



Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

12th March 2018

Report of
Councillor Christine Thomas

Title
Annual Report on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Voluntary Action Coventry

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the work of Voluntary Action Coventry (VAC) over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommends that Council does not appoint a representative to the Voluntary Action Board after the current grant aid agreement ends at 31st March 2018

3 Information on Work of Outside Body

- 3.1 Founded in 1957, VAC is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Membership of Voluntary Action Coventry is open to all voluntary and community groups working within Coventry.
- 3.2 They offer a range of services & activities to voluntary and community organisations including:
- Group support
 - Volunteering
 - Network and information sharing
- 3.3 The strategic objectives of VAC are “The promotion of all or any charitable purposes for the benefit of the community in the city of Coventry and in particular by assisting the work of statutory authorities and voluntary organisations engaged in the advancement of education, furthering health, relieving poverty, distress and sickness or pursuing any other objects which now or hereafter may be deemed by law to be charitable.” The area of benefit is the Midlands area and in particular the city of Coventry.
- 3.4 VAC meets these objects by:
- Supporting representation of issues from or relevant to the voluntary and community sectors (either by our members or by VAC championing issues that affect the sector generally)

- Organising networks and forums to provide liaison with statutory, voluntary and community organisations and to promote collaborative working
- Circulating information, including through newsletters and websites
- Providing advice on funding, volunteer management, charitable and constitutional issues etc.
- Providing occasional training or briefing sessions
- Promoting volunteering and helping volunteers find suitable opportunities
- Providing practical resources such as meeting rooms
- Signposting to other agencies with more specialist expertise
- Promoting the voluntary and community sectors generally

3.5 In April 2016 the Council put in place a Grant Aid Agreement with VAC, which ends in March 2018. This sets out the key outcomes which VAC is expected to contribute to in return for grant funding:

- Collaborative relationships between partners (voluntary, statutory and others) are established that focus on improving outcomes for Coventry residents.
- Approaches to engaging community organisations (and their communities) achieve greater collaboration and participation between the third sector and public sector.
- The voluntary and community sector grows in strength and capacity

3.6 VAC reports on its performance on a quarterly basis, this is discussed at the quarterly Management Board meeting which is also attended by the elected members and a Council officer representative. Key activities reported to the board during the first three quarters of the year include:

- Providing workshops to build collaborative relationships amongst third sector and public sector organisations, including to support: hospital discharge, domestic violence and abuse, drug and alcohol service, modern day slavery, mental health, proactive and preventative health and well-being, family hubs, Prevent and adult social care.
- Participation in a range of events and external funding consortia
- Supporting 130 organisations to set up and or run community organisations
- Supporting Coventry residents to give time to volunteering
- Establishment of two community based services

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

4.1 The Council Plan sets out the Council's vision and objectives for the period 2016-2024. With increasing public sector cuts, the third sector has an important role in helping to deliver the priorities for the City. By attending the VAC Board meeting elected members can hear at first hand the support provided by VAC to the sector and any issues that the sector may face.

4.2 The VAC Board includes representatives of local voluntary and community organisations elected by their membership. By attending the VAC Board meetings, City Council representatives benefit from discussion with third sector organisations on the VAC business plan and activities. It also provides an opportunity to network with third sector providers.

5 What Financial Contribution Does the Council Make to this Organisation

- 5.1 Voluntary Action Coventry was granted £103,965.00 for 2016-17 and the same for £2017-8
- 5.2 Throughout the period of the grant VAC has been advised that the grant would end by March 2018 and officers have encouraged VAC to develop alternative income streams. Six months formal written notice that the grant would end was also provided on 14th September 2017 to ensure compliance with the Voluntary Sector Compact. The discontinuation of the Council grant will have a financial impact on VAC.
- 5.3 The Council's Insight Team has conducted engagement with third sector organisations and organisations in the city which provide capacity building support, including VAC, to help develop an alternative model to supporting the third sector.
- 5.4 This resulted in approval at the Cabinet Member (Community Development) meeting on 10th January 2018 for a one-year trial of a new grant scheme to provide small amounts of funding for community based organisations to aid them to become financially viable. It is envisaged that this will help to ensure that those third sector organisations the Council depends upon to provide less formal support to vulnerable or isolated residents are more able to be financially independent.

6 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

- 6.1 Coventry City Council's representatives on Voluntary Action Coventry are Councillors Thomas and Sawdon. This arrangement has been in place for a number of years, including for the period of the current grant aid agreement. The representatives are invited to attend VAC's quarterly Management Board meetings and attend as observers rather than voting members of the board. During the period inclusive Councillor Bigham attended one management board meeting, prior to handing the appointment to Cllr Thomas who attended one meeting, and Cllr Sawdon attended three. Both Cllr Thomas and Cllr Sawdon attended VAC's Annual General Meeting.
- 6.2 There is no remuneration associated with this appointment.
- 6.3 Representation from the Council was discussed at the February VAC Management Board meeting and while official observers (Councillors and Officers) won't be required to attend from 1st April 2018, it has indicated that Councillors are very welcome to do so in an individual capacity.

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper

Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies

Location:

Council House, Room 73