

MEETING:	COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	6TH DECEMBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERING
REPORT BY:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ECONOMY AND CULTURE

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Purpose

To consider the Executive's response to the Review of Volunteering conducted by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

THAT:

- (a) the report is agreed; and**
- (b) the action plan is monitored by the scrutiny community for the next 12 months.**

Key Points Summary

The key findings of the Scrutiny Review of Volunteering were forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community Services. The Cabinet Member agreed all the recommendations and the attached action plan highlights how the actions will be achieved.

The key activities outlined in the action plan aim to result in more people volunteering (an increase of 3.5% by the end of the current financial year on current performance indicator of 29% on 2008). The activity concentrates on a collaborate approach facilitated through the Voluntary Development Group (VDG), specifically supported by the Voluntary Sector Liaison Officer employed by Herefordshire Council. Key activity includes:

- Increased marketing and awareness;
- Increased collaboration with other organisations / groups including NHS Herefordshire and parish / town councils;
- Raise awareness of the local authority commitment to enable staff to volunteer in office time for up to 2 days per year;
- Gain further understanding of the Community Transport programmes.

Alternative Options

- 1 The scrutiny review and supporting documents found that volunteering is a cost effective way of supporting communities; addressing challenges people face individually; and more widely has a wholly positive effect on society. However, considering the financial climate the alternative option is that support for volunteering provided by HPS is scaled back or withdrawn with the recommendations presented by Scrutiny Committee ignored.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 Before being agreed by the Cabinet Member the recommendations presented by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee were considered by the Volunteering Development Group (VDG) and felt to be relevant and achievable through a collaborative approach.

Introduction and Background

- 3 On the 7th December 2009 the Community Services Scrutiny Committee decided to establish a review group to consider support for volunteering. After a series of interviews and discussions the review group presented its findings to the wider committee on 28th June 2010. The report as presented was accepted.
- 4 The report was considered by the VDG as many of the recommendations affect the work and interests of the membership; also the group felt the issues raised are best addressed through a partnership approach.

Key Considerations

- 5 As outlined in the action plan all the recommendations presented by Community Services Scrutiny Committee have been agreed by the Cabinet Member, as well as being presented to the Joint Management Team.
- 6 The scale and level of the activity in some cases will depend on finding additional funding or reprioritising of activity.
- 7 As well as some short term activity, longer term initiatives include working with parish councils that do not usually engage in volunteering campaigns; and that the Third Sector Review of Infrastructure considers the role of organisations that support volunteering.
- 8 More work is needed to understand the management and delivery of community transport as a number of organisations are involved and it was unclear to the review group if there was duplication. Also, the Volunteer Centres are working increasingly with people with learning disabilities, which require a different type of resource requirement. This again needs to be clarified in terms of impact and demand and should be considered through discussions with people who work with people with disabilities.

Community Impact

- 9 The review group found that the work, the local authority and other organisations in supporting volunteering, has a very positive effect on communities. This is outlined in more detail in the review document but includes creating a sense of well being and achievement, connection to communities and supports people gaining experience for work.
- 10 It found that people and communities rely on volunteering, but also those who volunteer see the personal benefits of "giving their time".

- 11 The review group also found that the nature of volunteering is changing with people motivated to be involved for a range of reasons - this might include addressing a pressing community issue (e.g. closure of a local shop). Also the pattern of volunteering has changed with more people giving their time, but fewer hours.

Financial Implications

- 12 The cost to meet the recommendations can be met from current budgets, aided by pooling resources across organisations. However, external funding will be sought to escalate some of the activity, particularly marketing and awareness campaigns.
- 13 The Volunteering Scheme run by Herefordshire Council has a cost implication in loss of staff hours. However, this is considered a worthy investment that creates greater benefit for the wider county.

Legal Implications

- 14 There are no identifiable legal implications.

Risk Management

- 15 Potential risks and mitigation;
- a. That the intervention activity outlined in the action plan does not have an impact on increased volunteering.
Mitigation: by people in the volunteering arena working together there is knowledge of what works well; though new activity will involve some risk which can be learnt from.
 - b. That the Third Sector review will raise issues of consideration and concern that needs further analysis that will delay the implementation of the recommendations.
Mitigation: an action includes that volunteering is included in the Third Sector review to be part of the wider considerations.
 - c. That financial support will be withdrawn from volunteering as direct benefit of intervention is not evidenced.
Mitigation: to be considered as part of the priority setting of Herefordshire Public Services.

Consultees

- 16 Members of the Volunteering Development Group: Alex Fitzpatrick, Chair; Tess Brooks-Sheppard (CVALD) Vice Chair; Angela Legg (HVA); Steve Ashton (HC, Sports Development); Sarah Crawley (Voluntary Sector); Chris Bucknell (Herefordshire Partnership); Rosie Nunnery (Police); Carol Walmsley (Fire and Rescue); Kate Gathercole (New Leaf); Jo Hardwick (SHYPP); Peter Ding (Herefordshire Council); Will Edwards (HCVYS); Caroline Watkins (CYPD).

Appendices

- 17 Community Services Scrutiny Review of Support for Volunteering.

Background Papers

- None identified.