Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Infrastructure Service

Cheshire East Council

Main Contact: Community Strategy Manager

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1. Introduction

1.1 Cheshire East determine the 'third sector' to be defined as not for profit organisations that offer social or environmental benefits to the area, typically the likes of voluntary and community organisations, faith organisations, volunteering bodies, charities, some registered social landlords, social enterprises and some co-operatives, trusts and mutuals.

1.2 The purpose of the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) Infrastructure Service is to ensure that support, expertise and resource is available to third sector organisations across the Cheshire East area, and to enable these organisations and their volunteers to achieve the best outcomes for local residents.

1.3 Cheshire East Council places great value on the work of the voluntary, community and faith groups and benefits from a strong and positive relationship with the sector. We are keen to build on these relationships and see the VCF Infrastructure service provider as key to facilitating this.

1.4 The Council has a culture of working in partnership across all sectors including public, private and voluntary. We want the Service to stimulate and encourage interest in volunteering and community action; provide training, mentoring and networking opportunities.

1.5 The Service will contribute to the delivery of the Ambition for All - Sustainable Community Strategy, and ensure that outcomes meet Cheshire East Corporate Priority 1 'Our local communities are strong and supportive'

2. Background

2.1 Cheshire East is the third largest borough in the North West as it covers 1,110km2 of both urban and rural land and has a population of over 370,000. It borders Cheshire West and Chester, Greater Manchester, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire and is home to the Cheshire Plain and the southern hills of the Pennines. The unitary Council was established in 2009 and is made up of, 52 wards, 148 parish and town areas, 51 middle super output areas and 231 super output areas. The key towns and service areas include Macclesfield, Poynton, Knutsford and Wilmslow (in the North) and Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich (in the South South).

2.2 We have a wide and diverse VCF sector across the borough delivering a vast range of services to local communities including advice and guidance, befriending, mentoring, social and community care, transport, health networks, community led planning and community assets. They are in turn supported by organisations who aim to provide developmental support, bespoke training, expert advice and guidance, and are strong advocates for the sector.

2.3 For a number of years a direct grant has been awarded annually to organisations for infrastructure support. In 2015/16 this enabled: -

- over 1100 information and advice sessions

- 49 training sessions covering topics such as project management, income generation and equality and diversity
- establishment of 13 new VCFS groups
- support for 45 funding bids
- 23 groups completing an online health check process
- rural areas supported in developing physical and social assets and activities, and helped to improve local service delivery.

2.4   As a commissioning council we want to get the most out of every £ that we spend on behalf of our residents, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for them. By commissioning the Service we can give a greater clarity on our requirements, and enable potential providers to propose more flexible and local methods of delivery for the benefit of local communities.

3.   Scope

3.1   The provider will be responsible for providing infrastructure support and advice to the VCF sector and shall be an independent organisation that helps groups across Cheshire East to work well for their members and represent what is important to them.

3.2   The Provider will lead, promote and develop volunteering across Cheshire East, and will provide a point of contact on volunteering issues for individuals, general support for organisations, Council Officers and Members.

3.3   The Provider will work with Council Departments and Teams, for example, Partnerships and Communities, Adult Services, etc to develop a co-ordinated process that ensures support for groups and volunteers is utilising the available resources effectively.

3.4   The Provider, as an independent organisation, will have an advisory function to the Council and will act as a voice for the sector, providing representation at key boards, committees and meetings.

3.5   The essential elements of the service are as follows: -

3.4.5   Facilitate, shape and support a diverse, sustainable and quality market of VCF providers for people with care and support needs,

- Developing VCF groups and organisations to enable them to provide more services within their communities and reduce unnecessary demands upon public services.
- Support local groups through the provision of diagnostic health checks on these groups and their services, and developing skills in areas such as financial management, business planning, governance, safeguarding, volunteer development/policies human resource management and marketing.
- Delivery of a programme of relevant accredited and developmental learning opportunities to groups and volunteers to help them become more self sustainable.
- Develop local networks and consortia to create opportunities for joint working and sharing best practice.

3.4.2 Mechanisms to consult and engage with communities of interest

- Develop a range of mechanisms which enable the Council to consult and engage with communities of interest across Cheshire East, to help us better understand and act on the needs or issues that those communities experience.
- To carry out an audit of existing mechanisms and then implement a plan to address gaps, ensuring the needs of all protected characteristic groups are covered.
- Engage and support groups that work with our vulnerable/hard to reach/diverse/protected characteristics population that do not easily engage with front line public services
- Ability to respond to ad hoc requests from the Council, such as engagement with a particular group, supporting innovative approaches, or receiving referrals from the Council to support named organisations with identified support needs.

