

**REPORT FOR:                    OVERVIEW AND  
    SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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**Date of Meeting:**                    14<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**Subject:**                                Update on recommendations from  
    ‘Delivering a strengthened  
    voluntary sector’

**Responsible Officer:**                Brendon Hills  
    Corporate Director Community and  
    Environment

**Scrutiny Lead  
Member area:**                        Councillor Chris Mote, Policy Lead –  
    Safer and Stronger Communities

    Councillor Nana Asante, Performance  
    Lead – Safer and Stronger  
    Communities

**Exempt:**                                 No

**Enclosures:**                         Appendix 1: Update on  
    recommendations from ‘Delivering a  
    strengthened voluntary sector’

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report provides an update on actions taken against the recommendations of the scrutiny review ‘Delivering a strengthened voluntary sector’.

**Recommendations:**

The Overview and Scrutiny committee is requested:

1. To note the updates and further actions against recommendations as described in Appendix 1.
2. To receive a further report in the autumn on the delivery of the Third Sector Strategy and updated action plan.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **2.1 Introductory paragraph**

2.1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny committee undertook a review called 'Delivering a strengthened voluntary sector' during 2008. The final report made 22 recommendations, 21 of which were accepted by Cabinet in March 2009. This report provides an update on progress and further action against these recommendations.

### **2.2 Background**

2.2.1 The responsibility for the delivery of actions against recommendations cuts across Council directorates. The positive and ongoing progress against recommendations demonstrates that relevant service areas have actively pursued these. The delivery of many actions has been undertaken through close partnership working and engagement of the voluntary sector in Harrow.

### **2.3 Current situation**

2.3.1 The table attached at Appendix 1 provides a summary of the actions taken to address the recommendations and highlights further action that will be undertaken with timescales for delivery.

2.3.2 The priority areas of activity going forward are;

- (a) Development of a Third Sector Investment Plan for 2012/13 onwards
- (b) Consultation on and commissioning of new VCS infrastructure support services
- (c) Finalisation of Compact Board governance arrangements and Compact funding code
- (d) Review of the Third Sector Strategy and action plan

### **2.4 Why a change is needed**

2.4.1 Reductions in public sector funding present a challenge for both the Council and the VCS. The impact of this for some VCS organisations has been significantly reduced levels of funding. The challenge for Harrow Council is managing the allocation of limited resources across a number of competing demands. To inform the strategic view of support to the voluntary sector officers are undertaking an analysis of Council funding and other provision across all Directorates to the sector.

2.4.2 A strategic Third Sector Investment Plan for 2012/13 onwards is being developed with internal and external stakeholders which will be presented to the Grants Advisory Panel and Cabinet in July. The plan takes in to account the results of consultation with the VCS in January 2011 and recent stakeholder workshops. The plan will ensure that support is delivered in a way that makes best use of available

resources, allocates these resources in a fair and transparent manner and aligns their use with the delivery of Council's priorities.

- 2.4.3 A further challenge facing the voluntary sector is the imminent closure of HAVS (Harrow Association of Voluntary Service). In recognition of this the Council has been working with voluntary sector representatives to set up arrangements for the delivery of interim support services including funding advice, capacity building support, volunteer recruitment and continued access to the premises at 64 Pinner Road. The Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP) voluntary sector representatives and the Council are finalising interim management arrangements for a period of six months to manage the delivery of these basic services whilst a consultation is undertaken by and with the voluntary sector to determine what support services are required in the long-term.
- 2.4.4 To manage the relationship between the sectors the development and role of the Compact Board to provide robust governance and promote the Compact across partners will be progressed through the Voluntary Sector Forum. The Funding compact code is being consulted on with the VCS and other stakeholders and will be finalised by October 2011.
- 2.4.5 In light of the changing environment for the Third Sector the strategy will be reviewed and the action plan updated to reflect new work streams and priorities. This will be reported to Members in the Autumn 2011.

## **2.5 Implications of the Recommendation**

### **2.5.1 Equalities impact**

Proposals described in this report will be subject to equalities impact assessments as part of the Council's continuing duties under the Equality Act 2010. The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race,
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

## **2.6 Financial Implications**

- 2.6.1 Cabinet agreed at its meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2011 to ring-fence £20,781 from the grants budget which will be matched by a £47,219 carry forward from 2010/11 to support the delivery of interim support services for the VCS and the consultation activity that will inform the development of a service specification for the long-term service. The carry forward is subject to cabinet approval.

2.6.2 All proposals contained within the Third Sector Investment Plan will be managed within the Council's current budget.

## 2.7 Performance Issues

2.7.1 Activities and services provided by the voluntary sector have the potential to contribute to a number of Council priorities. The future development of the Third Sector Investment plan will aim to ensure that all Council funding is more closely aligned to Council priorities. This will be measured through specification and monitoring of outcomes based on funding priorities.

## 2.8 Environmental Impact

2.8.1 The development of a Third Sector Investment plan will take into account opportunities for specifying fair trade goods and other environmental considerations for the procurement of services.

## 2.9 Risk Management Implications

2.9.1 The provision of Council funding to the VCS whether through grants or commissioning has associated risks in particular with regard to ensuring the proper use of public funds. The Council is working to improve its approach to monitoring organisations in receipt of funding. In 2010/11 the Adults and Housing and Community and Environment directorates undertook joint monitoring of funded organisations. The monitoring process for this year's grants programme and future years will be further strengthened in the light of this experience.

## 2.10 Corporate Priorities

The services provided by the voluntary and community sector have the potential to contribute to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe.
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

## Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Kanta Hirani.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: ...3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2011.....		
Name: Jessica Farmer .....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: ...3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2011.....		

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Kashmir Takhar, Head of Service – Community Development,  
020 8420 9331

### **Background Papers:**

Appendix 1: Update on actions to address recommendations from the  
Overview and Scrutiny review