

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **13 October 2022**

Title: **Key Partnerships Funding**

Portfolio Area: **Councillor Jonathan Hawkins (Lead Member for Communities)**
Councillor Nicky Hopwood (Lead Member for Cost of Living)

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y / N**

Date next steps can be taken: the recommendations will be considered by Council at its meeting to be held on 15 December 2022.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive:

- 1. NOTE the positive contribution of our key funded partners in supporting our ambitions as set out in our Corporate Strategy, Better Lives for All;**
- 2. RECOMMEND to Council to AGREE to extend the funding for the following key partners for a further two years as follows:**
 - SW Museum Development Trust - £4,000;**
 - Ivybridge Ring and Ride - £5,710; and**
 - South Hams CVS - £10,000;**
- 3. RECOMMEND to Council to AGREE an increase in funding for each of the next two years in recognition of additional activities being delivered for the following partners:**

- Citizens Advice South Hams – £70,867 (an increase of £10,000 per annum funded from Covid-19 vulnerability grant underspend);
- South Devon AONB - £28,749 (an increase of £8,000 per annum), subject to a Service Level Agreement in respect of focused support to meet the demand of South Hams District Council Development Management Service; and

4. REQUIRE that officers work with Newton Abbot Ring and Ride to request further information about the service provided within the district and, if appropriate, consider an updated application through the 2023/24 budget setting process.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council has a number of key community and voluntary organisations that it funds to provide functions that complement Council Services or provide functions that support our ambitions of Better Lives for All (our Corporate Strategy).
- 1.2 In 2019 it was agreed to provide a three-year funding arrangement to these key partners in order to provide them with longer term financial certainty.
- 1.3 The three-year funding arrangement has now entered its final year and it is important that a decision is made as to the future support for the organisations concerned.
- 1.4 This report highlights some of the positive work of our key partners and recommends an approach for extending the current funding term by two years.

2. Background

- 2.1 For many years the Council has financially supported organisations that complement existing Council services or that are providing other support aligned to our own priorities.
- 2.2 In 2019, Council explored (as part of the budget setting process), a three-year funding agreement for key partner organisations.
- 2.3 Organisations were asked to complete an application form which was assessed in terms of how it aligned to our ambitions or how it supported the Council in delivery of its services.
- 2.4 The applications were reviewed by a senior officer and Executive Lead Members before a recommendation was made on which organisations to support.

2.5 As a result, it was agreed that the Council would fund six key partner organisations, all of whom have played important roles in supporting our ambitions for the future.

2.6 The following partners were supported through the 2019 – 2023 funding agreement.

Organisation & website	Amount per annum
South Devon AONB https://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/	£20,749
Citizens Advice https://southhamscab.org.uk/	£60,867
CVS https://www.southhamscvs.org.uk/	£10,000
Ivybridge Ring and Ride https://www.ringandride.net/	£5,710
Newton Abbot Community Transport https://newtonabbotcta.org/ring-ride	£7,370
South Hams Museum Group	£4,000
TOTAL PARTNERSHIP FUNDING	£108,696

2.7 In order to provide greater financial certainty for our partners, in August 2022, they were each asked to update their funding application setting out why their services are required and how they align to our corporate priorities.

2.8 The deadline for submission of applications to be received was 19th September 2022.

3. The importance of our key partners in supporting our priorities

3.1 While our Better Lives for All corporate strategy was only adopted in September 2021, our key partners have all played, and continue to play important roles in delivering on our longer-term vision for South Hams.

South Devon AONB

3.2 Ensuring that we protect and enhance our natural environment and responding to the climate and biodiversity emergency are both specific priorities within our strategy.

3.3 In addition to its day-to-day role, the AONB is delivering a number of projects that support these ambitions including-

- a. Life on the Edge - A multi-partner project that aims to restore viable populations of some of the UK's rarest invertebrates and plants living along the South Devon coast between Berry Head and Wembury
- b. Supporting the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme which provides funding to allow farmers and land managers to work with the AONB to provide benefits for nature, climate, people and places
- c. Slapton Adaptation Project

- d. Dwarf seagrass meadow research project
 - e. Saving Devon's Treescapes project
 - f. Estuaries Partnership projects including survey and assess the condition of Dart Estuary saltmarshes, consider enhancement of the Kingsbridge Washbrook Stream to incorporate semi-natural silt traps and produce a State of Devon Sea report
- 3.4 While these are just a few of the recent activities undertaken by the AONB, it clearly demonstrates a strong alignment to the Better Lives for All ambitions, including specifically Action BN1.3 (Supporting Schemes that contribute to enhancing the marine environment)
- 3.5 The SHDC contribution of £20,749 toward core costs has remained the same since 2014/15 and now represents a real terms reduction. DEFRA have substantially increased their contribution in the last two years but from 2022/23 onwards, the additional contribution is contingent on 25% match funding being provided.
- 3.6 In addition to enabling AONB to meet the match funding requirements of DEFRA, increasing the funding will also enable AONB to respond to increases in the Development Management caseload.
- 3.7 It is recommended that this request be supported and that the total funding for AONB be increase to £28,749 per year from 01st April 2023 for a period of two years, subject to agreeing a Service Level Agreement including clear performance targets for the additional funding. The second years funding being dependent on that performance being delivered in year 1.

