

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **7 June 2022**

Title: **Key Partnerships Funding**

Portfolio Area: **Councillor Paul Vachon (Hub Lead, Communities)**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y / N**

Date next steps can be taken:

Author: **Neil Hawke** Role: **Head of Strategy**

Contact: Neil.Hawke@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Hub Committee:

- 1. Note the positive contribution of our key funded partnerships in supporting our ambitions as set out in our Corporate Strategy, A Plan for West Devon;**
- 2. Request that the Head of Strategy liaise with existing key partners (as set out in section 2.6) to request that an updated application be submitted for a further two year funding arrangement from 31/03/2023; and**
- 3. Consider the returned application forms at their meeting in September 2022.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council has a number of key community and voluntary organisations that it funds to provide functions that complement Council Services or provide functions that support our ambitions of A Plan for West Devon (our Corporate Strategy).
- 1.2 In 2019 it was agreed to provide a three year funding arrangement to these key partners in order to provide them with longer term financial certainty.

- 1.3 The three year funding arrangement has now entered its final year and it is important that a decision is made as to the future support for the organisations concerned.
- 1.4 This report highlights some of the positive work of our key partners and recommends an approach for extending the current funding term by two years.

2. Background

- 2.1 For many years the Council has financially supported organisations that complement existing Council services or that are providing other support aligned to our own priorities.
- 2.2 In 2019, Council explored (as part of the budget setting process), a three year funding agreement for key partner organisations.
- 2.3 Organisations were asked to complete an application form which was assessed in terms of how it aligned to our ambitions or how it supported the Council in delivery of its services.
- 2.4 The applications were reviewed by a senior officer and Hub Leads before a recommendation was made to Council on which organisations to support.
- 2.5 As a result, it was agreed that the Council would fund nine key partner organisations, all of whom have played important roles in supporting our ambitions for the future.
- 2.6 The following partners were supported through the 2019 funding agreement.

Organisation & website	Amount per annum
Citizens Advice https://www.ruraldevoncab.org.uk/	£32,900
CVS https://www.westdevoncvcs.org.uk/	£5,100
OCRA https://ocrasport.org.uk/	£1,333
Okehampton Community Transport https://odctg.co.uk/	£6,533
Tavistock Ring & Ride http://www.tdltg.co.uk/	£6,533
Young Devon https://www.youngdevon.org/	£2,500
Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum http://www.plymouth-mpa.uk/home/managing-the-mpa/tamar-estuaries-consultative-forum/	£4,500 Index linked
Tamar Valley AONB http://www.tamarvalley.org.uk/	£8,835
World Heritage Site https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/conservation/world-heritage-site/	£4,000

3. The importance of our key partners in supporting our priorities

3.1 While our Plan for West Devon corporate strategy was only adopted in September 2021, our key partners have all played, and continue to play important roles in delivering on our longer term vision for West Devon.

Citizens Advice

3.2 Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of West Devon residents is an important aspect of A Plan for West Devon specifically working with partners to pilot new approaches to tackling rural poverty (Action CW1.1)

3.3 Citizens Advice is by far the most significant partnership we have in terms of the funding allocated to it. They play an important role in supporting the Health and Wellbeing of our residents by offering them advice on support on a range of issues including Housing, Debt and employment.

3.4 The advice provided to residents through Citizens Advice ensures that they are able to access benefits that they are entitled to (including by supporting individuals with Universal Credit applications), and to tackle problem debts. If Citizens Advice were not able to continue offering this support, it is likely that those seeking support would turn to the Council by which time their support need could be more acute.

3.5 With the cost of living continuing to increase, the role of Citizens Advice in providing support and advice to our residents will be even more important than usual.

CVS

3.6 Another group at the centre of supporting West Devon residents through Covid-19 was the CVS.

3.7 A large number of community organisations stepped in across the district to ensure that some of our most vulnerable residents were able to access much needed support including collection of food and essential medical supplies, ensuring that individuals were able to get to medical appointments with volunteer drivers etc.

3.8 CVS played an important role in co-ordinating this effort, from offering new groups support and advice on how to operate in the correct way, training for community leaders and volunteers and linking volunteers to groups.

3.9 The CVS also continued with their business as usual activities throughout the pandemic including supporting voluntary organisations with signposting to fundraising opportunities.

3.10 Now that we are learning to live with Covid-19, the CVS is again stepping in to play an important role in respect of the Homes for

Ukraine Scheme. They are already supporting voluntary sector groups with linking up to translators, providing training and resources to community groups and ensuring signposting for hosts and refugees is in place.

- 3.11 We are currently having discussions with the CVS around formalising this arrangement and ensuring a coherent support network across the Borough for the medium to longer term.
- 3.12 The work of the CVS directly aligns to the Council ambitions of A Plan for West Devon, specifically through Action SC1.5 (Develop a plan for supporting our voluntary sector in the future).

