

Briefing paper for PCC Resources Committee Meeting

1. Introduction

1.1 Community First for Portsmouth (CFfP) exists to make a difference to the lives of the people of Portsmouth every day. Our purpose is "To lead the development of a vibrant, sustainable and independent voluntary and community sector (VCS) whose voice is at the heart of decision making."

1.2 Following growing confidence in the ability of CFfP to provide strong leadership for Portsmouth's diverse Voluntary and Community Sector, a 3 year core funding contract with PCC was agreed in June 2009.

1.3 It was recognised that the core contract would not finance all the activities provided by CFfP, but the core contract would be vital to enabling additional resources to be levered into the organisation, city and sector. The core contract awarded in 2009/10 was £175, 000, that is 30% less in real terms than had been the grant in 2006/7.

1.4 Some examples of the additional resources recently attracted to the sector from the utilisation of the Core Grant to CFfP include:

1. £250,000 over three years for the City from the Grassroots grant programme
2. £200,000 over two years from the Primary Care Trust Voluntary and Community Sector Investment Fund
3. £110,000 over two years for the Small Sparks healthy choices grants programme
4. £125,000 via the hand in hand intergenerational grants programme
5. £30,000 from Zurich Assurance and NHS Portsmouth to fund a part time Business Development Manager for 2 years.
6. £30,000 in Capacity Builders Funding to purchase new IT and renew infrastructure at 338 Commercial Road

1.5 This contract was structured around the operating environment at that time, 2009, with a focus on CFfP:-

- Providing leadership for the VCS in Portsmouth during the recession
- Strengthening and expanding volunteering
- Ensuring the voice of the VCS was heard by key decision makers
- Delivering training for staff and trustees in the CVS
- Providing advice on funding, business development and setting up groups
- Provision of financial services to small groups
- Improving communication between VCS organisations e.g. Merlin database and CFfP website
- Supporting Public Sector Service delivery by the VCS
- Providing support services to the VCS e.g. CRB checks

2. Delivery in 2009/10

2.1 There has been strong delivery of contract targets in 2009/10 with some of the highlights being:-

- Development of the Partnership Improvement Action Plan with key statutory partners and facilitating that the VCS have responsibility for holding all partners to account.
- Creation of a VCS leadership group to ensure PIP delivery and to lead cultural change in the sector.
- Agreement by the LSP in January 2010 of funding principles re how to make funding reduction decisions, proposed by the VCS.
- Over delivery of Volunteer placements by 90%, 659 placed against a target of 350. Volunteer placements have grown by over 300% since 2007.
- Establishment of a time limited LSP wide volunteer development forum to improve the quality of volunteering in the city.
- Establishing JobAid, a free volunteer and staff recruitment service in partnership with Jobsite, Portsmouth Football Club and Volunteer England.
- Delivery of funding advice to over 200 organisations, leading to successful funding applications and bringing resources into the city e.g. Friends of the Earth obtaining £225,000 from the Big Lottery Fund in 2010 for a grow to eat well project.
- Provision of Tendering and outcomes training to 35 VCS organisations in the city, plus delivering 28 TRACS training courses attended by 295 learners.
- 29 VCS organisations received Small Sparks Funding, 55 received Grass Roots funding, and 8 organisations were awarded contracts for health services via the PCT Investment fund. All this helped develop capacity and sustainability.
- Provision of financial services and payroll to 45 VCS organisations.
- Administered over 550 CRB's for VCS organisations
- Organised numerous well attended briefing events, community events and Celebration Big Event. Including a VCS elections hustings event watched by over 4,500 people on line via Portsmouth Live TV.
- Expanding organisational capacity by 4 part time staff via Future Jobs fund and secured funding for a part time business development manager for 2 years.
- Supporting the development of new working arrangements for the Community Network.
- New website and Merlin database in place. Focus newsletter enhanced and developed mass e mailing capacity to over 650 organisations on MERLIN database. Merlin data capture commenced.
- New UK On Line service developed offering free internet access and IT training.
- Published our 5 Year Strategic Plan 2009 to 2014, around a purpose, organisational values and 5 key strategic objectives.
- Signing a new 5 year lease on our office building with PCC
- Expanding Shopmobility into the Royal Naval Dockyard wef July 2010
- Negotiating use of space in the new Palmerston Road Library to promote the work of our sector.
- Retaining our Investor in People status and being accredited with Volunteer England and having the National Association of Voluntary Action (NAVCA) Quality Award.

CFFP has made great strides during the first year of its new contract and this demonstrates that Portsmouth City Council is getting value for money from its contract with CFFP. **However...**

3. New context

3.1 The context for CFFP and the VCS has clearly changed dramatically in the last 3 months, with reality of severe public sector financial restraints combined with the opportunities available for more service delivery and other gains from the "Big Society" agenda.

3.2 The need for cultural change in Portsmouth's VCS is enormous and the challenges ahead will provide a real opportunity to make the necessary changes. It is the unanimous view of the VCS Leadership Group that the need for the strong leadership and coordination that CFFP can bring to the city is more important now than ever.

3.3 A new culture is needed that will demonstrate the following characteristics:-

1. An energetic and dynamic VCS in Portsmouth which is collaborative, effective and evidence based; meeting the needs of commissioners and demonstrating clear outcomes.
2. Empowering and supporting Community First for Portsmouth by providing a clear mandate from the VCS of what the organisation should be doing to lead, support, and champion the sector. This will then form the basis of contract with PCC.
3. Ensuring that all VCS organisations systematically review their strategic direction and service delivery models in the light of the changing context to ensure they are customer focussed and fit for the future.
4. Being confident and proactive to shape it's future.

3.4 In partnership with the VCS Leadership Group, the Trustee board and staff of CFFP have developed a new set of operational priorities for this new operating environment, with a focus on becoming more flexible, smart and responsive in delivering our leadership and support.

3.5 The new work plan includes:-

- Developing VCS collaborative business models through which the VCS can deliver services to the community, respond to tenders, deliver lower unit costs and add greater added.
- Sharing back office functions and developing a city wide VCS Kite Mark for accredited organisations, to demonstrate adherence to standards of governance, management and performance developed with our leading stakeholders.
- Developing ways of demonstrating evidence of economic and social outcomes and impact in the sector.
- Strengthening engagement with commissioners in service design.
- Expanding the membership of the Leadership Group and developing leaders at all levels across the sector.
- Expanding our strong volunteer services.

- Establishing a VCS help and support line for organisations being challenged by funding cuts, signposting where they can get information, advice and support.
- Increasing the range of briefing and support material available to trustees and staff in VCS organisations.
- Exploring partnership working with other councils of voluntary services in adjacent local authorities.
- Developing our website and new social media capacity to provide prompt information and get timely feedback from all parts of the VCS in Portsmouth as a basis for rapid consultation.
- Reinforcing the need for funding organisations to follow the agreed LSP principles when making difficult financial decisions.
- Providing a voice for small organisations.
- Developing Merlin to be an interactive database of VCS organisations that can be used to inform discussion, policy and funding.
- Strengthening our accredited volunteering service to place and support more volunteers.
- Raising the profile of great work being delivered by the VCS in Portsmouth by organising a local ministerial attended event.
- Review existing groupings and networks to minimise duplication and maximise value added.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The future will bring both challenges and opportunities for CFFP and the VCS in Portsmouth.

4.2 A strong VCS needs a strong Community First for Portsmouth.

4.3 CFFP is responding to the changed agenda with a new work plan for delivery over the next 12 months.

4.4 The new VCS leadership group will continue to provide critical challenge to CFFP ensuring that it delivers what the VCS in the city needs.

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CFFP
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