

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2008
Subject:	Scrutiny Review “Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow”
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Michael Lockwood Chief Executive Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
Portfolio Holder:	Chris Mote Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Recommendations Appendix 2 – Reference from Overview and Scrutiny – to follow Appendix 3 – Report to Overview and Scrutiny

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the response to the final report of the scrutiny review entitled “Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow”.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to note this report and request a further response to the scrutiny recommendations at its meeting in March 2009.

Reason: To consider a response to scrutiny recommendations.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

1. Following a proposal from the Council’s Community Development team, the Overview and Scrutiny committee commissioned a review entitled “Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow”. as part of its 2008/09 work programme.
2. It was recognised at the outset that the review had to be carried out “with” rather than “done to” the voluntary sector. The review was jointly sponsored by Julia Smith, Chief Executive of the Harrow Association for Voluntary Sector (HAVS) and Myfanwy Barrett, Corporate Director of Finance at Harrow Council. The review team included representatives of the voluntary and community sector and there were various events to seek a wide range of views from the sector. A huge amount of evidence was gathered through research and visits to other organisations as well as meetings with key people.
3. The final report is welcomed by the Council. The report represents part of a journey to improve the relationship between public sector bodies and the voluntary sector in Harrow over time and should be seen in that context rather than as the final word on the subject.

Options considered

4. The recommendations from the scrutiny have been noted and will be considered in detail, with a further response presented to Cabinet at its March 2009 meeting. The recommendations along with the lead officer responsible for implementation are shown in Appendix 1.
5. Given the importance of the recommendations it is proposed that a Scrutiny Implementation Group be established, chaired by the Director of Community and Cultural Services, and including representatives from across the Council to ensure all aspects of the report are properly addressed. In addition, representatives from the voluntary sector should be invited to join the group.

6. The PCT has also expressed an interest in working more closely with the Council in this area and may also wish to participate in the community trust. Therefore the PCT will also be invited to join the implementation group.
7. The scrutiny implementation group will be tasked with initially reviewing the recommendations, prioritising the activities and, where appropriate, firming up timescales for implementation. Hence there are no dates given in Appendix 1. A more detailed response to the recommendations will come to cabinet in March.
8. However, it is recognised that some of the recommendations, most notably recommendation 1 which relates to a council-financed funding support officer, need to be addressed as part of the budget process.
9. The proposed third sector strategy is a vital piece of work that will help to set out the vision for the relationships between the public and voluntary and community sectors in Harrow in future and the approach to grant making and commissioning.
10. The Council interacts with the voluntary sector in all sorts of ways and at all levels. The role of relationship manager, recommended by the review, is seen as a key point of contact for resolving issues or fixing problems and not as the single point of contact for all matters. The strong relationships that exist between Adults and Children's services and the sector for running core services will continue, as will a whole range of other relationships.
11. The community trust model is noted as a possible way forward for focussing the council's support to the third sector, for example through grant making activity. It is not necessarily envisaged that commissioning, or allocation of specific funding pots from government (eg, Positive Action for Young People), will be carried out via the community trust, at least in the short to medium term.
12. The community trust model requires considerable further work – including mapping out exactly how it will work, what it will do and how it will be resourced, drawing up a detailed specification and carrying out a procurement exercise to identify a provider - to ensure it will be effective when it is established.

Financial Implications

13. Some of the recommendations, most notably the proposal to appoint a funding officer, do have costs associated with them. Any new investment can only be agreed as part of the wider budget round.

Performance Issues

14. There are no direct performance issues. However, the scrutiny recommendations should improve relationships and grant making processes considerably.

Risk Management Implications

15. There are no direct risk management implications.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Myfanwy Barrett.



Chief Financial Officer

Date: 20 November 2008..

Name: Hugh Peart.....



Monitoring Officer

Date: 20 November 2008....

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Tom Whiting....



Assistant Chief
Executive

Date: 20 November 2008.....

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Myfanwy Barrett, Corporate Director of Finance, 020 8420 9269

Background Papers: None

Response to Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsible Officer(s)
1	To have a Council-financed funding support officer within the voluntary and community sector to support groups in a variety of ways e.g. grant applications, adapting to any changes in the grants process, developing funding strategies, meeting monitoring requirements, procurement processes, community assets. To work closely with the Council's external funding officer.	Myfanwy Barrett, Corporate Director of Finance Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
2	To have a relationship manager at the Council to act as a signpost for groups in the voluntary and community sector and a support in the event of difficulties in the relationship between any Council service and any VCS group.	Javed Khan, Director of Community & Cultural Services Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive
3	To develop a third sector strategy for Harrow that seeks to define the local relationship with the VCS and invests in VCS development in line with partnership priorities. The third sector strategy should also seek to address the recognised gaps in the models developed and proposed by the scrutiny review - Community Trust model (for example gaps in commissioning and premises) and further work on the model of commissioning in the Strategic Relationships model.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive
4	To ask VCS representatives on the Harrow Strategic Partnership to feed back more systematically to sector colleagues through regular emails or as updates in existing newsletters.	Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive
5	To recognise the real opportunity to develop volunteering in Harrow where supply of volunteers outstrips demand – investing more resource to build the capacity of the Volunteer Centre Harrow to provide an infrastructure and support to small voluntary groups in recruiting and training volunteers and coordinating skills for day-to-day management of groups.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
6	To advertise the Volunteers Centre on the Harrow Council website.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services

