**HEALTH AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17 JUNE 2015**

ITEM NO.   ....9...........

INFRASTRUCTURE REVIEW

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members on the performance against the Strategic Grant for infrastructure and the draft action plan and advise members as to the proposed plan to provide support to the voluntary sector from September 2015.

Summary

2. A review of Strategic Grants conducted by the Health and Partnership Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has led to an examination of infrastructure support to the voluntary sector. An independent consultant's review was commissioned and an action plan has been developed to enable the existing infrastructure support to move towards an alternative delivery plan over a period of six months.

3. The full report can be found at

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

    and it was presented to Health and Partnerships Scrutiny on 15 September 2014. The full infrastructure report was then shared with all of the people who had participated in the review.

4. Following release of this report an action plan was developed by Darlington Borough Council with the Executive Director of Evolution based upon the priority areas identified in the report. The local authority has worked with Evolution over the past 6 months to support delivery of this plan.

5. Performance of the existing infrastructure body has informed the development of options for future infrastructure support. Options have also been developed based on the proposals for £100,000 savings from strategic grant for 2015/16 and a further £95,000 savings in 2016/17.

6. Based upon the priorities in the infrastructure review report, research and visits to other areas options for delivery have been assessed. The mechanisms for delivery will discussed further over the summer but will include development of networks to strengthen representation from the sector, web based funding support and commissioning of services to develop volunteering support.

7. This report sets out :

   (a) Information and analysis based upon the Infrastructure review
   (b) Priorities as identified in the Infrastructure review
   (c) Performance of the existing infrastructure body against the action plan
   (d) Best Practice examples from elsewhere
   (e) Future delivery

8. Cabinet are due to decide on future commissioning plans for infrastructure at their meeting on 16 June and this will be reported to Health and Partnership Scrutiny as part of discussion at this meeting.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Scrutiny Members consider the performance against the draft action plan and note the decision of Cabinet in relation to future delivery.

Catherine Whitehead
Assistant Chief Executive

Background Papers

 (i)   Darlington Borough Council Cabinet Paper dated 1 July 2013
 (ii)   Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Paper 10 December 2013
 (iii) Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Paper 15 September 2014
 (iv)   Cabinet Paper 6 January 2015

Mary Hall : Extension 6053

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no direct benefits for crime and disorder but many of the issues of this report are of secondary benefit in reducing crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	Provision of infrastructure support to the VCS supports people with health and social care needs and facilitates prevention activity.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impacts
Diversity	Infrastructure support will also assist organisations that work with diverse communities.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected by delivery funded supported through infrastructure
Groups Affected	The whole population will potentially be impacted upon by the infrastructure support available to voluntary and community organisations.
Budget and Policy Framework	Strategic Grants are part of the support given to the Voluntary Sector and are also part of the Medium Term Financial Plan budget proposals.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Organisations accessing support a number of vulnerable people in Darlington and will help to reduce inequalities.
Efficiency	This report aims to identify value for money.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis of the Infrastructure review

10. All recipients of Strategic Grant were asked to attend a Health and Partnership Scrutiny Task and Finish Group in June 2013. The aim of this meeting was to discuss the existing use of the grant and the outcomes it was able to deliver. It was agreed as part of the work plan for scrutiny that further work was needed to assess effectiveness including the ring-fenced allocation to Evolution for the provision of infrastructure.

11. An end of year performance report in relationship to organisations in receipt of Strategic Grant was brought to Health and Partnership Scrutiny on 17 June 2014. Scrutiny requested quarterly updates on delivery by all recipients of strategic grant including the infrastructure body. This process evidenced that frontline delivery organisations were performing well and in many cases were over performing against outcomes and outputs required.

12. It was identified that a more detailed review of infrastructure was needed as the economic environment had changed and also there were concerns about the delivery of infrastructure support. Stephanie Sexton from Russams was appointed to deliver a review of infrastructure following a quotation process.

