



South Derbyshire District Council

1.0 Chairman's Foreword

- 1.1 This Scrutiny review has provided a welcome opportunity to recognise the work done across South Derbyshire by the funded voluntary organisations – and the volunteers themselves. In focussing on 'best value' principles, the Committee has considered a large amount of evidence in depth, visited several groups and invited participation and received several powerful presentations.
- 1.2 The review has increased Scrutiny Members' understanding and appreciation of what is being delivered, and the dedication and hard work of those who give up their own time to improve the lives of others. I thank the groups for their co-operation over the last year, and hope that this review will highlight what is best about the voluntary organisations and volunteers of our District.

2.0 Background to the Review

- 2.1 This review area was originally proposed in 2010, and was initially undertaken by a task group. The focus of the review was revisited as part of the annual work programme refresh in June 2011 with a formal report presented to the subsequent Meeting in September.
- 2.2 That report confirmed the details of current funding provided to voluntary organisations (see financial details below) and considered a proposed way forward with this review area. The current funding to nine voluntary organisations was subject to service level agreements. The organisations had a direct impact on the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives, either as enabling infrastructure organisations or through direct service delivery. The Council had representation on the Board of each of these organisations and monitoring and support was undertaken through the Community Partnerships Scheme.
- 2.3 Members were reminded of the review of the Shopmobility Scheme, which sought to understand more about the service that the voluntary organisation provided. This review had been undertaken using a task group, which reported its findings to the full Committee in January 2010. It was proposed to undertake similar reviews for each of the other funded voluntary organisations, again using task groups, although was subsequently decided that the full Committee should complete the review work.
- 2.4 In December, the Committee received its first presentation from People Express and agreed that similar presentations should be provided by those organisations which received funding of more than £25,000 per annum from the Council. For the remaining groups, it was proposed that a Special Meeting of the Committee be arranged in April 2012 to consider written reports from each of these bodies other than the Shopmobility Scheme. A questionnaire would be circulated, based on the areas identified by Members for this review to ensure a consistent approach. The information received would be submitted to the



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Committee, along with each organisation's Annual Report. Following the completion of the process, the review report would be submitted to the Housing and Community Services Committee.

3.0 Funding Provided to Voluntary Organisations

3.1 Revenue funding of £250,553 was provided across 9 organisations under Service Level Agreements during 2010/2011. This amount includes a payment of £48,288, to Sharpes for the delivery of tourist information services; this is a contracted service and did not form part of the review. A similar amount is due during 2011/12 under current SLA's.

3.2 The 9 voluntary organisations being funded at present:

- Shopmobility - £9,955
- Rural Action Derbyshire - £4,380
- Citizen's Advice Bureau - £51,095
- Council for Voluntary Services - £63,950
- Next Step - £3,745
- Asian over 60s - £6,245
- People Express - £27,000
- Sharpes (ex TIC) - £24,400
- Home Start - £11,555

3.3 The principal purpose of the review is to look at the value of payments that have been made to voluntary sector organisations by South Derbyshire District Council in terms of how they fit with the plans and direction of the Council.

The review of organisations to be undertaken in terms of:

- The 'mission' of the organisation
- What kind of service do they provide to the community?
- Fit with SDDC Corporate Plan / Strategies



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Corporate Plan 2011/12

- Sustainable Growth & Opportunity
- Safe & Secure
- Lifestyle Choices
- Value for Money

Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-29

- Healthier Communities
 - Safer Communities
 - Vibrant Communities
 - Sustainable (Community) Development
 - Children and Young People
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- Examples of current projects/programmes
 - (Proportion of) Work done in South Derbyshire
 - Number of staff/volunteers
 - Charges for service, if any
 - Turnover
 - Sources of income
 - Proportion of income from South Derbyshire District Council
 - How each group promotes itself to the whole of South Derbyshire?

4.0 Presentations by Organisations:

People Express

4.1 The first detailed presentation by Julie Batten of People Express took place at the organisation's premises on 7th December 2012. Copies of the People Express Annual Report had been circulated, together with other literature on this organisation. People Express showcased areas of their work through a presentation accompanied by a short video. This included a young peoples' film "Young, Gifted and Angry" which had engaged individuals with different social needs, those with mental health issues or who had been the subject of bullying or domestic violence. Through maintaining contact with the individuals it was seen how this initiative had improved their lives and the project had now been developed on a County-wide basis.

