
TITLE: Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Committee: Community Services Committee

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[T219]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To note the performance and emerging issues identified by the three voluntary organisations funded by East Cambridgeshire District Council, and to agree their funding allocations for 2019/20.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i) Note the latest performance information relating to Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire and the Citizens Advice organisations.
- ii) Note the emerging issues identified by the voluntary organisations.
- iii) Approve the grant contributions for the 2019/20 Service Level Agreements as set out in 6.0.

3.0 PERFORMANCE BETWEEN APRIL – OCTOBER 2018

3.1 Citizens Advice Newmarket

188 East Cambridgeshire residents were assisted (37% of clients were aged between 50 - 64) and 223 issues were dealt with (debt and benefits being the most frequent). 126 clients were supported with some element of welfare benefit issue and 26 clients received general debt advice incorporating financial capability services. 9 clients were supported with debt advice at a specialist level, totalling £20,380. 4 clients supported with council tax arrears at specialist level. 10 clients have been supported for rent arrears and 5 clients were supported with mortgage arrears that have reached re-possession stage and may otherwise lead to homelessness. 27 volunteers support the service.

Using a treasury approved formula, it has been calculated that in 2016/17, for every £1 invested, £19.15 in benefits was recovered to individuals.

The main communities of concern are Burwell, Cheveley, Soham South and

Fordham. 125 of the 188 unique clients supported by Citizens Advice Newmarket came from these four areas.

The service has adopted a 'quick enquiry' model where information and signposting is provided, without taking any monitoring information, leaving advisors to support those who have greater needs. More people are accessing information via the website which is freeing up resources for those who need more extensive support with face to face assistance.

3.2 Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire

982 East Cambridgeshire residents were assisted (12% of clients were aged between 35 - 39). 3,710 issues were dealt with (the most common issues dealt with were debt; benefits and tax credits; and relationships and families). 805 issues of debt were dealt with. Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire employs a specialist debt adviser (funded by the Money Advice Service) to support clients with unmanageable debt that helps to prevent homelessness or non-payment of priority bills such as council tax.

Using the Manchester New Economics Model approved formula; Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire have calculated that for every £1 spent on the Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire service, there was a fiscal benefit to clients of £21.60, this means income gained through benefits, debts written off and consumer problems resolved.

Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire act as a registered agent for the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme and combine advice services for clients before issuing vouchers for household items and supermarket vouchers.

The service takes part in local campaigns, in 2018 they took part in the Energy Best Deal Extra and the Big Energy Savings Week campaign.

The communities that received the most support from the service were Soham South, Ely North and Burwell).

3.3 Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire (VCAEC)

VCAEC provided training for 28 people on issues including safeguarding adults and child protection. VCAEC has placed 33 volunteers into local projects and businesses, with 80 volunteer enquiries dealt with.

52 enquiries from voluntary and community groups were dealt with, enquiries included GDPR and setting up a new group and funding. 17 groups were assisted with funding searches and 6 new groups were supported. VCAEC brought in £23,000 external funding into East Cambridgeshire.

The Social Car scheme remains in great demand, with 26 drivers completing

3,872 journeys, travelling 59,068 miles, volunteering a total of 4,851 hours, adding £58,212 value to the service. The service enables residents without access to a vehicle and/or unable to use public transport to meet medical appointments. Approximately 70% of the journeys undertaken are health related.

The Helping Hands service is generally aimed at elderly residents and helps sustain people in their own homes as well as supporting the social housing sector. The service has seen a positive effect on volunteers who come from a variety of backgrounds including people in long term unemployment and with learning difficulties. Volunteers working on the Helping Hands gardening project between April and the end of September 2018 have given 3,560 hours of their time to complete 174 jobs for clients, who would not otherwise have been able to get the work done. This has generated added value of £42,720 to the service.

