

Part A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: Monday, 9 November 2020
Report author: Voluntary Sector Specialist
Title: Voluntary and Community Strategy

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The new Voluntary and Community Strategy (VC Strategy) links to the 'Watford Together' Council Plan. In particular, the aim to: 'Work even more closely with the Voluntary and Community Sector, to build a resilient community where people support each other'.
- 1.2 This new VC Strategy also supports the 'Community' work stream of the Council's 'Road To Renewal' plan, which sets out how the council will focus on moving forward from Covid-19.
- 1.3 The VC Strategy also reflects the findings of the Member-led Watford and Three Rivers Trust Task Group which presented its final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2020.

2.0 Risks

2.1

| Nature of risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood) |
|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|--|
| VC Strategy is not adopted | Voluntary and Community organisations that support vulnerable residents will not be able to do so effectively due to lack of funding options, poor information sharing and inadequate | Adopt or amend the VC Strategy | Treat | 4 |

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|---|--|--|-------|---|
| | volunteer management. | | | |
| VC Strategy is not delivered | The wellbeing of vulnerable residents will be detrimentally affected by a less resourced, less informed and less coordinated Voluntary and Community Sector. | Detailed delivery plan developed in response to strategy | Treat | 4 |
| Only some aspects of the Strategy are delivered | Preventative support offered by many Voluntary and Community organisations will be less than satisfactory and may cause potential long-term health or social problems. | Annual review of progress against the plan | Treat | 4 |

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Voluntary and Community Strategy is adopted.
- 3.2 That delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Community & Environmental Services to develop a 4 year action plan to deliver the Strategy, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- 3.3 That, once completed, progress with this action plan is reported to Cabinet as part of the quarterly updates on progress with the Council Plan.

Further information:

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4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 This report introduces the Voluntary and Community Strategy for 2020 to 2024 and links to the overall Council Plan. Please see the attached VC Strategy for further details.
- 4.2 There are 24 recommendations within the VC Strategy, listed below.

Post-Covid Recovery and Renewal

1. Review the Watford Helps triage and referral processes, to clarify the complementary roles of all signposting/social prescribing bodies, i.e. Watford Helps, HertsHelp, the W3RT Wellbeing Hub, Watford's Healthy Hub, HCNS, Watford Together, Neighbours Together, etc.
2. Ensure that partners at Hertfordshire County Council-commissioned service HertsHelp have accessible local information to support Watford residents effectively, and ease local services.
3. Consider how to work towards a long-term town-wide strategic approach to respond specifically to issues of social isolation and mental health in the community.
4. Build on best practice in the VCS to tackle digital isolation as part of the Council's Road to Renewal plan.
5. Work with W3RT to create and share accessibly a collection of case studies with innovations and best practices, developed in response to Covid-19, from the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Engaging Volunteers

6. Review the Watford Helps volunteer brokerage system, to clarify the complementary roles of all volunteering services which Watford residents might access, including TeamHerts Volunteering, do-it.org and W3RT.
7. Ensure that partners at Hertfordshire County Council-commissioned service TeamHerts Volunteering have accessible local information to efficiently help Watford residents, and ease local services.
8. Ensure that there is a formal process for volunteer referrals to organisations to ensure both skills and motivations are considered, and that engagement information is captured.
9. Coordinate approaches for the recognition of volunteers by the Council and other partners in the community.
10. Build on the response to the Covid-19 crisis as a basis to change attitudes to support the most vulnerable in society, by building opportunities for professional development and long-term volunteering such as trusteeship.

Diversifying Funding

11. Review the Watford Helps Community Fund, to clarify its role in relation to similar funds, such as HCF's Coronavirus Relief Fund and WCH's Community Development Fund.

12. Ensure that the administration of a revised Community Fund is done as collaboratively and transparently as possible. Consider support from a range of partners on this such as Hertfordshire Community Foundation.
13. Consider aligning Community Fund grants more closely to strategic priorities.
14. Consider allocating part of the Community Fund to projects lasting more than 12 months.
15. Align reporting schedules of all Watford Borough Council ‘Business-As-Usual’ expenditure with the Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure strategic priorities are considered.
16. Consider a full-time fundraising post, to support the Community Fund and VCS groups through the CVS.
17. Consider how to explicitly support the Voluntary and Community Sector to build financial resilience and diversify income streams alongside traditional fundraising.