13. The review was conducted through a process of telephone and face to face interviews with over 40 people from the community sector, voluntary sector, public sector, national and regional infrastructure support providers and Evolution as the existing local provider.

14. A Think-Piece was written by the consultant and workshops undertaken to discuss this prior to the development of the final infrastructure review report which can be found at http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/407926/Darlington-Report-Appendix-2.pdf

15. The report highlighted the need for infrastructure to provide a national perspective to help the sector understand changes in legislation, shifts in policy and the impact of these on the not-for-profit sector. It also highlighted the need for funding support especially for smaller organisations, governance support and support for volunteering recruitment and ongoing mentoring.

16. The report highlighted the differing demands of large and small organisations within the sector. Larger organisations did not identify the need for support like set-up, governance, IT and policy development as often this was available from their parent organisations if they were national organisations or they had been working in the field for a considerable time and had capacity within their own organisation or had other routes to source this information. Smaller organisations needed more support but the current providers branding made it more difficult for them to know who to get help from.

17. Volunteering was highlighted as a key area in which the role of the infrastructure body was pivotal. Feedback from the review stated that there appeared to be no single point of contact for volunteering and opportunities were being lost. Signposting of volunteers was dependent on the signposter's own knowledge of groups and organisations in Darlington and their ability to involve volunteers and support them.

18. The report recommended a 6 month action plan to deliver improvements and to see if the current arrangements could be restructured so that they were fit for purpose, meeting the needs of all sectors whilst delivering the savings agreed as part of the MTFP.

19. The action plan was developed through detailed collaboration with the Chief Executive Officer of Evolution over a number of meetings throughout the summer and early autumn. The draft action plan was designed as a transition process making the steps towards changed infrastructure support rather than reflecting each of the specific recommendations of the report.

20. The Action Plan identified that there were a number of key requirements for infrastructure:

    (a) A clear vision and role for Evolution. Evolution has appointed external consultants to help them carry out this work.
    (b) Wider discussions with the not for profit sector moving forward, and the need for joint objectives and evaluation.

(c) Leadership and strategic view for the sector and engagement with the sector and wider partners in a joint response to a changing climate

(d) A clear and understood mechanism for providing representation into key decision making and discussion forums, and for ensuring information is disseminated to the wider sector.

(e) An effective information database

(f) An effective Volunteer Centre that is accredited to match volunteers with volunteering opportunities.

(g) Support to not for profit bodies and community groups

(h) Support to not for profit organisations to broker joint bids and help to develop tendering skills.

(i) A method by which commissioners can approach the sector and vice versa to develop co-production approaches to service delivery.

(j) Effective marketing and communication

(k) Data collection and analysis.

21. The actions set out in the action plan were considered to be reasonable for delivery during a period of six months to the end of March 2015. Detailed discussions continued to take place with the Executive Director and the Board of Evolution and it was made clear that if individual elements proved not to be possible within the timescales an element of flexibility could be applied.

22. The Assistant Chief Executive presented the action plan to the Board of Evolution on 7 October 2014. It was agreed that the Executive Director and Operational Manager from Evolution would meet on a monthly basis to review performance and agree how this would be evidenced. The performance of the existing infrastructure body is covered) in paragraphs 44 to 75 of this report.

Priorities identified in the Infrastructure Review

23. The key priorities are identified by the grouping of a number of issues within the action plan into three key strands. These are:

(a) Representational and Strategic Infrastructure Support

(b) Information, Governance and Funding

(c) Volunteering, Recruitment, Placement and Support

Representational and Strategic Infrastructure Support

24. The issue of representation and strategic support was raised as important in giving the sector a strong voice that could influence policy developments as well as delivery. This was seen as key both from within the sector and also with public sector bodies and in particular commissioners. This includes representation on the Darlington Partnership, representation on other strategic groups and development fora. Representation is a difficult issue when dealing with a diverse community such as the voluntary and community sector. Being a representative on behalf of others is a difficult task that requires commitment and the time necessary to build trust and develop relationships.

