

Funding for VCS Agencies - Consultation March 2014

Overview

The County Council has a long track record of supporting and developing the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). Historically it has contributed more financially to the sector than the majority of other local authorities nationally. However, the significant financial challenges that now face the Council, specifically delivering £110 million of additional savings (a third of its budget) over the next four years, and changes to Council services, commissioning and grant arrangements will inevitably have an impact on the voluntary sector.

Each Department of the Council has different funding arrangements with VCS organisations and this consultation relates specifically to funding for the sector from the Chief Executive's Department.

Chief Executive's Department 'Funding for Agencies' Budget

The County Council's 'Funding for Agencies' budget currently supports eleven contracts, SLAs and grant funding arrangements with seven different VCS organisations. These organisations are:

- Voluntary Action Leicestershire (3 contracts) [VAL]
- Rural Community Council (3 contracts) [RCC]
- The Race Equality Centre (on behalf of a consortium) [TREC]
- Citizens Advice Leicestershire [CAB]
- Citizens Advice Charnwood [CAB]
- POhWER [POhWER]
- Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils [LRALC]

In summer 2013, the 'Leicestershire's Future' consultation identified 'Funding for Agencies' as one of the top three budget lines to "reduce a great deal" or "reduce to some extent" i.e. it was felt that 'Funding for Agencies' was a lower priority area where savings could be made.

A savings target of £590,000, or almost 50% of the total £1.2 million budget, was therefore agreed by the County Council at its meeting on 19th February 2014, to be delivered by the 2015-16 financial year. Protecting services for vulnerable people is clearly a priority for residents, stakeholders and Council staff and the remaining budget will therefore be prioritised to enable us to best support those who are vulnerable.

This questionnaire is seeking your views on the following proposals:

A. That there should be no reduction in funding for Advice and Advocacy Services through Citizens Advice Leicestershire and Charnwood, and Support for Town and Parish Councils through the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils. That there will be minimal change to the Healthwatch Leicestershire contract despite a proposed reduction of £80,000 over two years (due to an underspend in the current year which will be re-allocated), and that the Think Leicestershire contract should end, as planned, in March 2015.

B. That the amount of funding available for the County Infrastructure Organisation, Voluntary Action Leicestershire, who deliver the Support for VCS Organisations contract, should be reduced from £595,880 to £300,000 in 2015/16.

C. That the Council should commission two new services from October 2014. The first of these will support capacity building of communities of place/geography (the new Community Capacity Building Service) and the second will support the representation of communities of interest (the new Equalities Challenge Group).

The table below shows the current funding against each area, the proposed funding for 2014-15 and 2015-16, and the saving to be delivered against each budget line. The report agreed by Cabinet on March 5th 2014 (which can be accessed by clicking [here](#)) includes a description of each budget line. The table also includes a proposed allocation of funding for two new proposed services and we would particularly like your views on these (see Section C).

Please note that £80,000 of the budget (H, I and part of E) is used to support internal LCC activity and cuts of 72% are proposed in relation to these elements of the budget.

	Cabinet Report Reference	Current Provider	2013-2014 (Current)	2014-2015	2015-16	Saving (£)
Advice and Advocacy Service	D.	CAB	192,000	192,000	192,000	0
Support Town/Parish Councils	G.	LRALC	20,000	20,000	20,000	0
Healthwatch & Health Advocacy	F.	POhWER/VAL	192,511	41,000	0	192,511
Think Leicestershire	E.	VAL/LCC	70,000	30,000	0	70,000
Support for VCS organisations	A.	VAL	595,880	595,880	300,000	295,880
Rural advice/Representation	B.	RCC	55,000	27,500	0	55,000
Race, Faith and LGBT representation	C.	TREC	35,000	0	0	35,000
NEW Community Capacity Building Service		Tender	0	25,000	50,000	-50,000
NEW Equalities Challenge Group		Tender	0	30,000	30,000	-30,000
Leicestershire Together	H.	LCC	20,000	15,000	10,000	10,000
Equalities - Workers Groups and Budget	I.	LCC	20,000	16,000	12,500	7,500
Total			1,200,391	992,380	614,500	585,891

SECTION A: Proposals where No Change or Minimal Change is Proposed

We propose to make no reduction in funding for 'Advice and Advocacy Services' through Citizens Advice Leicestershire/Charnwood (this service includes a range of advice to individuals, including money advice and financial literacy) and 'Support for Town and Parish Councils' (which includes officer support and a range of information, advice and training) through the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils. These budgets have been safeguarded as they will play a key role in delivering our priorities around supporting vulnerable people (to reduce demand on public services) and/or supporting service devolution, enabling other organisations to get involved in delivering public services.