4.2 Another example was the Aspirations Dance project, where the students had gone on to become leaders delivering further projects in their own schools. Other projects were participation at the Festival of Leisure, contemporary dance workshops, hand crafted wooden products and the Hope exhibition for women suffering from domestic abuse. There were examples of disabled children's activities at Rosliston Forestry Centre and a project to raise awareness of sexual health issues at Granville School. The presentation included



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wider community projects in the Hatton area and statistics on the number of participations for the previous year.

- 4.3 Members had been given the opportunity to submit questions, which had been provided to People Express and resulted in a further document circulated at the Meeting. These issues had been covered through the presentation, although there was the opportunity for further questions on the evening. It was confirmed that People Express worked exclusively in the South Derbyshire area. Details were provided of other external funding secured to provide bespoke support for individual projects. It was questioned whether participants were charged for the services provided. This was not the case, but there was recognition of the current financial climate and the need for additional funding might be required, whilst not breaching the organisation's charitable status. There was a discussion about the funding secured for the building in which People Express were located and recognition by the Arts Council of the outstanding services provided. Further areas discussed were how People Express engaged with disadvantaged groups, the criteria for referral and other potential funding opportunities.

Citizens Advice Bureau

- 4.4 On 18th January 2012, Jackie Spencer of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) made a presentation to Members on the work of the South Derbyshire CAB. Initially, she explained the service aims and principles of the CAB together with the main enquiry areas that were responded to. Two case studies were provided to show how the service was delivered to South Derbyshire residents. Details were then provided of the volunteer team and paid worker team at the CAB together with current funders of the organisation. The presentation concluded with statistics showing a breakdown of clients accessing services in 2010/11, for 2011 to date and the projected end of year statistics.
- 4.5 Members took the opportunity to submit questions and seek further information on the services provided. It was asked if the CAB sought contributions from clients accessing services. This was not currently the case, but the officer was mindful of the economic climate and this issue had been questioned several times. However, it was noted that most clients presented when in financial difficulty and the organisation did not want to present barriers. It was also noted that some funding had been lost with effect from March 2012. To date, the CAB had been able to maintain all services through the use of volunteers, although it was possible that any further funding cuts might result in the withdrawal of certain services. There was discussion about the relationship between the local CAB and the national body, but it was confirmed that there was no crossover of funding and each local CAB was an individual charity. Further issues discussed were the outreach work provided via doctors' surgeries, the use of home visits in some cases and it was questioned whether the current funding streams were adequate. A copy of the latest annual report was subsequently circulated to Members.



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Council for Voluntary Services

- 4.6 The February meeting was hosted by the Council for Voluntary Services and its Chief Executive, Jo Smith addressed the Committee. A copy of the CVS Annual Report and other supporting literature had been circulated ahead of the Meeting. Details were provided of the organisation's Mission, its role and values. The presentation also covered service delivery and how the CVS activities contributed to the Council's Corporate Plan, before responding to some pre-circulated questions.
- 4.7 Jo Smith explained the strategic aims of the South Derbyshire CVS and commented on the customer appreciation of the services it provided. She spoke about the services delivered directly and the support given to other voluntary organisations. The CVS was a large, established organisation. Examples of the services delivered included the social car scheme, the handy van service, safer homes, advocacy, domestic abuse support for children and young people, the lunch club and the befriending service. A leaflet had been circulated with more details on each of these services.
- 4.8 The presentation then addressed how these services contributed to the Council's Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy. Under each of the four key themes within the Corporate Plan, a number of examples were given of the services delivered and the added value that this provided to South Derbyshire. The CVS provided an effective delivery mechanism, whilst also retaining a challenge role. Further areas covered were the work with children and young people, involvement in the South Derbyshire Partnership and an update was given on funding. A number of case studies had been prepared and would be circulated following the Meeting. Jo Smith also referred to the pre-circulated questions, explaining the staffing arrangements at the CVS. She confirmed that the majority of work was delivered in South Derbyshire, with some projects delivered across the wider Southern Derbyshire area and the County as a whole. Further questions were submitted and responded to.