25. Their needs to be a mechanism for representatives to be selected or voted on and to provide a forum for feedback from the representatives. To be representative

requires individuals to discuss issues with the sector and feed these into the relevant discussions in strategic fora. It is essential to the development of the sector and to implementation of co-design, consortia working and joint bidding that this representation is effective, trusted and robust. All of these activities are crucial to the survival of the not for profit sector and to the continued provision of services in Darlington.

26. It is also important that there are routes for the sector to learn about and debate national policy and to be able to access a range of support to do this. Much of this support and mentoring can be provided by representatives of the sector itself but it needs to have a forum for this interaction to take place. For this reason over the last six months one of the priorities in the action plan was the facilitation of the Strategy and Development Group.

27. A strong strategic group would provide a forum for commissioners such as the local authority, health, police and fire to bring joint bidding, commissioning and developments to the sector. It would also provide an environment where the public sector may be able to add value to the work of the voluntary and community sector either through provision of matched funding or through working together to evidence ways to include social benefit in contracts for example.

28. This joint activity could increase the funds being brought into Darlington, help manage demand on services by developing prevention services and facilitate co-design that involved not only large commissioned organisations but service users, carers and a broad range of providers.

Information, Governance and Funding

29. Sara Llewellin, Chair of the Independent Commission on the Future of Local Infrastructure, stated:

"Infrastructure needs to be financed but it also needs to undergo a redesign, It needs to be leaner, meaner and more technologically savvy. It needs to act as a lever bringing in new resources……

30. The Council has already begun to develop and implement a move away from face to face support to web and telephone interaction with its customers. This needs to take into account the reduction in capacity but also the need to focus this capacity on dealing with those people who cannot access web or telephone support whether this is because of disability, language, complexity or other issues such as digital exclusion.

31. The infrastructure report highlighted the need for :

   (a) Funding support particularly for new groups
   (b) Charity law and regulation
   (c) Policy information
   (d)   timetables and support
   (e) Information about regional and national opportunities
   (f) Understanding what is available to support people (Directory of VCS Services in part to support the Care Act)

(g) Training

32. The majority of the support listed above can be provided online for the majority of enquirers. This information can be provided by bespoke written material, links to national support provide a core of essential information. This could include basic policies including Health and Safety, Safeguarding, HR, Training modules and a range of model policies and how to adapt them for local circumstances.

33. It is important to understand that the economic environment is a major lever for this shift in the way groups are supported. It is not a situation unique to Darlington and indeed Darlington has tried very hard to keep support to the sector in place at times when many other areas have pulled funding all together from infrastructure.

34. Apart from these drivers it is also an efficient provision of services providing the right product is chosen and that it is delivered through partnership with the VCS to ensure that the needs of both the local authority and the sector are met.

Volunteering Recruitment, Placement and Support

35. The most crucial need identified with the infrastructure review was that of support to an effective and efficient volunteer bureau. During the review process many people commented on the lack of a co-ordinated approach and the lack of ongoing support both for volunteers and organisations. Key points raised were:

    (a) Signposting and Recruitment

    (b) Mapping to identify the range of opportunities and the range of volunteers required by the sector

    (c) Checking, training, development supervision, mentoring and support

36. The sector identified the need for a bureau that very clearly stated what it was so people with little or no knowledge of the sector in Darlington could locate it quickly and easily. This was one area where the branding of the current provider was seen as unhelpful.

37. Currently there is little or no marketing of volunteering opportunities other than through Mirus and again this is branded in a way that is not supportive of volunteering. It is also important to include activity to encourage a wide range of volunteers including those with professional skills. This would include direct approaches to organisations who employ people with those skills. There is also a need to capitalise on large recruitment opportunities, for example the Festival of Thrift and to retain volunteers that come forward for these events.

38. There needs to be a pro-active approach to groups who may have a particular need to add volunteering onto a CV. Students are one example of this and the timing of recruitment activities could be targeted at the times that students may be coming to or returning to Darlington. Other potential groups are those that are approaching retirement and links here to retirement preparation courses will be important here.

