

# VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (VCS) FUNDING PROGRAMME 2024-2027

Councillor Richard Cox Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

Date:	10th October 2023
Agenda Item:	5
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Key Decision?	YES
Local Ward Members	All



**CABINET**

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks the approval of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Funding Programme Prospectus 2024-2027. The voluntary and community sector plays a vital role in making Lichfield District a confident, prosperous, active, and green place to live, work and visit. Lichfield District Council is committed to working in partnership to support the local voluntary and community sector and the VCS funding is a key element of our ongoing support to the sector.
- 1.2 The available funding to award is £163,000 per year, which is £489,000 for the next 3 financial years as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023- 2027. All awards will be made across the 3 year cycle however organisations are not obliged to apply for the full three years of funding. Continued funding will be awarded over that period for projects that can demonstrate impact and performance.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the 2024-2027 VCS Funding Prospectus at **Appendix 1** to be launched on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
- 2.2 To delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement in conjunction with the Chief Operating Officer to agree the funding awards, subject to the awards being within existing budgets and following consultation with an Officer Panel and a Member Panel.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 A thriving and diverse voluntary and community sector is an important component of what makes Lichfield district a great place to live, work and visit. Our draft Lichfield District 2050 Strategy recognises the vital role that a vibrant local voluntary and community sector has to make Lichfield district the most confident, prosperous, active, and green part of the country by 2050.
- 3.2 In March 2022 we published our Community Power Strategy, setting out our vision to understand, engage and involve communities in everything we do. Key to empowering communities is ensuring that local community groups can grow, sustain, and thrive. Lichfield District Council is committed to working in partnership to support our local voluntary and community sector. As well as the VCS Funding Programme, other key initiatives include:

**We Love Lichfield Fund** – Lichfield District Council partnered with the Staffordshire Community Foundation to establish We Love Lichfield Fund, providing up to £1,000 of grant funding to community

groups across the district twice a year. We Love Lichfield has distributed approximately £35,000 of grants in 2022/23. We continue to be a key supporter of We Love Lichfield, contributing funding on an annual basis.

**Lichfield Community Lottery** – In 2019 Lichfield District Council established the Lichfield Community Lottery. The Lottery has a jackpot of £25,000 and gives 60p from every £1 ticket sold to good causes across the district. Community groups are supported to set up their own online page to sell tickets. 50p of each ticket sold goes to the selling community group, with 10p going to a central fund administered by the Council. In 2022/23 the Lottery supported over 60 good causes and raised almost £35,000.

3.3 Since 2017 we have invested in a three-year dedicated programme of funding for the local voluntary and community sector – our VCS Funding Programme. During 2021-2024, we have awarded a total of £489,000 via this Funding Programme to 10 different organisations. The current funding programme expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Organisations are required to submit an annual performance report that demonstrates the impact and outcomes that the funding has achieved and overall, all the projects that were funded have demonstrated excellent progress against the outputs and outcomes agreed in their funding agreements. In 2022/23 our funding helped enable:

- MHA communities to provide 32 individuals with a face to face befriending visit each week and provide 248 older people with a befriending telephone call each week
- Support Staffordshire to deliver training opportunities to a wide range of VCS organisations and council staff.
- Southeast Staffordshire CAB to assist 1,165 Lichfield district residents via the income maximisation service on 4,699 welfare benefit issues.
- Pathway Project to support 36 service users to ensure they can access an income that best works for their current circumstances usually being supported to stay in employment or find new employment or access relevant benefits.
- Friends to Friends to support 40 individuals to engage in different groups including history, research, cookery, panto, and art.
- Spark Burntwood to deliver 727 community sessions attended by 1206 individuals to reduce social isolation in addition to 112 one to one sessions benefitting those in crisis.
- CRUSE to support 336 clients with telephone support and support 76 clients on a one to one basis following referral.
- Liberty Jamboree to provide young adults with special educational needs more opportunities; 6 members have completed the NCFE Level 1 in Employability Skills and 4 members have completed their level 3 Employability Skills.
- Lichfield Arts to support 80 students to engage with various Lichfield Arts South Staffs College collaboration activities.
- Phoenix Counselling to deliver 564 sessions of counselling to those who would be unable to afford private sessions following which 100% of clients reported improved mental health.