Okehampton Community & Recreation Association

- 3.13 OCRA is a charity that aims to maintain and develop sporting / recreational opportunities for Okehampton and the surrounding areas. It does this through
 - Delivering a programme of over 1,400 sessions annually
 - Taking sport and activity sessions out to satellite towns and villages
 - Delivering and supporting special needs and disability activity
 - Supporting the delivery of facilities – with recent projects including skate parks, all weather pitches, play areas etc.
- 3.14 It works closely with organisations in the area to develop recreational activities for the community, a key aspect of our Plan for West Devon, specifically supporting CW1.5 (Provision of high-quality and accessible leisure services).

Community Transport

- 3.15 Both Okehampton Community Transport & Tavistock Ring and Ride schemes have seen volunteer drivers continue to offer vital transport throughout the pandemic and beyond. These services enable residents to maintain their independence and dignity and to also continue to live in their own homes whilst alleviating isolation and loneliness.
- 3.16 In the latest quarter January – March 2022, Okehampton Community Car Scheme carried 706 passengers, of which 22 couldn't transfer from their wheelchair in to a car seat.
- 3.17 In total during this period, 1214 passenger journeys were undertaken with the significant majority being for health related appointments.
- 3.18 This was delivered through a mix of 500 paid hours and 1900 volunteer driver hours.
- 3.19 Tavistock and District Ring and Ride are seeing numbers of users continuing to increase although it has been a challenge to build confidence of service users to begin travelling again, especially the more vulnerable groups that the service is aimed at.

- 3.20 Within the last couple of months the scheme has launched some new leaflets making it clearer how to access the service and the available route. These are distributed throughout the area. They have also tried to encourage users to recommence travel to vital appointments by promoting the service in the local press.
- 3.21 Ensuring that our communities are connected with easy access to transport for our most vulnerable residents is an incredibly important element of supporting the Health and Wellbeing of the District as well as reducing the cost on statutory services of transporting individuals to essential medical appointments.
- 3.22 These groups support our Plan for West Devon actions CW1.1 (Rural Poverty – through provision of affordable transport) and CW1.3 (Supporting more people to live independently for as long as they chose)

Young Devon

- 3.23 Young Devon have utilised funding from West Devon Borough Council to fund a young people's counselling service in Tavistock for 1 day per week throughout the year, enabling young people to explore issues and allowing a safe space for disclose any problems and giving advice in possible ways to tackle those issues.
- 3.24 During 2020-2021 (we're awaiting the following years report), 24 young people were worked with using the funding from WDBC with all but one of those young people presenting with Stress /Anxiety.
- 3.25 Of those supported by the service, 92% of the young people achieved a 'reliable improvement' as a result of the intervention. This compares very well to the average in the South West services of 72% 'reliable improvement'
- 3.26 This project contributes to action CW1.6 – support delivery of mental health support and outreach for young people.

Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum

- 3.27 The marine environment is under increasing pressure from human activity, which can damage and further threaten marine ecosystems. The Government is aiming to protect habitats and species in UK seas by contributing towards a network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas.
- 3.28 The Waters of Plymouth Sound and the Tamar Estuaries are classified as MPA's through their designation as; Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation, Tamar Estuaries Complex Special Protection Area; and Tamar Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone.

- 3.29 Management measures are therefore required to protect the vulnerable features of the MPA's and Relevant Authorities need to consider appropriate measures when determining application for development or permitting activities near sites.
- 3.30 For well over 20 years the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum has been successfully managing these activities through a collaborative approach. Without the Forum, the financial burden and requirements on each individual organisation would be much higher than the contribution we make to TECF.
- 3.31 The activities of the Forum directly contribute to our ambitions for our Natural Environment, specifically NE1.8 (Map our ecosystems, species and other natural capital) and NE1.10 Work with key landowners and partners

Tamar Valley AONB

- 3.32 Ensuring that we protect and enhance our natural environment and responding to the climate and biodiversity emergency are both specific priorities within our strategy.
- 3.33 The AONB is a statutory designation and is of equal standing to a National Park.
- 3.34 AONB's are serviced by core AONB team and their main purpose is to deliver a Management Plan that will conserve and enhance the natural beauty on behalf of a local partnership reflective of the area.
- 3.35 The funding to employ the core team and some modest project funding is provided through contribution of local authorities.
- 3.36 In addition to the AONB being a statutory designation, the activities that they deliver promote volunteering activities, working with schools to promote health and wellbeing activities, improving the upkeep of the Tamar Trails and delivery against its core 5 year Management Plan.
- 3.37 The work of the AONB directly contributes to our priorities for our built and natural environment within A Plan for West Devon.

World Heritage Site

- 3.38 The final partnership that we have supported in the current funding round has been the World Heritage Site Partnership Board.
- 3.39 The partnership is the Steering Group for the World Heritage Site with Membership comprising Cornwall Council, Devon County Council and West Devon Borough Council – plus the National Trust.

