

Report for:	<b>Formal Shadow Executive</b>
Meeting Date:	<b>11th February 2020</b>

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Grant commitments to voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSOs).</b>
Shadow Portfolio Holder	Isobel Darby Shadow Communities Portfolio Holder
Responsible Officer	Claire Hawkes Director, Localities and Strategic Partnerships  Elaine Jewell Head of Communities
Report Author Officer Contact:	Tel: 01296 387306 Email: <a href="mailto:chawkes@buckscc.gov.uk">chawkes@buckscc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1 Note the importance of the VCSO sector as a core partner and, in consultation, continue to develop the VCSO / Not for Profit Sector Strategy for Buckinghamshire for consideration by the Cabinet in July 2020</b></li> <li><b>2 Recognise the VCSO's need for assurance specifically during the transition phase and support the continuation of the predecessor councils' multi-year funding arrangements at a revised cost of £1,392,709 in 2020/21 and of £1,168,758 in 2021/22 as per the spending protocol.</b></li> <li><b>3 Conduct a review of Buckinghamshire Council's financial support for the VCSO to ensure a planned and sustainable approach; report to the Cabinet funding streams which would include grants to VCS in Autumn 2020 with proposed terms of reference for the review and a detailed plan which includes any proposed grant extensions where appropriate.</b></li> </ol>
Corporate Implications:	<p>Legal advice has been sought and there are no specific implications, unless one of the alternative options is selected.</p> <p>The financial implications of this decision are built into the MTFP and do not cause any spending pressures.</p>
Options: (If any)	<b>Option One</b> – not continue funding the VCSOs that have been awarded grants by district councils in 2020/21 (or years 2021/22). It is likely that the financial viability of some of the

	<p>funded VCSOs would be affected. If this option were to be pursued an Equalities Impact assessment would be needed.</p> <p><b>Option Two</b> – Agree the continuation of the predecessor councils’ multi-year funding arrangements at a revised cost of £1,392,709 for year 2020/21 and £1,168,758 in 2021/22. This would enable those funded VSCO to have assurance of 2 years In addition conduct a review of financial support to VCSOs and return to the Cabinet in Autumn 2020 with proposed terms of reference for the review. <b>This is the preferred option</b></p> <p><b>Option Three</b> - Support the continuation of the predecessor councils’ multi-year funding arrangements at a revised cost of £1,392,709 in 2020/21 and £1,168,758 in 2021/22 with no review. Without a review this could lead to some missed opportunities.</p>
Reason:	<p>Community groups are vital partners supporting the Council’s priorities. At a time when funding for public services is reducing, we need a strong and independent VCSO / Not for Profit Sector. Stability of funding is vital in order to maintain and develop relationships of trust with residents and improve outcomes.</p>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The reports informs members of the Shadow Executive of the commitments for 2020/21 and 2021/22 that have been made by the four District Councils in the form of grants to voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSOs).
- 1.2 It also highlights the importance of maintaining key relationships with strategic partners, particularly the VCSO / Not for Profit Sector and providing financial stability in the first years of the new council.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 There is often varied terminology when referring to VCSO’s, for example ‘Community groups, Not for Profit, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector or Charities’. Whatever the terminology used members have often highlighted their significant value as a core partner. Whilst the preferred terminology will be reflected upon with the sector, for brevity, this report uses the term VCSO as it is the most widely understood within local government at this time.
- 2.2 The draft corporate plan highlights collaborative working as critical given one organisation cannot solve complex problems. VCSO’s are valued partners because of their insight into the overall needs of communities. They are at the heart of the community, delivering key services and their expertise lies in building relationships and social connections. They are proven to be vital in strengthening and supporting communities with a unique capability of energising local communities and building social capital, especially with those most vulnerable. The sector is a huge part of the solution, particularly when it comes to loneliness and social isolation.
- 2.3 With a coordinated strategic focus VCSO’s are known to deliver local services that support people in need and reduce statutory demand. In addition VSCO’s have the

opportunity to maximise value for money and leverage external funding, increasing the investment in Buckinghamshire services to residents.

### 3. Continuing Grants

- 3.1 Buckinghamshire legacy Councils have allocated within their 2018 / 19 and 2019/20 spending rounds grant support to local VCISOs to provide stability during the transition period.
- 3.2 Some of the District Council awards were made for two years and some for three years which results in the new authority having financial commitments for 2020/21 and 2021/22. Under the Unitary Spending Protocol these commitments need to be highlighted to the Shadow Executive (table 1).
- 3.3 In addition there are other grant agreements totalling an annually recurring £341,430 that pre date the sending protocol (table 2) and £17m of contracts to the voluntary sector<sup>1</sup>.

