

RESOURCES COMMITTEE BUDGET REPORT

WEST DEVON COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SERVICES (WDCVS)

The Council currently makes a funding contribution of £8,500 per annum to the West Devon CVS to enable the achievement of specified outcomes to promote community and voluntary action in West Devon.

There is a service level agreement (SLA) in place to ensure that funding is used for the agreed purpose. Monitoring meetings take place 6 monthly and a report is presented to Overview and Scrutiny annually. Members last received a report in January 2013. The Committee may also choose to invite a representative of the CVS to attend a meeting of the Committee to present on their work and how it is achieving outcomes for West Devon.

The SLA is a rolling one, which means that at the end of the term, should a review not take place the existing SLA continues under the same terms. A three year agreement ending 31st March 2013 has just been reviewed and revised outcomes are being incorporated based on the Devon County Agreement. The SLA has initially been renewed for one year with the ability to extend for up to a further 2 years. The Council is required to give at least 6 months notice to terminate the agreement.

Best Value Statutory Guidance issued by the Government in September 2011 sets out clear expectations for Councils considering changes to funding for local voluntary and community groups. Some key points from the guidance are listed below:

“Government is committed to the principles in the renewed National Compact - the agreement which aims to ensure that Government and civil society organisations work effectively to achieve common goals and outcomes for the benefit of communities and citizens in England.

Under the Duty of Best Value authorities should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision.

To achieve the right balance – and before deciding how to fulfil their Best Value Duty – authorities are under a Duty to Consult representatives of a wide range of local persons; this is not optional.

Authorities should be responsive to the benefits and needs of voluntary and community sector organisations of all sizes.

Authorities should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate reductions - by not passing on larger reductions to the voluntary and community sector and small businesses as a whole, than they take on themselves - and in particular:

- An authority intending to reduce or end funding (where ‘funding’ means both grant funding and any fixed term contract) or other support to a voluntary and community organisation or small business should give at least three months' notice of the actual reductions to both the organisation involved and the public/service users.

- An authority should actively engage the organisation and service users as early as possible before making a decision on: the future of the service; any knock-on effect on assets used to provide this service; and the wider impact on the local community.
- Authorities should make provision for the organisation, service users, and wider community to put forward options on how to reshape the service or project. Local authorities should assist this by making available all appropriate information, in line with the government's transparency agenda".

It could be argued that the work the CVS undertakes supporting local community and voluntary groups helps them build capacity to enable the delivery of the Localism agenda and reduces approaches to the Council for advice and support; an example of this might be signposting and advising local groups of funding options and assisting with funding bids.

The Government guidance and the value local communities and the Council receive from supporting the CVS will need to be considered when making funding decisions.