3.4.3 Providing information and support to voluntary community and faith groups

- To support newly forming groups in becoming established and providing guidance in constitutional matters where required
- Maintaining and promoting a comprehensive directory of voluntary, community and faith groups that are active within Cheshire East, and make this available to the Council.
- A website to support the voluntary, community and faith groups with a variety of electronic resources, tools and networking opportunities.
- Advice and support on income generation opportunities including grant funding and tendering for service contracts.
- Mechanisms to enable voluntary, community and faith groups to make contact with other local groups concerning activities and needs.
- Advice and support on funding applications.
- Annual conferences and events for the sector.

3.4.4 Provider to be representative of all sectors and establish effective partnership working relationships

- To facilitate a mechanism which brings the VCF sector together with providers and commissioners to develop a way of working together to improve relationships for mutual gain, and to consider areas such as involvement in policy design and consultation, funding arrangements (including grants and contracts), promoting equality, ensuring better involvement in delivering services, and strengthening independence.
- Recognise that faith organisations are independent and complex and do not fit into obvious networks. Develop appropriate engagement methods to ensure any needs are met and that any representation is mandated.
- Providing opportunities to discuss and debate issues and share good practice with strategic partners.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration, joint applications and partnership arrangements between local organisations.
- Encouraging voluntary, community and faith groups to engage with local area networks and involve local communities in local issues.

- Be the voice of the VCF sector by representing, or facilitating the representation of the sector, on key boards, committees and meetings.

3.4.5 <u>To promote and increase volunteering opportunities across the whole of Cheshire East</u>

- Development of a programme of volunteering opportunities, including a database, and identify gaps in volunteering opportunities.
- Facilitating social value approaches to enable growth of Council staff through the VCF sector, and enabling more Corporate Social Responsibility opportunities for organisations.
- Provide advice, support and training to enable organisations and public sector bodies to develop volunteer policies and procedures.
- Provision of a disclosure and barring service, either as an umbrella organisation or able to signpost effectively to an umbrella organisation.
- Involvement with local partnerships to address volunteering issues.
- Work with partners to plan, facilitate and host volunteer celebratory events that recognise the contribution made by our volunteers.
- Promotion of opportunities on service website(s) and other social media outlets as appropriate.

3.4.6 <u>Development of a strong VCF Sector</u>

- Development of policy guidelines for the sector e.g. safeguarding.
- Work with the Council to ensure the appropriate data sharing agreements are in place to share intelligence about VCF sector organisational activity, to enable a strategic approach to external funding, maximise benefit, and ensure skills and resources are used to best effect.
- Work with the Council to ensure that the VCF sector is represented and participating in the Council's information and advice marketplace activity, and to share any directory or list of VCF groups so that information within it can be utilised as part of the personalised online service for Cheshire East residents.
- Recognise the independent nature of the faith sector, and work in collaboration with faith support organisations and networks to bring added value to initiatives and projects.
- Undertake an annual review of the VCF Sector in Cheshire East, identify key issues affecting the sector and share findings with the Council and key partners.
- Be an advocate for the rights of the VCF Sector groups and organisations in order to secure opportunities for the benefit of the sector.
- Provision of a quality assurance system for local groups and organisations.

3.4.7 <u>Encouraging collaboration between large and small VCF providers, and actively developing approaches to create efficiencies and opportunities in the sector</u>

- Work with the VCF Sector to develop consortia approaches to commissioned services around common areas, in order to make large contracts accessible to smaller providers and reduce any potential duplication and competition.
- Work with the VCF Sector to develop consortia approaches to external funding opportunities, to maximise impact and reduce any potential duplication and competition.

- To offer advice and assistance to organisations when they are tendering for public or private sector work and ensuring that they are able to meet any legislative requirements for acceptance of funding e.g. to meet the Council's commissioning standards for Safeguarding.
- Encouraging collaboration between services, to reduce costs and maximise local impact e.g. through sharing of back office functions.
- Explore and support the development of trading opportunities for VCF organisations.
- Take advantage of external funding opportunities and local/regional/national projects that will enhance delivery of the Service, without impacting on the core role of infrastructure support.