4.0 EMERGING ISSUES

4.1 Universal Credit Support - Citizens Advice Newmarket and Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire

In October 2018, the Department of Work and Pensions announced that from 1st April 2019, it will be providing funding to Citizens Advice services to help claimants through every step of making a Universal Credit claim. It will offer people the comprehensive and practical support they need to get their first payment on time and be ready to manage it when it arrives. It is envisaged that this move will provide a more consistent and streamlined service for claimants.

Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire have reported that despite the roll out of Universal Credit being in its infancy in East Cambs, they have already seen an increase in issues relating to Universal Credit and they expect that trend to continue.

Citizens Advice Newmarket has some anticipated concerns relating to the roll out of Universal Credit, which was rolled out in particular postcodes around the Newmarket area in December 2018. The concerns are that there could be an increase in demand for the services provided by Citizens Advice Newmarket; with some individuals not having access to internet; people not having the capacity to manage an extended period of time without money; and difficulties with Housing Benefit such as identifying social landlords and producing tenancy agreements.

4.2 Citizens Advice Newmarket (Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau)

The service has some anticipated concerns relating to Brexit that may result in an increased demand for their services; concerns include people seeking

reassurance about their status post Brexit, people wishing to “fast-track” the British Citizenship process and people experiencing hate crime and discrimination.

In November 2018, Citizens Advice Newmarket announced that it will merge with Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau, taking effect from 1st April 2019. The organisations do not foresee any negative impacts on East Cambs clients, and it envisaged that service delivery may improve for East Cambs clients such as having access to specialist advisors currently based at Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau.

4.3 Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire

In 2017/18, the Service Level Agreement between the Council and Citizens Advice Rural Cambs was reviewed to ensure that the services of both organisations complement one another and that the needs of clients continue to be met with consideration of emerging issues, such as the unknown impacts of when Universal Credit is extended to all claimants.

During 2018/19, Citizens Advice Rural Cambs has been providing both general and more focused, specialist advice including debt advice, welfare and benefits, bankruptcy, debt relief orders, consumer advice, immigration advice, pension advice and education related advice. A reviewed Service Level Agreement has meant that any duplication of services such as housing advice has been minimised and better value for money achieved.

Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire’s new website has had over 8,500 visits in its first full year, empowering residents to find information to help address their problems themselves. The website has a webchat service that is becoming increasingly popular since it was launched. These online services will free up resources to respond to clients with more complex needs and potentially those requiring support with Universal Credit.

4.4 Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire (VCAEC)

VCAEC has recognised that attendance at local events is an effective method of engaging with community groups and potential volunteers therefore efforts will be focused in this way moving forward. VCAEC is continuing to develop an events team of volunteers with the aim of the team being on hand to assist with community events and initiatives when required.

As a member of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership’s Delivery Group, VCAEC is signed up as a partner of the Eyes and Ears scheme and will be training their staff and volunteers in the referral process.

5.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

The District Council recognises that the voluntary and community sector plays a crucial role in meeting a wide variety of community needs, including supporting vulnerable communities. The Council has historically supported the sector through the provision of funding linked to Service Level Agreements with Voluntary and Community Action East Cambridgeshire, and to the Citizens Advice services that support clients living within East Cambridgeshire.

During 2019/20, the Council will continue to work closely with the three funded voluntary organisations to monitor the impacts of the emerging issues identified at 4.0, to ensure that clients are receiving the support and advice that they require through the Service Level Agreements

The outputs of the 2018/19 Service Level Agreements will be used as the baselines for 2019/20.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

It is proposed to maintain the same level of grant funding for 2019/20 as was awarded in 2018/19. This can be funded from existing resources in the Communities & Partnerships budget:

Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire: £47,346.80
Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau: £23,166.03
VCAEC: £19,928

Equality Impact Assessments attached as appendices A and B.

7.0 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix A - EIA - Grants to Vol Orgs 2019/20
- Appendix B - Full EIA Form - Grants to Vol Orgs 2019/20

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Service Level Agreement 6 month monitoring reports	Room F008, The Grange	Lewis Bage Communities and Partnerships Manager (01353) 665555 E-mail: lewis.bage@eastCambridgeshire.gov.uk