39. Voluntary Sector organisations who participated in the infrastructure review expected infrastructure organisations to provide advice and support for volunteer involving organisations. Organisations said that too often volunteers went directly to them and valuable time of front-line staff was needed to assess if the volunteer was suitable and understood the type of opportunity available.

40. Support for individual volunteers is required to explain the benefits of volunteering but also the risks and challenges including the impact on welfare benefits and this requires skills that may not be available in all frontline organisations.

41. There is also a lack of support to resolve issues where the volunteering opportunity does not work out in a particular organisation. The reasons for this can be various ranging from, lack of skills, physical or mental health issues, personality clashes, changing commitments both of the individual and organisations, lack of understanding of role, failure to value volunteer, failure to understand and implement policy and culture. It is important though that the organisation and individual gets help to address these things quickly. Often an external discussion will make sure that the situation is resolved either by changing the placement or by putting improvements in place to support the placement to work.

42. It is also important that there is a central repository for statistics and data relating to volunteers as this enable the economic value of volunteers to be applauded. Not only is this important for organisations but also so that individuals themselves feel valued. When bidding for money volunteer hours can also be used for some funders as a benefit in kind to provide match fund.

Performance of the existing Infrastructure Provider

43. As stated previously following the publication of the infrastructure review an action plan was developed and Evolution's own statement of performance can be found at **Appendix 1**. Agreement has been reached with the Chief Officer of Evolution although to our knowledge the Board of Evolution have not yet formally signed off the action plan.

44. This section of the report highlights the performance against the priorities distilled from the infrastructure review. It was explained at the development of the action plan that this would provide an opportunity for the current provider to evidence that they had responded to the need for a new approach prior to the development of a future commissioning process.

Representational and Strategic Infrastructure Support

45. One of the key changes sought by the Action Plan was the development of a clear business plan which outlined a vision in which Evolution would move from a traditional VCS delivery model to a new approach which will meet the challenges of a changing climate.

46. The traditional model assumes that infrastructure support will be on a face to face basis to a variety of organisations large and small. It assumes a sector which is heavily dependent on the local authority and other commissioners for funding and

contracts. It also assumes a static view of public service delivery which continues to deliver at the same level and with existing resources.

47. The new model would see a more innovative relationship between the not for profit sector and the public service commissioners in which co-design and co-production are supported. It would recognise the withdrawal of funding both to the sector and to public services and look to support the sector in finding new and innovative ways in which it can generate income and help the public sector to reduce costs through joint working. It would support a far greater role for the not for profit sector in the delivery of public sector services.

48. There appeared to be a reluctance on the part of the Evolution Board to set out a clear vision to take Evolution on that journey. Despite clarification that the Business Plan was about the future direction rather than commercial activity, the Board have yet to sign off this element of the Action Plan and to date the vision has not been forthcoming.

49. The creation of the Strategic Development group and its role in conducting a 360 degree appraisal of Evolution was also not agreed by the Board. The group was identified as a key tool in helping to make the transition in infrastructure support detailed above. The reluctance to recognise the purpose of the group and to build trust with the sector by engaging in an open discussion about the performance of Evolution has further undermined the delivery of the overall transition.

50. Whilst the Strategy and Development Group has been set up engagement from the sector has been weak and the group has not delivered the objectives of the action plan in being a forum which could effectively support the development of the sector into new areas of service delivery.

51. Mirus is the vehicle commissioned by Evolution to deliver online information. As of 11 May 2015 this year Mirus contained directory entries from 228 organisations operating in Darlington despite the fact that in the Directors Report for the year ended 31 March 2014 it is stated that there are over 450 voluntary and community organisations in Darlington. The system also includes multiple entries for some organisations and individual scout and cub groups.

Information, Governance and Funding

52. As part of the action plan it was agreed that Evolution had a key role in co-ordinating the promotion of the sector and the services it provides. Mirus is one way of doing this with the issues outlined above. It was agreed that Evolution would look to develop a communication plan and it is understood that this has been done but not shared with the stakeholders.

