
STRATEGIC GRANTS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to present to Members actions proposed following the infrastructure review.

Background

2. Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group have been examining the way that the Council supports the Voluntary and Community Sector through Strategic Grants. During this work it was agreed that further work needed to take place to look at what infrastructure support was needed in the future.
3. An external consultant was appointed and undertook a series of interviews with people from the voluntary and community sector and also other stakeholders, including local authority staff.
4. The final report has been posted on the Council's website, distributed to all participants in the review and it has also been presented to the Task and Finish Group of this committee on 18 July 2014. The full report can be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/407926/Darlington-Report-Appendix-2.pdf>

Infrastructure Review

5. Following discussion at the Task and Finish Group it was agreed that the Local Authority should develop a specification to enable the ongoing assessment of delivery under the Strategic Grant.
6. The Assistant Chief Executive and Senior Engagement Officer subsequently met with the Executive Director and a member of staff over a number of sessions to discuss the report and to develop an agreed way forward. The main areas for discussions were:
 - (a) Business Planning and Vision
 - (b) Strategic Development of the Sector
 - (c) The directory and Mirus
 - (d) A Toolkit for supporting the wider sector
 - (e) Relationships and Representation
 - (f) Tendering and Contracting

- (g) Volunteering
- (h) Capacity of Evolution
- (i) Data capture

7. During the discussions it was apparent that steps had already been taken in a number of areas to start to address issues raised within the report and in particular Mirus is a working data base and volunteer facility. Discussion was able to challenge existing practice with open discussion about alternative delivery models and a joint view was reached about key pieces of work moving forward to better meet the changing climate. A joint action plan has been developed (**Appendix 1**) which sets out a series of steps that will need to be taken within the next six months on each of these issues (ie the timescale for the existing strategic grant) and which details the evidence required to demonstrate delivery. Monthly monitoring meetings have also been arranged to assess progress during this time. The proposed changes will enable a specification to be drawn up in the future.
8. A summary of the discussions and proposed actions was prepared and discussed with Stephanie Sexton on 3 September 2014. She was supportive of the approach and made a number of additions to the proposed actions.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Members consider the action plan document attached as Appendix 1 and provide comments and suggestions from the perspective of this Scrutiny Committee to ongoing discussion on the future of infrastructure support.

Reasons

10. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) To ensure that the Council's funding is effective and used efficiently
 - (b) That the voluntary and community sector and the Council have the necessary infrastructure in place to make a real difference to the residents of Darlington.
 - (c) That the Council's wider objectives in relation to Building Stronger Communities are realised.

Catherine Whitehead
Assistant Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

C.Whitehead : Extension 2306

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no direct issues that affect crime and disorder but delivery of the action plan will help to develop stronger communities that is a benefit for this area of activity.
Health and Well Being	There are no direct issues that affect health and well-being but delivery of the action plan will help to develop stronger communities that is key to both healthy residents and their feelings of well-being. .
Carbon Impact	There are no specific carbon impact implications in this report.
Diversity	The report has no direct impacts on individuals but sets out an overall objective of fairness in relation to the way the local authority works with the voluntary and community sector and the residents they support.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report seeks approval of an action plan that will deliver outcomes effectively and efficiently in return for Strategic Grant given to Evolution
Key Decision	This is not an executive decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an executive decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report supports the overall vision for the delivery of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	This will ensure efficient use of the grant currently given to support infrastructure in the voluntary and community sector.