Citizens Advice

- 3.8 Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of South Hams residents is another important aspect of the Better Lives for All Strategy, specifically working with partners to pilot new approaches to tackling rural poverty (Action CW1.1)
- 3.9 Citizens Advice is the most significant partnership we have in terms of the funding allocated to it. They play an important role in supporting the Health and Wellbeing of our residents by offering them advice and support on a range of issues including Housing, Debt and employment.
- 3.10 During the current funding round, Citizens Advice have been required to change their operating model to offer a much more remote service due to covid restrictions. To enable more people to access the service, they have installed video booths and rolled out an app for mobile phones so that discussions can be had over video call.

- 3.11 The advice provided to residents through Citizens Advice ensures that they are able to access benefits that they are entitled to (including by supporting individuals with Universal Credit applications), and to tackle problem debts. If Citizens Advice were not able to continue offering this support, it is likely that those seeking support would turn to the Council by which time their support need could be more acute.
- 3.12 Alongside the core partnership funding, we have increased funding to Citizens Advice by £20,000 for the next six months to provide 3 days per week dedicated support to Ukrainians arriving through the Government Homes for Ukraine scheme. This has been funded through ring-fenced government grant.
- 3.13 With the cost of living continuing to increase, the role of Citizens Advice in providing support and advice to our residents will be even more important than usual. Citizens Advice are already struggling to recruit to volunteer roles and therefore meet the demand for their services.
- 3.14 We are working closely with them to develop joint communications and signposting of support services but as they are not able to meet the existing demand, this clearly needs addressing.
- 3.15 Of the £60,867 grant received from us, £36,000 is paid back to the Council in rent and service charges.
- 3.16 Citizens Advice have requested that in order to continue to meet the current level of demand, the Council consider increasing their funding by;
- a. £17,141 in 2023/4 to reinstate the core grant to its original value (pre-2012 levels)
 - b. £5,000 to support the fuel price hike (note that this request was made prior to the Government announced support for business energy costs)
 - c. £10,000 to support the recruitment and development of additional volunteers and for further service development in response to the cost of living crisis.
- 3.17 Since CA submission of their funding application, Government have announced support for organisations on business energy tariffs and therefore we do not feel it appropriate to support the requested increase of £5,000 in respect of energy costs at this point in time.
- 3.18 It is recommended that;
- a. Current funding arrangement of £60,867 be continued for two years (2023/24 and 2024/25) and;
 - b. An increase of £10,000 a year for each of those two years be made in recognition of the additional costs and

challenges facing Citizens Advice in meeting the demand for their services from our residents.

- c. Officers continue to engage with Citizens Advice to identify opportunities to work closer in the coming months.

CVS

- 3.19 Another group at the centre of supporting South Hams residents through Covid-19 was the CVS, who are also now supporting us in our Homes for Ukraine programme.
- 3.20 A large number of community organisations stepped in across the district to ensure that some of our most vulnerable residents were able to access much needed support including collection of food and essential medical supplies, ensuring those individuals were able to get to medical appointments with volunteer drivers etc.
- 3.21 CVS played an important role in co-ordinating this effort, from offering new groups support and advice on how to operate in the correct way, training for community leaders and volunteers and linking volunteers to groups.
- 3.22 The CVS also continued with their business-as-usual activities throughout the pandemic including supporting voluntary organisations with signposting to fundraising opportunities.
- 3.23 Now that we are learning to live with Covid-19, the CVS is again stepping in to play an important role in respect of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. They are already supporting voluntary sector groups with linking up to translators, providing training and resources to community groups and ensuring signposting for hosts and refugees is in place.
- 3.24 We have developed a formal proposal with CVS where they are facilitating grants to community groups working directly with Ukrainians and this is working well. They are also taking a lead role in signposting Ukrainians to community activities and events.
- 3.25 The work of the CVS directly aligns to the Council ambitions of Better Lives for All, specifically through Action CW1.6 (Work with the Voluntary Sector to plan how we can work better together in the future).
- 3.26 It is therefore proposed that the key partnership funding agreement (£10,000 pa) for South Hams CVS be extended to provide certainty of funding and enabling continued contribution to our strategic priorities for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 3.27 Furthermore, as set out in the Cost of Living Report being considered by Executive today, it is proposed that further

conversations are held with South Hams CVS around how they may support our Cost of Living response action plan.