- 3.40 The funding we provide is invested in an annual work programme which is agreed by the three Councils, for projects that deliver the World Heritage Convention Objectives.
- 3.41 The WH Convention Objectives are designed to support local communities to benefit from, and become involved in the management of, their internationally significant heritage assets.
- 3.42 The WHS also liaise with Parish and Town Councils that are drafting Neighbourhood Plans, to enable them to incorporate opportunities arising from the WHS status in the proposals.
- 3.43 WHS activities, such as cultural events and educational activities contribute to vibrant communities in the area, and directly support our ambitions around Supporting and Promoting events in the Borough (SC1.4), Progressing Plans for an Eco museum across West Devon to maximise the assets of the WHS (TE1.4) and Supporting the promotion of Parishes surrounding the WHS (BE1.2)

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The West Devon Borough Council Communities Advisory Group met in February 2022 to consider a number of matters in respect of the Plan for West Devon delivery plan. The delivery Plan includes a specific action in 2022/23 to review partnership funding (Action SC1.1)
- 4.2 During the meeting, a number of options were considered with Member key points from the discussion being
 - a. It is important that we understand the outcomes that are achieved by each partner
 - b. We should acknowledge that the cost of delivering some of the projects may now not reflect the funding awarded in 2019
 - c. While it was acknowledged that a large number of groups also play key roles in supporting the priorities set out in A Plan for West Devon, the Council is not able to provide funding to them all – so we need to be careful to manage expectations in any review of partnership funding.
- 4.3 While the Advisory Group has now decision making authority, the recommendation from the group was that we should look to offer existing partners (as set out in this report), the opportunity to provide a short update to their funding applications and, subject to satisfactory information being provided, provide an extension to the current three year funding term. More in-depth consideration of the options is set out below.

Option 1 – Extend the current round of partnership funding for two years in line with the Council’s Plan for West Devon refresh cycle

- 4.4 As set out in section 3 of this report, all of the key partnerships currently funded are making a significant positive impact on the lives of residents of West Devon. All of them are also aligned to the priorities set out in the Plan for West Devon and

accompanying delivery plans. The next series of delivery plans will be developed during 2023/24 to be implemented in 2024/25.

It is therefore recommended that to ensure our key partner organisations can continue their contributions to A Plan for West Devon, that we offer them the opportunity to complete a short refresh of their previous applications for funding for two years (to 31/03/2025 when the next three year delivery plan commences). This would enable the Council to consider how it wishes to commission partnership support for its future actions within the strategy while providing some longer term financial certainty for these organisations.

Option 2 – Offer partnership funding to only limited groups from the existing partners

4.5 This option would reduce the Councils financial contributions but would mean that support currently provided by any of those organisations would likely need to be reduced or stopped altogether. The full impact of this would need further analysis should it be the chosen option however this is currently not a recommended option given the contribution all of the groups are making to our Plan for West Devon ambitions.

Option 3 – No longer offer partnership funding to any groups

4.6 This option would provide the Council with a saving to its budget from 01/04/2023 of £72,234. However, while an initial saving, the ability of the existing partners to provide services would be significantly impacted by withdrawing funding. This would need a more in-depth analysis and, in all likelihood will lead to a longer term increase in costs as more residents look to the Council for support (for example for help with debt, housing advice etc). This option is therefore not recommended.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 The recommendation is to offer key partners the opportunity to extend their current funding arrangement by two years to 31st March 2025 (Option 1 above)
- 5.2 This extension would require a short application form setting out any significant changes since the last application in 2019.
- 5.3 The completed applications would then be considered by the Hub Committee at its meeting in September 2022.
- 5.4 All key partners would also be scheduled to provide an update to Members at least once a year (either in writing or by attendance at Overview and Scrutiny).

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address

Legal/Governance	Y	The Council has no legal duty to provide financial support to the groups included within this report beyond the term of the current funding arrangement (31/03/2023).
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	This report sets out three options for providing funding to key partner organisations beyond 31/3/2023. Currently, the funding to pay for these costs is included within the Council's Revenue Base Budget for 2022/23.
Consultation & Engagement	Y	Our Key Partners provide regular updates to the Council on their work which includes presentation at Overview and Scrutiny on an annual basis. Should the Key Partner funding be agreed for an extension, we will schedule annual updates for each Key Partner to Overview and Scrutiny and consider wider updates on their work to our communities at that point – for example through joint press releases etc.
Risk	Y	There are a number of risks to consider in deciding the future of partnership funding. Each of the partner organisations plays a key role in contributing to the ambitions of A Plan for West Devon in stopping or reducing funding at this point we will negatively impact the ability to deliver on some of our specific actions within the delivery plan. Further consideration will be set out in the report alongside responses from the partners.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	All
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	N	
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	The key partners detailed in this report support a wide range of residents. Full consideration of E&D impacts will be set out once their updated applications are received
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	Some of the key partners are delivering activities that would have a positive contribution on community safety within the Borough.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	Many of the key partners are delivering activities that have a positive contribution to the Health and Wellbeing of residents.
Other implications	N	

Supporting Information

Appendices:

None