

## Report for West Devon Borough Council | Overview & Scrutiny meeting 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016

West Devon CVS requests a continuation of the grant from the Borough Council to continue the provision of 'infrastructure support' to communities across West Devon. This support is provided to community groups and organisations and individuals who want to participate in their communities through volunteering or developing community action.

Community volunteers &/or organisations are playing an ever increasing role within communities, supporting & underpinning the local delivery of services & activities.

The grant will contribute to our core service provision supplementing our services delivered through the grant from Devon County Council.

The services we offer as 'core' Infrastructure support are based on those defined by the National Association for Community & Voluntary Action (NAVCA) and provide the foundation for our all activities. This establishes the "quality standard" for our service delivery

Using this vital core, we are able to provide added value through drawing down additional funding, entering into other partnerships, developing support for vulnerable people, helping to build resilient communities and ensuring that West Devon's Voice (and the issues facing our communities) are heard in a number of strategic partnerships and forums across the County such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Steering & Development Group.

The essential funding from WDBC will support West Devon CVS as follows:

- Contribute to staff and office costs allowing us to continue to offer face to face support to groups and organisations, Outreach activity in Okehampton and Tavistock as well as online information and delivery through partnership working with Devon Voluntary Action (DeVA)
- Carry out a robust stakeholder consultation to inform a new business plan for WDCVS to put in place during 2018
- Identify the issues and challenges facing the sector and our communities specific to West Devon
- Maintain intelligence about the not for private profit sector in West Devon
- Continue our membership of national organisations who, using our local intelligence, inform and lobby government and funders so policy and funding supports local charities and community groups

We will deliver support to

- **existing community organisations** based in or delivering services to West Devon to develop or maintain a sustainable organisation. This covers areas such as governance, fundraising, capacity building. We will focus on those organisations in particular which support the vulnerable people in our communities but will also offer support to organisations of every type across a wider spectrum eg health, environment, recreation, children, arts etc
- **individuals** wanting to initiate community action. We will assist these individuals by using our intelligence to make introductions to likeminded groups/ organisations/ individuals where appropriate, facilitating meetings, brokering discussions with

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fundlers through to advice on formal governance structures and helping with training and skills building.

- **communities** who want help to address identified needs & gaps in services, building local resilience and community assets. We will use an agreed market development process, shared by all DeVA partners, which has been developed to encourage local responses where it is appropriate and feasible.
- **bring organisations together** to network, to learn together & from each other, 'see the bigger picture', and have a voice; reducing duplication and creating a wider network of 'joined up' support for communities in West Devon. The funding will directly enable 2 of these multi sector events (one each in Tavistock and Okehampton) to identify and encourage partnership working and common understanding.
- individuals who want to participate in their communities through **volunteering** will be supported by the use of on-line systems. With those who need help being supported through limited face to face local support: targeted at the most vulnerable, this helps develop employability & other skills, improves self-esteem and confidence and fosters a sense of purpose

Whilst our core services do not directly impact on the lives of individuals, through helping organisations & people to help others, through charitable & community services or through the benefits of volunteering, we have an impact on a great many individuals in West Devon.

Community action helps to connect people in communities and can reduce loneliness and isolation. It can harness the power of many to improve people's well-being and lead to different way of doing things and providing new ideas which can be shared through West Devon CVS networks.

By developing ideas for community action often aimed at addressing a lack of services or unmet needs within communities, residents who are often the most vulnerable and/or isolated will benefit.

The services West Devon CVS provides to groups, particularly contribute to the Council's organisational objectives in the areas of wellbeing, communities and infrastructure with other organisations we support delivering services in the areas of Heritage and Environment. Support provided to groups has included advice on setting up an independent residents association, multiple interventions with individuals and groups to assist in new service provision of mental health services, funding advice for a number of arts organisations and festival committees and advising on the setting up of a west Devon youth partnership and facilitating partnerships on behalf of groups delivering services for older people.

Whilst often not cited as directly contributing to the economy, our intelligence indicates that we have just over 8,000 active volunteers in West Devon the economic value of which is calculated to be in the region of £9 million pounds.

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41% of groups based in West Devon employ at least one part time worker, accounting for around 7% of the working population in West Devon<sup>1</sup>

We have established relationships with over 500 organisations and projects either based in or delivering services in West Devon. These include those working in areas of:

- Financial support and debt management including Citizens Advice, Credit Unions, Church-based financial advice, Money Advice, SSAFA
- Health and Wellbeing including surgery based support schemes, conditions specific groups, exercise, sport and leisure providers as well as social activities and clubs
- Housing and Homelessness including Housing Support providers, Residents, Foodbanks, Furniture Stores, Salvation Army,

As well as a range of other providers including: Family support, Advocacy, Faith Groups and Carer Support.

With our grant from WDBC, in partnership, we will

- identify gaps in services and support the development of new services to help reduce health inequalities and social isolation
- encourage new volunteering activities and services, helping ensure local people have access to activities that promote positive healthy lifestyles and wellbeing
- empower and encourage local people and social activists to develop new ideas for their communities and support them to develop new enterprises & projects
- provide access to opportunities for local residents to develop skills and enable them to contribute to the local economy
- share community intelligence and input with new and existing partnerships bringing new activity and investment into the West Devon
- provide continued support to village halls, play areas, community transport, sports and recreation, environmental & heritage projects helping to create thriving communities, attractive to new businesses and employees
- facilitate engagement and consultation with voluntary sector service providers and users at a number of different levels
- bring new funding into West Devon through our own projects (something that will not be possible without a strong core local organisation) and by supporting local organisations in identifying and applying for funding.

Our small core team has low management costs and overheads and provides an efficient and effective service. We employ skilled and experienced part –time staff members supported by volunteers who help in the office and at our outreach events.

We charge a membership fee of £12 per annum and a fixed fee of £25 per hour for additional support.

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<sup>1</sup> These statistics are taken from the Report 'Third Sector Overview of West Devon' Produced by Devon Voluntary Action in April 2016

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In terms of value for money, WDCVS supported 139 groups in financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. For the investment of £8,500 from the Borough Council this equates to an average cost of just over £60 per group. These groups delivered services to at least 5,000 individuals throughout the Borough.

West Devon CVS remains committed to encouraging change in our communities to help support those most in need, whilst safeguarding as far as possible the resilience of our local communities, our heritage and natural environment.

The effectiveness of our outcomes can be seen through the benefits to the organisations we support, their improved sustainability and capacity to deliver services. These services are preventative in nature and they in turn provide significant cost savings 'down the line'

We will demonstrate clear outcomes & impact to our funders and stakeholders and set appropriate targets to measure our performance, including:

- Stakeholder survey to be conducted
- A 3yr Business Plan to be prepared for implementation in 2018
- Charging structures will be reviewed
- New projects set up in West Devon CVS to underpin the core activities
- Statistical monitoring of work with groups and outcomes data aligned to council priorities collected 6 monthly
- Running costs within pre agreed budget
- Continued review of services and identification of potential opportunities for greater partnership working with South Hams CVS and within the DeVA partnership

The money received from WDBC supports the core foundation from which we are able to deliver our services and develop new projects both for ourselves and with communities. Our philosophy has always been to maintain our services to the best level possible. Over the past three years we have reduced staff hours, closed our office in Tavistock and made economies of scale to a level where it is no longer viable for staff roles to be further reduced. We are shortly downsizing our remaining office premises in order to make further savings. Should the funding from WDBC be withdrawn or reduced then our only remaining option is to consider the complete withdrawal of some or all of our services.