Information Sharing

18. Review the Watford Helps networks, clarifying the roles of groups such as the Mayor’s Volunteering Planning Group in line with the One Watford review due in December. Ensure that there is scope across Watford for VCS leaders to input to both operational and strategic discussions and decision-making.
19. Review principles of CVS approach so as to minimise any possible conflicts of interest between W3RT’s support to its members and its role as a service delivery organisation.
20. Review the CVS staffing role at W3RT to ensure more WBC input with regards to strategic and operational responsibilities, with the aim to encourage long-term staff who can build up strong local knowledge and relationships.
21. Consider how to support VCS with collection, analysis and data sharing on changing needs across Watford, as part of wider approach by WBC and statutory partners.
22. Consider the groupings and ‘themes’ used to categorise VCS organisations as a means to link new and emerging groups to those with similar aims.
23. Refresh the CVS’ KPIs on actively engaging with business so as to lay out explicit plans on how to share knowledge and skills between local businesses and the VCS.
24. Work with W3RT to create a proactive action plan to better engage with all parts of the Voluntary and Community Sector, particularly those that support underrepresented communities including those from BAME communities and those smaller groups that may not have their own physical spaces.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications for the Council arising from adopting the Voluntary and Community Strategy.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Interim Head of Legal comments that there are no legal implications.

5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

5.3.1 As this is a new policy, an equalities impact analysis has been undertaken. The analysis is attached as Appendix 3 to this report. The main conclusions of that analysis is that the strategy will aim to actively aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people.

The strategy will aim to actively aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010 by:

- Creating a strategic approach to social isolation and mental health at Recommendation 3
- Ensuring that there is a formal referral process for volunteers at Recommendation 8
- Ensuring that there is collaborative and transparent administration of the Community Fund at Recommendation 12
- Avoiding any possible conflicts of interest at Recommendation 19

The strategy will aim to advance equality of opportunity for:

- all Voluntary and Community Sector groups, and those residents that benefit from their services, particularly those who are new and emerging; seeking to be more financially resilient; smaller or from underrepresented communities, as impact from all Recommendations
- Watford residents who seek support (particularly support with health, social isolation and digital isolation) by strengthening links between those organisations who are offering 'signposting' support, as an impact of Recommendations 1-3

- Watford residents who seek to volunteer, by providing them with a clear and thorough support, as an impact of Recommendations 6-8
- Improving support for all groups but particularly those that support underrepresented communities including those from BAME communities and those smaller groups that may not have their own physical spaces, as an impact of Recommendation 24

The strategy will aim to foster good relations between people through:

- Encouraging information sharing and collaboration among the Voluntary and Community Sector, as an impact of Recommendations 5, 9, 22 and 24
- Encouraging town-wide collaboration by strengthening links between the Voluntary and Community Sector and business, as an impact of Recommendations 17 and 23.

There are unlikely to be negative equalities impacts. The evidence base has identified the diversity of the Watford community and there is a need to ensure underrepresented VCS groups are supported and that the Watford community can engage with the voluntary and community sector across the town. Negative impacts would follow if the recommendations of the Strategy are not implemented in terms of reflecting the diversity of the Watford community.

Any future funding arrangements which come out of recommendations from the strategy will require their own Equality Impact Analysis to ensure that they are reflecting what we know about the Watford community.

There are no specific human rights implications under this report.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 Staffing

5.4.1 The action plan will be developed within existing resources.

5.5 Accommodation

5.5.1 N/A

5.6 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

5.6.1 N/A

5.7 Sustainability

5.7.1 N/A

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Voluntary and Community Strategy
- Appendix 2 Survey Results
- Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 4 Voluntary and Community Strategy: Summary

Background papers

The following background papers was used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

Watford and Three Rivers Trust Task Group report, presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2020.