53. Evolution have recently undertaken a review of staffing levels as funding for a number of programmes has come to an end. Currently there is very little capacity to support funding and governance.

54. As part of the development of the action plan there has been a requirement for Evolution to develop a website for the not for profit sector that has advice and information on the setting up of organisations, being a charity and deciding which

governance model is most appropriate, support for basic IT and HR, data law, contracting and keeping accounts. Highlighting funding options, submitting bids and developing joint bids.

55. Evolution have developed some templates and online support but this is minimal and for example setting up a new group deals with the development of a charity and does not include the full range of models, explain incorporation and when it is necessary for a charity. It also does not give information about the ongoing governance issues such as managing buildings, developing business plans and the wide range of policy information successful organisations need to understand.

56. There is further concern at the lack of funding which has been brought in as a direct result of support provided by Evolution and about the capacity for Evolution to carry out this work in future. In the absence of a Business Plan it is difficult to see how Evolution intend to address funding in the future.

Volunteering Recruitment, Placement and Support

57. Some of the issues relating to volunteering have been picked up earlier in the report as they are linked to the Mirus project. There continue to be issues about the lack of engagement within the sector with regard to Mirus and the focus of Evolution appears to be developing the product for marketing outside the Borough rather than developing it as a tool to support the sector. Within Darlington the fundamental problem with Mirus is the lack of engagement from the sector and the absence of a plan to address this. There are issues of branding and trust both in terms of the individual volunteer and also organisations.

58. An overreliance on this system has meant that broader marketing opportunities have been lost. It is only as part of the action plan discussions that the need for volunteering fairs to target specific groups has been identified. It is a positive that a a Volunteering Fair has taken place in June in the Market Place but there needs to be a statement within the Business Plan about how volunteering is to be resourced within current staffing levels. There are also concerns about whether the resources both staffing and financial will be available to support the delivery of the action plan moving forward.

59. During the development of the action plan discussions took place with Evolution about the need for an audit trail for volunteering. This is because whilst Evolution can give individual's details or signpost to organisations needing volunteers there is no evidence of the outcome of these introductions. This puts Evolution at reputational risk but more importantly does not give evidence of the quality of the matching process. Neither does it ensure that volunteering is a successful process for both the organisation and the individual.

60. It is not clear from the information supplied that there is any support with development of job descriptions, volunteer expenses, training volunteers, monitoring safeguarding issues. Much of this could take place on line but on some occasions it will need face to face discussion and in some cases a mediation process or review of the placement and suitability of the volunteer or organisation.

Best Practice from Elsewhere

61. As part of the development of options for future delivery the infrastructure support offered elsewhere in the country has been explored. Some of this was undertaken through face to face discussion and others by desktop research. A visit was made to York CVS, and research was undertaken looking at Hull, Sandwell and Bradford.

62. Research was also undertaken to look at the Tees Valley infrastructure organisations using the reports submitted to the Charity Commission as a basis for this. This latter exercise was particularly to inform the development of arrangements for volunteering and the value of any contract.   There is a pattern of withdrawing from a whole service approach to infrastructure support and a focus on funding for specific services such as a volunteer bureau or on a commercial income generating model which relies on contract management with the not for profit sector.

(a) Representational and Strategic Infrastructure Support

63. York CVS highlighted that relationships were seen as key both within the sector and with commissioners. The CVS provided HR and Independent examination of accounts to VCS organisations and the majority of services are charged for. There is some basic information that is seen as core and provided with funding from LA. They give basic information and provide factsheets for HR and then charge if organisations need something over and above that. The VCS facilitate forums and networks and organise a time bank type of volunteering programme

64. Involve Yorkshire and Humber which include Leeds and Hull highlight that working in collaboration is key to a strong voluntary and community sector and that trust between organisations is key to a successful sector. It gives a stronger voice but also provides opportunities to share training and maximise the use of existing capacity.

