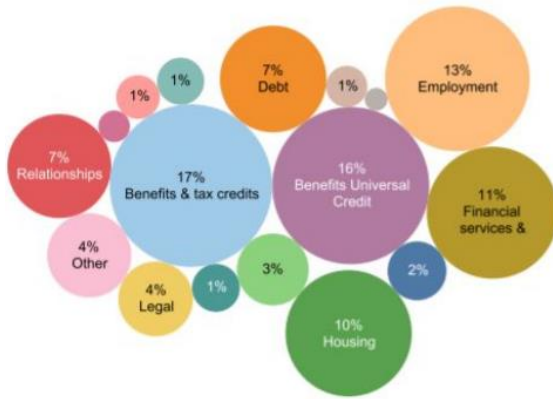
- **£1,279,939 (£2,299,172) funding** secured by Hampshire VCSE with CVS support.
- **2,787 (2,398)** VCSE organisations have been supported by their local CVS including:
 - **274 (372)** supported with governance and policy
 - **268 (377)** HR (paid staff and volunteers)
 - **75 (44)** new groups developed
- **490 (1,142)** Volunteers have been placed into local VCSE organisations
- **195 (260)** training sessions delivered to **2,920 (2,472)** learners

Covid 19 Response Infrastructure Support Headlines to date

- **186** new voluntary groups spontaneously developed across Hampshire to support their communities
- **75** response groups developed with CVS support
- **4,178** new volunteers enrolled to support the response
 - **1,846** volunteers signposted into responding community groups
 - **2,488** volunteers support a direct CVS response

Appendix B: Information on the demographics of Citizens Advice clients in Hampshire and nature of issues based on known client profiles 2020/21 to date

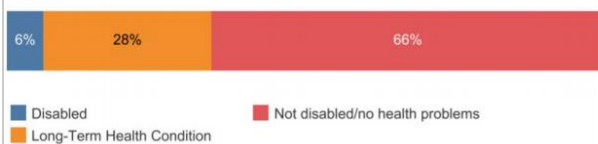
Part 1 issues %



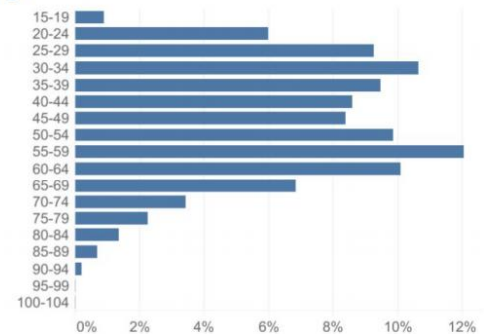
Gender



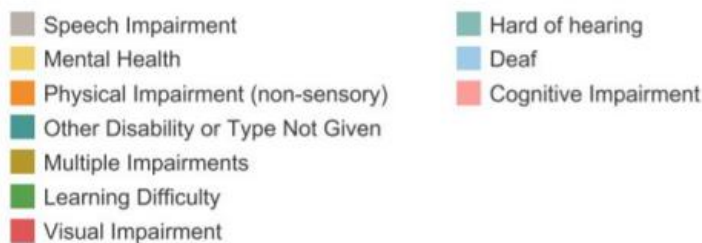
Disabled / Long term health condition



Age



Type of disability (% of disabled clients)



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

- 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:

- The purpose of the County Council's financial support to voluntary sector infrastructure organisations is to ensure that groups and organisations are helped to develop their effectiveness, particularly in supporting vulnerable groups. Core grant funding also promotes individual voluntary action to benefit vulnerable people, including those who participate and those who receive help as a result of that activity.
- The health of the sector and level of voluntary action is fundamental to the wellbeing of residents including the most vulnerable and consequently to the demand on public services. For this reason, this report recommends grant funding remains at a consistent level.
- The Assistant Chief Executive will work closely with the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice Hampshire and the Chief Executives of the Hampshire CVS Network to ensure that the revised grant purpose documents continue to be directed towards supporting vulnerable communities.