We propose to remove the additional County Council funding (up to £192,500 per annum) for 'Healthwatch and Health Advocacy', delivered through Voluntary Action Leicestershire and POhWER respectively. Healthwatch is the consumer champion for health and care and POhWER provides a service which enables people to complain about NHS care or treatment. As less has been spent this year on Healthwatch than expected, it has been agreed that this saving can be used in future years, so there will be no overall reduction in the funding received by VAL and POhWER for Healthwatch and Health Advocacy work respectively.

Find out more about 'Think Leicestershire' at www.thinkleicestershire.co.uk. Our funding for Think Leicestershire was always intended to end after three years (in March 2015) but the County Council staff contribution will be removed for 2014-15.

Q1 Do you have any comments about our intention to retain funding for the two Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Association of Local Councils and POhWER (Health Advocacy) at the current level?

Q2 Do you have any comments about the minimal/planned changes to the Healthwatch Leicestershire (VAL) and Think Leicestershire (VAL) projects?

SECTION B: Support for VCS Organisations through the County Infrastructure Organisation

The proposal is to reduce the amount of funding available for the County Infrastructure Organisation, Voluntary Action Leicestershire, who deliver the Support for VCS Organisations contract. This will be reduced from £595,880 to £300,000 by 2015/16. We recognise that this cut will have a significant impact on the level and type of support available to voluntary sector and community groups in the County. We would therefore like your views on what the impact will be, how we can mitigate any impact and how the remaining funding (£300,000) for Support for VCS Organisations should be used to most effect in order to protect the most vulnerable.

At the moment the contract supports three specific areas of activity:

A. Policy and Voice - influencing and enabling the local voluntary sector voice

This includes producing policy information/briefings, helping the sector to influence policy decisions, supporting the sector to collaborate (work together), influencing commissioning processes, demonstrating the social value of the sector and gathering/providing accurate information about the sector in order to influence decisions

B. Group Support - capacity building the local voluntary sector

This includes supporting new groups to evolve to meet gaps in service provision, funding advice and support, assisting groups who want to tender for public sector contracts, help to run groups effectively and general group support services (e.g. training, workshops and consultancy)

C. Volunteering - promoting, developing and supporting volunteering

This includes supporting the development of new volunteering opportunities, enabling people to take up volunteering opportunities and ensuring people are happy with their volunteering placement

Q3 Please rank each of these in order of importance to your organisation:

	1st	2nd	3rd	Not important
Policy and Voice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SECTION B: Support for VCS Organisations (Continued)

Q5 Which five of these are most important to your organisation? Please tick up to 5 options.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy updates and information on relevant VCS issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Influencing policy decisions - locally and nationally | <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership working / collaborating / forming consortia with other VCS organisations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leading engagement with the public sector | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable business planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support a collective and effective VCS voice for Leicestershire | <input type="checkbox"/> Research and evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge and information about the Leicestershire VCS | <input type="checkbox"/> Information about funding opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enhancing communication within the VCS | <input type="checkbox"/> Developing funding applications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training around specific development areas for staff, volunteers and trustees | <input type="checkbox"/> Responding to tender opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation of meetings / events / forums around key topics | <input type="checkbox"/> Defining and measuring outcomes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help setting up / running a group or organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating social value |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective governance | <input type="checkbox"/> Developing and marketing volunteering opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial management and sustainability | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting volunteers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment and HR issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting and managing volunteers - good practice |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/PR |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Change management and being creative |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Advice on Equality and Diversity |

SECTION B: Support for VCS Organisations (Continued)

Q6 What specific impact is the proposed reduction to 'Support for VCS Organisations' through the County Infrastructure Organisation likely to have on your organisation/group?

Q7 Are there any steps that the Council could take to minimise this impact and, if so, what?

Q8 Will the proposed reduction in budget to the County Infrastructure Organisation present challenges for specific service users (please identify who and what the specific challenges will be)?

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SECTION B: Support for VCS Organisations (Continued)

Q9 Have you/your organisation ever accessed support from the current County Infrastructure Organisation, Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL)?

- Yes
- No

Q10 What difference did this support make to your organisation?

Q11 What would the impact have been on your organisation if this support was not available?