Ivybridge and District Community Transport

- 3.28 Ivybridge & District Community Transport has seen volunteer drivers continue to offer vital transport throughout the pandemic and beyond. These services enable residents to maintain their independence and dignity and to also continue to live in their own homes whilst alleviating isolation and loneliness.
- 3.29 Ivybridge & District Community Transport Association offers a Dial-a-ride service (which includes wheelchair accessible door to door minibus services), volunteer car services to enable those with no transport of their own to access medical and healthcare appointments and a scheduled minibus service covering Blackawton and Dittisham.
- 3.30 Ensuring that our communities are connected with easy access to transport for our most vulnerable residents is an incredibly important element of supporting the Health and Wellbeing of the District as well as reducing the cost on statutory services of transporting individuals to essential medical appointments.
- 3.31 Ivybridge and District Community Transport supports our Better Lives for All actions CW1.1 (Rural Poverty – through provision of affordable transport) and CW1.3 (Supporting more people to live independently for as long as they chose)
- 3.32 It is therefore proposed that the funding for Ivybridge & District Community Transport Association (£5,710) be extended to provide certainty of funding and continued contribution to our strategic priorities for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Museum Development Trust

- 3.33 This Museum Development Trust, while not at the forefront of the Covid response, was significantly impacted by the pandemic.
- 3.34 The Museum Development Trust supports museum, heritage and cultural services in five towns within South Hams as well as educational services including outreach to schools and community organisations. They also support museums and heritage organisations within the district to access grants and other development services.
- 3.35 The work of the Museum Development Trust has enabled £92,968 in grants being awarded to museums in the South Hams.

- 3.36 The Museum Development Trust activities not only support the economy of the South Hams (through providing accredited (and therefore trusted) museums, but it also plays a key role in our ambition to celebrate our past.
- 3.37 Initial discussions have been held with the Museum Development Trust to explore opportunities to link their work into our promotion of the visitor economy (Better Lives for All Action TE1.3) and we will continue to work with them on this.
- 3.38 The SHDC funding equates to a 2.5 return on investment and it is therefore recommended that the current funding be extended at its current level to provide certainty of funding and continued contribution to our strategic priorities for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Newton Abbot Community Transport

- 3.39 Newton Abbot Community Transport provide wheelchair accessible vehicles, ring and ride door to door transport to local shops and services, volunteer driven minibuses for community groups, clubs and schools and local scheduled bus services.
- 3.40 The funding application as it stands does not provide sufficient information for us to understand fully how the service meets the needs of residents nor how the funding is used which is important when awarding public funding.
- 3.41 It is therefore recommended that Officers work with Newton Abbot Community Transport to understand the full scale of the service being provided in South Hams. Subject to these discussions, a further application may be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 It is recommended that the funding be agreed as set out in section 3 of this report, with a requirement for each Key Partner to provide an annual report on activities and attend Overview and Scrutiny to present their report.
- 4.2 Executive could decide to recommend to Council to no longer fund any or all of the partners or reduce funding given the significant increases in costs the Council is also experiencing as set out in our Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 The recommendation is to offer key partners an extension to their current funding arrangement by two years to 31st March 2025 as follows:-

Organisation & website	Current Amount per annum	Proposed amount per annum 23/23 and 24/25
South Devon AONB	£20,749	£28,749
Citizens Advice	£60,867	£70,867
CVS	£10,000	£10,000
Newton Abbot Community Transport	£7,370	£0* (See 3.41)
Ivybridge Ring and Ride	£5,710	£5,710
South Hams Museum Group	£4,000	£4,000
TOTAL PARTNERSHIP FUNDING	£108,696	£119,326

- 5.2 It is also proposed that officers work with Newton Abbot Community Transport as set out in 3.41 of this report and if appropriate, consider a further application as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.
- 5.3 It is also recommended that the Director of Strategy and Governance develop a Service Level Agreement with AONB setting out the requirements to meet the demand of our Development Management Service over the next two years, with funding being contingent on meeting the agreed levels of service.
- 5.4 Finally, each of the key partners within the report would be scheduled to provide an update to Members at least once a year through attendance at Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	y	The Council has no legal duty to provide financial support to the groups included within this report beyond the term of the current funding arrangement (31/03/2023). It does have a duty to ensure that public funding is spent appropriately. Carrying out the process of requiring key partners to demonstrate the contribution they make to our corporate priorities is a key element of ensuring scrutiny of funding awarded.
Financial implications to include reference	Y	This report sets out an increase in the overall partnership funding budget. This increase will be met from funding provided to meet the needs of vulnerable residents through the Covid

to value for money		Vulnerability Funding provided to us by Devon County Council and aligns with the Cost of Living report considered today.
Risk		There are a number of risks to consider in deciding the future of partnership funding. Each of the partner organisations plays a key role in contributing to the ambitions of Better Lives for All and in stopping or reducing funding at this point we will negatively impact the ability to deliver on some of our specific actions within the delivery plan.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	All
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	N	
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	The partners set out in this report provide valuable services to all of our residents regardless of protected characteristics.
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	The partners in this report contribute to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of residents across the South Hams.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A – Funding Applications