(b) Information, Governance and Funding

65. York have a funder finder package but were pro-active in following up work e.g. bid writing. Perhaps the best example of use of a funding package is that of Bradford who have a voluntary partnership called 'Bfunded' and they use IDOX funding package 'Open4 Community' but have developed additional information around the system. The funding package is open to any community group and provides national, regional and local funding information.

66. The rest of the package includes Governance support with a range of topics to help both new and existing groups. For example, it includes how to write a partnership agreement that sets out a checklist of information that will need to be included and uses an example to show what is required. This covers the role of partners, timetable for delivery, payments, reporting and accounting, copyright, dispute resolution and termination or breach.

67. Also included is support for tendering, basic HR, developing a business plan, risk management, preparing a fundraising plan and other associated policies and templates that the not for profit sector would find useful. This covers a vast range of

information and is largely a self-service approach although contacts are given for additional support. Hull also use the same package as do Sandwell.

68. Both Hull and Bradford undertake an annual survey of users of Open 4 Funding and this helps to ascertain the funding brought in through this system. In 2014 Hull reported that £230,000 had been brought into Hull as a result of using the system and in the 2015 £130,000 had been secured despite the tighter economic position.

(c) Volunteering

69. All of the organisations reviewed have a strong emphasis on volunteering linked to the increasing demand for care and support and the reducing resources. All of the organisations had also had to restructure and faced reduced budgets which had served to focus the business plan on activities that could be charged for, areas of greatest benefit in terms of social benefit and financial benefit.

70. York have a volunteer centre that is accredited. They have 4 volunteer brokers and use the Do-It national system as a matching tool. The CVS hold drop-ins and will also hold individual sessions and they use placements of social work trainees to support this activity. They provide templates for Job descriptions etc. and provide placement support for people especially those with support needs including people with learning impairments and mental health issues. This includes offering mentoring to the individual and the organisations.

71. The majority of volunteering at York is through a self-serve process. The CVS has a volunteer co-ordinator who concentrates on diversity in volunteering and there is a volunteer co-ordinator based in the LA. They also have a basic charter for volunteering that sets out what a volunteer can expect. This includes a self-assessment process and the local authority use this internally.

72. Hull also have a Volunteer Centre that sees thousands of people per year and includes the use of the Do-it national matching programme and also their own local database. They also hold drop-in sessions twice a week and can hold confidential matching at these sessions and they also provide volunteer management training.

73. Costs for delivery of Volunteer centres varies considerably across Tees Valley and elsewhere and it is also hard to clarify how core costs are split across a number of areas of activity. Evolution's costs are £85,357 compared to £29,995 in Redcar for example for seeing a similar number of volunteers.   However, there are examples of volunteer businesses which could be funded for a smaller amount than the current infrastructure grant.

Performance Summary

74. The purpose of the Action Plan was to enable a more specific evaluation of the performance of the current infrastructure and to support development to a new model. It is apparent that despite the review and significant support and time being put in the transition has not been achieved. The financial background for local authority funding has continued to worsen and savings identified in the MTFP in relation to Strategic Grant need to be achieved.

Future Delivery

75. To ensure that the Council is to be able to make the savings and have confidence that it can still deliver its objective of Building Stronger Communities, a report has been presented to Cabinet which recommends an alternative approach moving forward. Given that the IT based funding package is a very different product from the volunteer support, it is proposed to split the various priorities of infrastructure support into three distinct areas.

(a) Representational and Strategic Infrastructure Support

76. The representational and strategic element of infrastructure support will need to be driven by the sector and commissioners working together in partnership. This will need to be developed and while it is proposed that officer time is contributed to support this approach it is not envisaged that this will require specific funding beyond a minimal level on a one off basis to facilitate development. There are existing arrangements which could be developed or combined to provide a single overarching forum and there are organisations who are well placed to support the process.

77. An overarching representational group could be chaired on a rotational basis with the secretariat initially being provided by the local authority but with the view to having a self-sustaining model in the future. Accommodation for meetings could also be provided initially but this again could be done on a rotational basis as this would also add to the increased knowledge and understanding of the sector.