	Recommendation	Responsible Officer(s)
7	To consider outsourcing the management of the 'Harrow Heroes' awards ceremony to the VCS so that it is a peer-led awards scheme, recognising the contribution of groups as well as individuals.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
8	To develop robust governance arrangements for the Compact, to include refreshing the document every two years, promoting the Compact and its way of working, formalising conflict resolution (providing a framework for stage 1 complaints). To be the responsibility of a new Compact Board of representatives to feed up to the HSP, and therefore not reliant on individuals.	Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive
9	To produce a reader-friendly summary of the new compact document and distribute this to councillors, officers and colleagues in the voluntary and community sector.	Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive
10	To roll out training on the Compact and what it means to partnership working. To be included in members' training, management/officer training and training within the VCS and other partner organisations within the HSP, to raise awareness and understanding. a) Agree that Member development for the Grants Advisory Panel be undertaken to increase awareness of the principles of the Harrow Compact and to support Members in developing a fuller understanding of the pressures and challenges faced by the sector. (Please note that part a) of the recommendation was agreed by Cabinet through the interim report).	Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive
11	To rationalise the grant-giving process – to clearly define processes, appeals mechanisms and adherence to these in order to improve consistency and transparency.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
12	To move towards three-year funding commitments through grants so as to encourage stability and more scope for planning ahead within the voluntary and community sector.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
13	To consider a longer-term approach (5-10year funding) for SLAs awarded to VCS infrastructure organisations.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services

	Recommendation	Responsible Officer(s)
14	To agree that the 2009-10 grants round should be conducted in full compliance with the existing criteria and process and in a transparent way. (Please note that this recommendation was agreed by Cabinet through the interim report.)	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
15	For the Grants Advisory Panel to engage with the VCS to consider the criteria for the 2010/11 grants round and take account of the concerns raised through this scrutiny review about the current system. To bring these proposals to a scrutiny challenge panel in preparation for the 2010/11 grants application process.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
16	To ensure that all procurement exercises and available premises are advertised in a regular email/newsletter and that the VCS be on that distribution list. To also raise awareness with the VCS that the Council's webpages for procurement include much help and advice on accessing procurement routes.	Myfanwy Barrett, Corporate Director of Finance Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
17	To optimise the VCS access to procurement exercises through thorough and fair assessment of the procurement requirements necessary for each tendering exercise.	Myfanwy Barrett, Corporate Director of Finance
18	To ask the HSP partners to compile a register of their community premises/rooms and develop a protocol for their use by the VCS. To encourage a fairer and more transparent system of community lettings.	Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive
19	To ask the relevant council directorate(s) (concerned with lettings especially of schools) to assess the current issues around community lettings (of schools and council buildings such as the Teachers' Centre and community centres) and offer possible solutions to these. To articulate this assessment and present possible solutions to a scrutiny committee and concurrently feed into scrutiny's review of extended schools.	Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services
20	To task the HSP with creating an environment where creative people can thrive and make best use of community assets. To seek people with a passion for developing social entrepreneurship and social capital.	Tom Whiting Assistant Chief Executive

	Recommendation	Responsible Officer(s)
21	<p>To establish a Community Trust for the Council's grants administration processes (and if appropriate, those of partners) and carry out further work on how this can best be achieved - the feasibility of a community trust model for grant-giving in Harrow should be fully explored, scoped and costed, using the scrutiny proposal as a basis. To include developing a better understanding of realistic timescales with regard to implementation and the ability to serve future needs of the borough, for example with regard to the Comprehensive Area Assessment, as well as drawing on the experiences of existing Community Trusts and local authorities who use the Community Trust model.</p>	<p>Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services – as Chair of Scrutiny Implementation Group</p>
22	<p>To conduct a feasibility of the Strategic Relationships Model for commissioning, using the scrutiny proposal as a basis. To include developing a better understanding of realistic timescales with regard to implementation, cultural/organisational shifts required, costs and the ability to serve future needs of the borough.</p>	<p>Javed Khan, Director of Community and Cultural Services – as Chair of Scrutiny Implementation Group</p>