SECTION C: NEW SERVICES

As planned, the current Rural Advisory Service, Rural Representation and Black & Minority Ethnic (BME), Faith and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Representation contracts are all due to end in March 2014. It is proposed to commission two new services from October 2014. The first of these will support capacity building of communities of place/geography (the new Community Capacity Building Service) and the second will support the representation of communities of interest (the new Equalities Challenge Group).

The new Community Capacity Building Service will support the Council in delivering its service devolution (communities delivering services, either on their own or in partnership with the Council) and demand management (supporting vulnerable people) priorities. This new service will cover the whole of Leicestershire (i.e. both rural and urban areas). The £50,000 allocated from the Chief Executives Department budget will be supplemented by £25,000 a year of Public Health funding. The total new contract value will therefore be £150,000 or £75,000 per year for two years.

Q12 What sort of capacity building support do you think community groups and voluntary sector organisations in Leicestershire most need if they are to a) support vulnerable people in order to reduce the demand on public services and b) get more involved in service delivery?

a) Support vulnerable people

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b) Get involved in service delivery

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SECTION C: NEW SERVICES (Continued)

We propose to commission new external support for the existing Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group (LECG). Associated capacity building and training will ensure that members of the group are able to participate effectively and communicate information between public agencies and the communities they represent. We intend to seek independent support for the LECG as we believe that this will enable the group to play a vital scrutiny and challenge role in terms of the Council's proposed policy and service changes.

The communities of interest currently included in the LECG are as follows:

- Age - Older and Younger
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- Carers (including young carers)
- Disability - Learning, Physical and Sensory
- Drug and/or Alcohol Users
- Gender Re-assignment (Transgender)
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Offenders and Ex-offenders
- People with poor Mental Health
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Rurally Isolated
- Sex (Gender)
- Sexual Orientation
- Workless

Q13 Are there any other priority communities or groups that the contract should target?

Q14 Do you have any comments about the role/remit of the group?

Q15 Do you have any other comments to make about the two new proposed contracts?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Q16 Can you identify any other ways - ideally low or no cost - in which the County Council can support VCS organisations?

Q17 Do you have any other comments about funding for VCS organisations?

ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION**Q18 What type of organisation do you represent?**

- Community Group
- Faith based Group
- Parish or Town Council/Meeting
- Residents Association
- Social Enterprise
- Voluntary Sector organisation
- None - completing as an Individual
- Other (please specify below)

Q 19a Do you have any connections (e.g. you are a staff member, trustee or member organisation) with any of the organisations affected by this consultation?

- Yes
- No

Q 19b Please specify which:

- Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL)
- Rural Community Council (RCC)
- Race Equality Centre
- POhWER
- Citizens Advice Leicestershire
- Citizens Advice Charnwood
- Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC)

Q20 How many full time equivalent (FTE) paid staff work for your organisation?

- No FTE staff
- 1-5 FTE staff
- 6 - 10 FTE staff
- 11 - 20 FTE staff
- More than 20 FTE staff
- Not applicable

Q21 What is the total gross income of your organisation?

- £0
- Less than £10,000
- £10,001 - £50,000
- £50,001 - £100,000
- £100,001 - 250,000
- £250,001 - £1 million
- More than £1 million
- Don't Know

Q22 Does your organisation work with volunteers?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q23 What geographical area does your organisation cover/what is your area of benefit?

Please tick all that apply.

- Leicestershire County only
 Leicester City only
 Both City and County
 Rutland
 Blaby
 Charnwood
 Harborough
 Hinckley and Bosworth
 Melton
 North West Leicestershire
 Oadby and Wigston
 Parish/Community (please specify below)
 National or Regional organisation
 Other (please specify below)

24. Does your organisation target its work to any of the following protected characteristic groups*? Please tick all that apply.

- Age - Older People
 Age - Children and Young People
 Disability
 Gender Re-assignment
 Marriage and Civil partnership
 Pregnancy and Maternity
 Race
 Religion or Belief
 Sex
 Sexual Orientation

* as defined by the Equality Act 2010

Name Postcode Organisation **The deadline for responses is Monday 2nd of June 2014.****Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.****Please click the "Submit" button below to submit your response. Please do not click "Submit" more than once.**

Data Protection: Personal data supplied on this form will be held on computer and will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for statistical analysis, management, planning and the provision of services by the County Council and its partners, Leicestershire County Council will not share any personal information collected as part of this survey with its partners. The information will be held in accordance with the Council's records management and retention policy.