3.4 The proposed VCS Funding Programme Prospectus for 2024-2027 is detailed in **Appendix 1**. As agreed, as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy £489,000 is available to be awarded over the three financial years starting 2024/25.

3.5 The 2024-2027 Prospectus has been revised to reflect on lessons learnt from the previous application window. In 2021 we had a broad application criterion, which led to over £1m of bids being submitted, far outstripping the amount of funding available. The 2024-2027 Prospectus is focused on the priorities outlined in the emerging Lichfield District 2050 Strategy. Given the value of the funding pot available and the broader voluntary sector funding eco-system that is available locally, we are proposing to set a minimum award of £1,000 per year and have also stated in the prospectus that we

are unlikely to award an organisation more than £50,000 per year. By including these parameters, we are aiming to strike a balance between ensuring that we can maximise the impact of this funding pot, whilst supporting as many organisations as possible.

3.6 The Prospectus will be advertised as widely as possible through social media platforms, grant finder, the council website and bulletin style mail outs issued by the Communications Team. Applicants will be asked to complete an application which will form part of a two stage application process and if the applicant is successful at stage 1 in line with the scoring criteria, they will be invited to complete a stage 2 application. After the launch there will be an online breakfast briefing held to give organisations a chance to ask any questions before applying, which will be recorded and made available for anyone that cannot attend.

3.7 The applications will be assessed by an Officer Funding Panel using a set scoring criterion at stage 1 and stage 2. Applicants will need to meet a threshold to be invited to submit a stage 2 application. After stage 2, the Officer Funding Panel will make recommendations to a Member Panel that will consist of three councillors, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and include a member from both opposition parties. Successful applicants will be informed of the stage 2 outcome by 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2024 ready for the funding period to begin in April 2024.

3.8 The timeline for the award of funding is as follows:

<b>What Happens?</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Supporting Information</b>
The Prospectus including the application forms and guidance notes will be made available online	To be made available on Wednesday 18th October 2023	(The web address for content page of the website will be added)
Breakfast Briefing/Meet the Funder Session	Friday 3rd November at 10am	A Microsoft Teams meeting will be held giving the opportunity for any questions to be raised regarding the prospectus and application process.
Stage 1 Applications to be submitted	By Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	An acknowledgement email will be sent on receipt of the application.
A Funding Panel will assess stage 1 applications and notify successful and unsuccessful applicants	By Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email.
Shortlisted applicants will be required to submit stage 2 questionnaires	By Friday 12th January 2024	An acknowledgement email will be sent on receipt of the application.
An Officer Funding Panel will assess stage 2 applications and will make recommendations to a Member Panel chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement	By Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Applicants maybe required to provide further information at this stage.
Stage 2 successful and unsuccessful applicants to be notified	By Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2024	Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email.