#### Overall grant commitments per authority

<b>Table 1 Within Spending Protocol Grant Commitments</b>		
<b>Council</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
AVDC	362,329	233,819
CDC	279,131	243,496
SBDC	71,017	66,663
WDC	660,232	604,780
BCC	20,000	20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,392,709</b>	<b>1,168,758</b>

<b>Table 2 Grants Pre dating Spending Protocol commitment</b>		
<b>Council</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
AVDC	38,031	38,031
CDC	0	0
SBDC	0	0
WDC	221,687	113,000
BCC	81,732	73,695
<b>Total</b>	<b>341,450</b>	<b>224,726</b>

- 3.4 As well as receiving oversight of all grant spend, the Shadow Executive is asked to comment specifically on those commitments made by the Districts within the spending protocol as outlined in table 1.
- 3.5 The grant sizes vary, with the larger annual grants supporting VCISO services such as Citizen's Advice, food banks, homelessness charities and Women's Aid refuges. These services reduce the demand for council services and consequent cost pressures.
- 3.6 These grants form an important part of funding the services of key local partner VCISOs, which, in some cases, would close if the grants ceased. These organisations

<sup>1</sup> Figure derived from CHASC and Children's Services Contract Management Application taking into account those areas that fall within the definition of VCS (Feb 2020).

support some of the area's most vulnerable residents and changes, such as the withdrawal of funding at relatively short notice, may give rise to equalities impacts. All committed funds are in the MTFP for 2020/21 and 2021/22.

3.7 Time will be needed to either transition these services to a new funding model, such as commissioned services, or to provide lead-in time for some to replace grant funding with other sources of external funding.

3.8 There are a number of grants application processes.

- Some are through a number of small awards, annual revenue grants and other grants covered by SLAs and contracts.
- Chiltern District Council has 'revitalisation grants' where 7 revitalisation groups are closely aligned with the Town and Parish Councils and are a delivery vehicle for some of the community's aspirations. As independent constituted bodies, the revitalisation groups can apply for funding in their own right and have been instrumental in accessing funding from a range of trusts and grant giving bodies to deliver projects. The revitalisation groups have a good track record of delivering high quality local projects improving the environmental, tourism, youth diversionary, economic, transport, heritage and culture.

3.9 It is worth highlighting that the Integrated Commissioning Team has started work on the recommissioning of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) services. Newly commissioned services are due to start on 1 April 2021 and there is an opportunity to bring District Council grant funded DVA services for (to the Rape Crisis including Aylesbury Sexual Assault Support Service, Relate and Women's Aid services) into the new arrangements. Where it made sense to do so any new arrangements could be brought into that commissioning process.

#### **4.0 Working with Partners**

4.1 By working together with the VCSO as a valued partner, we can develop a better understanding of the county's priorities and discover new ways of tackling them. Officers have been exploring with partners how we can:

- strengthen relationships;
- ensure member or officer contact points are not lost after vesting day;
- how the VCSO's can be an active part of council strategies and shape the development of the new council;
- share intelligence and drive forward collaborative discussions (events or roundtables) to strategically tackle the wicked issues and create long term sustainable solutions;
- we can best help the sector develop to be strong, sustainable and independent, able to coordinate and strategically channel external funding into Bucks for targeted work, better able to flex towards the changing needs of Bucks residents.

4.1 Partners have been kept up to date on the unitary transition and particular focus has been given to VCSO's (newsletters, meetings, 121 conversations with officers and proactive engagement in any partner requests which help solidify the collaborative ambition for example guest speakers at events, participation in the Inspiration Programme etc).

4.2 During the first year of the new council, we will work in collaboration with the sector, and our partners, to develop our strategic approach to supporting communities.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 The funding mentioned in this report has been allocated by district councils and has been identified in the MTFP for the new Council. No new or additional funding is recommended. There will continue to be ongoing discussions between the Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing workstream and the Localism workstream to ensure no grant funding is missed and that the process for grant awards is coordinated.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

6.1 Legal advice has been sought at this stage and there are no specific implications. It is possible that legal advice will be needed if a different way forward is selected.

## **7.0 Other Key Risks**

7.1 There is always a risk that an independent organisation may fail and services cease to residents but the risk of this is reduced if funding awards are supported in the short term.

7.2 There are opportunities to co-design services anew and to deliver service improvements and/or greater value for money. Extending the funding awards provides time for a collaborative change process with VCSO partners and lessens the risk of service interruption or failure.

## **8.0 Dependencies**

8.1 Please include any dependencies associated with the recommendations outlined in the report and ensure that you have consulted the following officers in preparing this report:

- Programme Board Monitoring Officer
- Programme Board S151 Officer
- Programme Lead

## **9.0 Consultation**

9.1 Not Applicable.

## **10.0 Communications Plan**

10.1 District Councils made the funding awards last year and publicised these. There is therefore no additional communications requirement. However if an alternative option is selected a communications plan would need to be defined and agreed.

## **11.0 Equalities Implications**

11.1 The recommendations continue existing funding and therefore no changes are proposed that have implications for individuals or groups with protected characteristics. If grant funding to some or all of the mentioned VCSOs is not continued then an EIA would be required as most of the grants support service delivery to vulnerable residents who may have protected characteristics.

**12.0 Data Implications**

12.1 N/A.

**13.0 Next Steps**

13.1 The report will proceed to the Shadow Executive. If grant awards are supported then the recipient VCOSOs will be informed in writing with confirmation of the grants that they will receive.

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>None.</b>
--------------------------	--------------