(b) Information, Governance and Funding

78. As set out above the proposed model is a funding website and associated information and governance support. Having looked at the various activities required it is proposed to purchase an improved funding package and that other information could be provided through a mixture of signposting and bespoke guidance and information available on links to the Council site.

79. The funding package proposed is the IDOX Funding4Community and a proposal is currently being examined. The Council currently has access to the Grantfinder programme through the external funding team but this is not open access and the benefit of the Funding4Community model is that it is very simple to use and can be accessed by tablet or PC and by Voluntary and Community Groups or individuals. This would also provide a useful tool for elected Members in their work with community groups.

80. As the Council has existing contracts for Grantfinder and also contracts for other IDOX products used within workforce development there is potential to negotiate a reduced rate with estimates of a one off set up of £2,500 with an ongoing commitment of £5,000 per year. Assuming the package would achieve increased funding of only £10,000 (a very modest estimate given the performance in other areas) it would justify this level of investment. The work is carried out by the provider and the system has a very short lead in time of approximately 3 months for implementation.

81. In terms of the other supporting information this could be developed in house and be in place by September/October as some of the information will already form part of the Member Toolkit currently under development. A wealth of information is already provided nationally and the site could include appropriate links to other sites to keep information up to date with minimal local input.

(c) Volunteering Recruitment, Placement and Support

82. A draft specification is currently being developed to enable a commission of a volunteer bureau to be started in time to enable the bureau service to be in place by the time the current infrastructure support comes to an end at the end of September.

83. This will require funding and it is proposed that existing infrastructure funding should be reduced but this should still enable sufficient resource to provide the service envisaged particularly where this is an add on to an existing HR or volunteer bureau business.

84. The scope of the service will be as follows:-

    (a) Provision of a recruitment service which:-

        (i)   Includes an online, telephony and face to face presence for at least a specified period (this can be an add on to an existing service or through a partnership arrangement).

        (ii)   Includes a skills assessment of volunteers

        (iii)   Includes a matching service which enables volunteers to be appropriately matched with specific opportunities within specific organisations using case studies to support this.

    (b) A training service to support the personal development of volunteers and to ensure that training opportunities across the sector are co-ordinated.

    (c) Development of a volunteer's charter to enable a clear contract between the volunteer and the organisation providing the volunteering opportunity to be agreed at the outset, including areas like the use of personal data, the volunteer's rights and a process for raising concerns.

    (d) A marketing and advertising service which promotes volunteering and holds recruitment events and has a clear plan in relation to opportunities to recruit volunteers via events, student fairs and retirement sessions.

    (e) A data collection and retention function which collects specified data to inform wider strategy and to performance manage the contract.

    (f) Advice line to organisations with skilled advice available in relation to legal and HR requirements and the duties and responsibilities of organisations to their volunteers.

(g) A mentoring service to resolve disputes between volunteers and their organisations.

(h) A representational service to promote the interests of volunteers and to seek concessions and other support to facilitate volunteering with e.g. employers and public services.

Conclusion

85. The infrastructure review has been completed and has involved discussion with a number of organisations and individuals. The importance of ongoing support to work with the voluntary sector is recognised and understood particularly if the wider objectives of Building Stronger Communities are to be achieved. However as with all services this needs to be delivered within the context of austerity and with a demonstrable business case. Effective infrastructure will help us to achieve our objectives in driving down demand for services such as social care, health and children's services. It can also help to fill the gaps left by services withdrawing from areas like financial inclusion, arts, culture, heritage and green spaces.

86. To achieve these objectives it has to be at minimal cost, to maximise the use of technology, to engage the sector in co-design and partnership approaches to service delivery and to maximise the use of external funding and to increase the number of volunteers hours which can effectively help to support our communities.

Recommendations

87. Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider this report, to note the observations about the delivery of the action plan and the consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 16th June 2015 in relation to future delivery.