Alternative Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Cabinet approve a different amount of funding for the Community and Voluntary sector.</li> <li>2. That alternative funding priorities are agreed for the prospectus.</li> </ol>																																							
Consultation	A Member Task Group was consulted during the previous funding round.																																							
Financial Implications	<p>The District Council provides funding to the Community and Voluntary Sector to the value of £163,000 per year until March 2027. The decision on the approach to future commissioning may impact on the level resources required to deliver the commissioning and performance management requirements. The approved budgets (plus the current projection for 2027/28) allocated to support the community and voluntary sectors is shown below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="293 512 1517 792"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2"></th> <th rowspan="2">Budget 2023/24 £</th> <th colspan="4">Budget - 3 year period</th> <th rowspan="2">Projection 2027/28 £</th> </tr> <tr> <th>2024/25 £</th> <th>2025/26 £</th> <th>2026/27 £</th> <th>Total £</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Community &amp; Voluntary Sector Grants</td> <td>£163,000</td> <td>£163,000</td> <td>£163,000</td> <td>£163,000</td> <td>£489,000</td> <td>£163,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Councillor Community Fund</td> <td>£14,100</td> <td>£14,100</td> <td>£14,100</td> <td>£14,100</td> <td>£42,300</td> <td>£14,100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Small Grants</td> <td>£23,000</td> <td>£23,000</td> <td>£23,000</td> <td>£23,000</td> <td>£69,000</td> <td>£23,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>£200,100</b></td> <td><b>£200,100</b></td> <td><b>£200,100</b></td> <td><b>£200,100</b></td> <td><b>£600,300</b></td> <td><b>£200,100</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Budget 2023/24 £	Budget - 3 year period				Projection 2027/28 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	Total £	Community & Voluntary Sector Grants	£163,000	£163,000	£163,000	£163,000	£489,000	£163,000	Councillor Community Fund	£14,100	£14,100	£14,100	£14,100	£42,300	£14,100	Small Grants	£23,000	£23,000	£23,000	£23,000	£69,000	£23,000	<b>Total</b>	<b>£200,100</b>	<b>£200,100</b>	<b>£200,100</b>	<b>£200,100</b>	<b>£600,300</b>	<b>£200,100</b>
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Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes																																							
Legal Implications	1. None known.																																							
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes																																							
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	<p>Funding local voluntary and community organisations supports the following emerging outcomes of Lichfield District 2050:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enable Lichfield, Burntwood and our villages to thrive and flourish by supporting our local economy, jobs and training and contributing towards start-ups and investment in the area. Also providing opportunities for residents.</li> <li>• To be the place across the UK that everyone aspires to live by creating confident communities ensuring that no groups are left feeling isolated and helping people to live independently and be involved in volunteering.</li> <li>• To be the greenest district in the country by supporting residents and organisations to be environmentally responsible and contributing towards protecting our heritage and looking after green spaces.</li> <li>• To be the most active district in the UK by supporting activity based groups to provide services to all areas of the district. Giving support to community and voluntary organisations helping those with mental health and delivering wellbeing initiatives.</li> </ul>																																							
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	Voluntary and community groups provide support to a range of groups and in particular children, older people and people with disabilities.																																							
EIA logged by Equalities Officer	Yes, this has been done and logged.																																							
Crime & Safety Issues	Several of the priorities contribute towards community safety including supporting victims and witnesses of domestic abuse and support for victims of anti-social behaviour.																																							

<b>Data assessment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prosperous Communities - some of our wards are amongst the most income deprived in England, and in 2019, 8.4% of the local population was identified as income deprived.</li> <li>2. Active Communities - we know around 35% of adults and 60% of children and young people in our district are not active for recommended weekly levels</li> <li>3. Greener Communities – over 836,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted across the district in 2019 and 149 protected wildlife sites exist across the district.</li> <li>4. It is anticipated that the outcomes achieved by the funded projects will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives and result in improved outcomes in the data.</li> </ol>
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<b>Environmental Impact (including Climate Change and Biodiversity).</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Funding community and voluntary groups that contribute to the green objectives of the district will promote sustainability, including use of renewable energy and other methods of conservation which will positively impact on the environment.</li> <li>2. Groups can also raise awareness of environmental issues and impact on the district.</li> </ol>
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<b>GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment</b>	<p>Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) are an essential part of our accountability obligations where the processing is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals. The Compliance and Data Protection Officer has assessed the Voluntary and Community Sector Funding Prospectus and established that a DPIA is not required in this instance, there is a clear framework for applications, all submitted information will be held securely and therefore there is no risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the timing of details being obtained to ensure only essential information is obtained at stage one and where personal information is obtained this will be reflected within the Record of Processing Activities and a copy of the overarching Privacy Statement will be provided.</p>
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	<b>Risk Description &amp; Risk Owner</b>	<b>Original Score (RYG)</b>	<b>How We Manage It</b>	<b>Current Score (RYG)</b>
A	No bids or an insufficient number of applications received	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Risk: Green	Engagement with community and voluntary groups	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Risk: Green
B	Bids exceed the funding available	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Risk: Yellow	Discussions and negotiation to take place with community and voluntary groups	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Green Risk: Green
C	Bids received do not support strategic objectives	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Risk: Yellow	Clear description of desired outcomes in the prospectus. Bids that do not support the strategic objectives will be filtered out at the scoring stage.	Likelihood: Green Impact: Green Risk: Green

		<p><b>Background documents</b></p> <p>Cabinet Member Decision notice 17/02/2021:  <a href="https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=419">https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=419</a></p>
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