3.5 The Provider must be aware and accept that their role in supporting the VCF Sector to tender for public or private sector work will not allow them to tender for the same service as this approach may cause a conflict of interest However, the Council will take into account previous examples of service delivery and will review on a case by case basis so that any exception to this can be made to ensure that the right service can be commissioned.

4. Statement of Requirements

4.1 The provider is to provide and occupy a suitable office base or bases, within the Cheshire East area, most suitable for providing the Service by the commencement date of this contract.

4.2 The Service is to be available 7 days per week, as and when required by local groups including evenings and weekends when groups meet. It is expected that the Service will be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity and resource to respond to any requests, and be able to take any initial actions required, within 48 hours.

4.3 Office opening hours to be agreed with the Provider. The office should normally be available for 40 hours per week, (excluding bank and public holidays) for 51 weeks a year. Outside these hours an answerphone service will be available. The Provider will ensure that the office base or bases are easily accessed by service users during the agreed opening hours. The Council should be notified in the event of failure to open and there is also an expectation that the provider will be willing to be reasonably flexible and attend occasional events and meetings that fall outside of normal working hours.

4.3 Staff shall be suitably qualified, DBS checked where appropriate, and flexible to provide the Service outside core office hours and in multiple locations including within rural areas in order to meet the needs of the Service and service users including attending meetings and events when appropriate.

4.4 Appropriate ICT functions will also be required as part of this provision in order to develop and maintain a database of groups and volunteers/volunteering activities, host and maintain a website and produce reports.

4.5 The Contractor shall be responsible for maintaining a records system which will enable the reporting of statistical information in relation to activities detailed within this specification.

4.6 The Provider will maintain an up to date range of robust policies and procedures, which will be open to inspection on request, including: -

- Health and Safety
- Equal Opportunities
- Safeguarding
- Data Protection
- First Aid
- Complaints
- Risk Assessments
- Declarations of Interest
- Confidentiality
- Anti Bribery
- Lone Working
- Whistleblowing.

4.6   The Provider will offer support to VCF groups and organisations across the Cheshire East area to include key towns, service centres, villages and rural areas via a range of methods including telephone, email or face-to-face.

4.7   The Provider will support Cheshire East in its duty to consult and engage the VCF sector on defined programmes of work such as commissioning engagement events.

4.8   The Provider will: -
- Deliver an annual market place event for all community groups to come together and share key achievements
- Deliver an annual report which outlines service delivery, progression against KPI's and development throughout each year of the contract life
- Develop and deliver a communication plan to raise awareness of the service
- Actively seek to review the Service by obtaining and acting upon feedback from service users, stakeholders and partners where appropriate.
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5.   KPI's

KPI Ref	Indicators	Target	Additional Points	Monitoring Frequency
KP1 – Overall increase in access and participation	Number of groups and volunteers making enquiries and accessing support, including via online services Number of groups receiving one to one support	Year 1 - 1200 CEC to review targets for Years 2 & 3 informed by baseline in Year 1.	Current baseline Groups Volunteers	Quarterly
KP2 – Participation: VCF Groups and Organisations	1) Number of health checks started, underway or completed 2) Number of new groups registered/accessing service 3) Number of groups attending accredited training 4) Number of groups attending non-accredited training	Yr 1 - 25 Yr 1 - 15 Year 1 – 430 for 3) & 4) – to agree split targets for Years 2 & 3	Evidence of strong governance Including Safeguarding, CSE	Quarterly

	5) Consortia developed	Yr 1 - 2		
	6) Mechanisms to engage with communities of interest including our vulnerable/hard to reach/diverse/protected characteristics population engaged and supported	Yr 1 - 6	Amount of external funding obtained	
	7) Number of organisations/groups supported to obtain external funding	Yr 1 - 50 All KP2 targets to be reviewed by CEC for years 2&3		
KP3 – Participation: Volunteering	1) Number of volunteers registered and breakdown in terms of gender, age, activity status.		Understanding of volunteer base	Quarterly
	2) Number of volunteering opportunities made available	At least 420 volunteering opportunities per year		
	3) Number of successful volunteer placements and breakdown by type e.g. admin, social care etc			
	4) Development of volunteering database and gaps in opportunities identified	Establish baseline in Yr 1, CEC to set targets Yr 2 and Yr 3.		
	5) Numbers of groups accessing advice, support and training to develop volunteer policies and procedures			
	6) Numbers of volunteers accessing disclosure and barring support		Subject to placement	
	7) Level of involvement with local partnerships to address volunteering issues		Active participation in local partnerships	
	8) Volunteer celebratory events held	Min 1 Baseline Yr & set for years 2&3		
	9) Number of bids assisted through tendering process			
KP4 – Partnership Working	1) Mechanism of joint working with all sectors established and evidence of any outcomes		Opportunities to discuss and debate issues and share good practice with strategic partners	Quarterly
	2) Groups supported to work together and submit tender/funding bids			
	3) Groups supported to work together and deliver services	Establish baseline for 2,3,4,5,6,and 8 in Yr 1, CEC to set targets Yr 2 and Yr 3		
	4) Number of referrals from the Council facilitated and outcomes as a result		Opportunities for collaboration, joint applications and partnership arrangements between local organisations made	
	5) Voluntary, community and faith groups encouraged to engage with local area networks and involve local communities in local issues.			
	6) Attendance at key Council boards, committees and meetings			
	7) Annual Report produced to share with the Council and partners			
	8) Number of collaborative approaches developed and evidence of savings		Improved networking within	

			communities	
				Annual
			Outcomes of meetings and agreed actions	
KP5 – External Funding obtained	1) Number of consortia bids facilitated	2 Establish baseline in Yr 1, CEC to set targets Yr 2 and Yr 3	Evidence of successful approach	Quarterly
	2) Amount of any external funding obtained on behalf of organisations	£186k target Yr 1 – review for years 2&3		
KP6 – Stakeholder Feedback	Evidence that an annual survey has been taken and is influencing future service development	Response ratios and full report presented to Council	Evolving and developing service that meets the needs of users	Annual

Monitoring and evaluation will be carried out on a quarterly basis. The Provider will be required to develop and implement an effective reporting format, and make arrangements to meet regularly with the contract manager. KPI's will be reviewed every 12 months to ensure that target outputs are proportionate, and so that adjustments can be made if necessary. The contract will contain provisions to enable the Council to recover service credits should the standard of service fail to meet the required KPI standards.

6. Quality Requirements

6.1 The lead Provider shall be affiliated to the National Association of Voluntary and Community Action and will be committed to working to NAVCA guidelines and standards

6.2 The lead Provider shall hold an NCVO Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation

6.3 The Provider should be able to work to and within relevant Cheshire East Council Policy and Procedures, and with particular reference to the list at 4.6 and security requirements at 8.

6.4 It is expected that the Provider will have a quality management assurance such as ISO 9001 or equivalent, or be working towards achieving such a standard.

7. Cost of Contract

To be confirmed – maximum budget available is £163k annually. A contract to deliver the Service will be awarded for 3 years. This will be reviewed every 12 months and, should the service require amendment due to non-performance, will contain a clause that will allow the service to be decommissioned.

8.   Security

8.1   The Provider shall ensure the security of confidential and identifiable information through appropriate data storing and sharing protocols and agreements and compliance with the contractual terms and conditions. Cheshire East Council supports the objectives of the Data Protection Act 1998 and is committed to ensuring that the personal and sensitive personal information (data) it holds about individuals is used only for the purpose intended, is accurate, up to date and securely protected from inappropriate access. The Council is further committed to ensuring that individuals can find out about their personal data, be given access to it and the right to challenge its accuracy.

8.2   The provider must also be vigilant and obtain all appropriate consents from individuals to collect and store data where necessary and ensure no information is kept longer than required and is destroyed in line with relevant guidance. In terms of non-personal information, the Council is further committed to promoting public access to the information it holds.

8.3   The Freedom of Information Act and related legislation gives the public the right to be told if information is held. All information recorded and held by the Council can be requested, even if someone else created it and we do not 'own' it. This might include information about contractors, suppliers and partner organisations

9.   Implementation Timetable

9.1   Subject to TUPE requirements the Service will commence in April 2017. The successful provider will be expected to submit a mobilisation plan prior to the commencement of the contract in order meet all the requirements as laid out in Section 4.

9.2   An initial liaison meeting with the contract manager should take place within 4 weeks.

9.3   The first quarterly report detailing progress against KPI's etc should be produced by mid July.

10.   TUPE

The Provider must satisfy itself in relation to the application of TUPE and will be expected to ensure the necessary compliance with TUPE liabilities from any existing contracts. Please see appendix ??

11.   Communication & Marketing Expectations

11.1   The Provider will be expected to develop and provide any necessary marketing or promotional materials required to carry out services, and to use a variety of methods as appropriate.

11.2   It is expected that the Provider will use their own branding, but will include reference to Cheshire East Council and our logo on all items relating to this service specification.