Sharpe's Pottery

- 4.9 At the special committee meeting on 25th April 2012, a presentation was made by Tony Hurrell, Chairman of the Sharpes Pottery Museum. Initially, he reminded Members of the developments that had taken place on-site since 1997, when a study was commissioned and bid was prepared to preserve the industrial heritage and create a community resource. In 2003, the Centre opened after the completion of a £1.7m project and details were given of the initial uses of the premises. Subsequent developments included the Tourist Information Centre being co-located at Sharpes in 2006, the strategic re-vamp in 2008 and, in 2010 a full financial review took place. The most recent development had seen the relocation of the coffee shop and creation of a Heritage Lottery funded 'Toilet Story' / play zone, which Members took the opportunity to view.
- 4.10 Mr. Hurrell summarised what the Centre had 'on offer'. The premises provided an iconic building and visitor attraction. He stressed that the museum and heritage centre was free to



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enter and told the local heritage story. It also provided a performance space, an educational centre and conference facility, being at the gateway to the National Forest. The premises also accommodated People Express and the Magic Attic.

- 4.11 The organisation's Mission Statement was provided together with a financial background, which explained recent financial challenges and how Sharpes had responded. Mr. Hurrell explained how the Centre was looking to secure its future, referring to recent developments at the Museum, the new coffee shop and play zone, together with works to the Kiln. He also confirmed the extensive partnership working and spoke about school visits. The presentation concluded in stating Sharpes' commitment. This was to continue to protect the valuable heritage, arts and culture at the site and remain at the heart of the delivery of the strategic vision for the West Street area of the Town centre. This commitment also included delivery of the Tourist Information Centre and to create an effective gateway for the National Forest in the Town Centre. In summary there was an intention to remain 'fit for purpose'.
- 4.12 Members submitted questions on the impact of the recently opened retail park at the other end of the Town, the loss of commercial support and efforts to gain more sponsors, together with the percentage use of the conference facilities. There was discussion about the role of Sharpes and that of the Council in terms of regeneration and observations/praise regarding the increased use of the facilities and the school visits.

Shopmobility

- 4.13 Shopmobility was the subject of an Overview and Scrutiny review including a visit in December 2009 so was not included within this review. An update on the organisation was provided. Since the review the organisation has moved premises and now rents space in a purpose built office at the CVS. Usage has increased markedly since the move. The move has also proved beneficial for the staff member as there is now support on site from the CVS itself.
- 4.14 Additionally, reports were provided by the following groups, which received Council funding of less than £25,000 each year.
- Rural Action Derbyshire
 - Next Step
 - Asian Over 60s
 - Home Start
- 4.15 Each report provides an overview for the relevant organisation. Taken as a group, it is clear that they operate with minimal paid staff, with much of the direct service provision being undertaken by volunteers offering real value for money to the District Council. It was noted that the Asian Over 60's group was run solely by volunteers. The diversity of the work being undertaken by the four groups was also noted.



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5.0 Findings

- 5.1 Throughout the process each of the funded groups have clearly demonstrated the value for money in respect of the grant payments made. A wide variety of undertakings delivering an even wider range of services to and for residents of the District. Each group has been able to show how they contribute towards the Districts Corporate Plan as well as the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

"The review has given more of an understanding of what is being delivered and how hard the voluntary sector work"

Councillor Mrs. Patten

- 5.2 What has become clear as a result of this review is the level of volunteering that is supported as a result of grant payments made to these groups. This volunteering is delivering benefits across the whole of the District, both within the urban core and rural areas.

"It was good to be able to meet the committee members ... as well as receiving feedback from them about our organisation and the voluntary sector as a whole... The process was a good forum for us to showcase our service... It's easy to just keep going, on a day to day basis, and not realise what we have achieved over the last 3 years."

Tracey Harris, Senior Organiser, Home-Start South Derbyshire

"This should have been done previously – elected Members sitting on these groups should have an interest in them and be able to report back to the Council"

Councillor Bambrick

- 5.3 As part of this review the role of the funding provided by the Council in attracting additional external funding has been clearly stated. Reports from external funders have been very clear that they consider our local support a key element of their decision making process.

"In the current financial climate, lots of councils made cuts to funding for the community and voluntary sector, but South Derbyshire made an early decision to retain its level of funding to the sector"

Stuart Batchelor, Head of Community and Planning Services, SDDC

"As a charity we really value the ongoing support from the Authority in what must be very challenging times for them..."

Tony Hurrell, Chair, Sharpes Pottery Museum

- 5.4 As part of this review the Committee has identified £100,000 of Revenue funding that had been put aside by Members in 2007, to support the Voluntary Sector and not used to date.
- 5.5 The criteria for inclusion within the list of groups funded by the District was discussed and it was felt that this could form a new review area.



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6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Housing and Community Services Committee recognise and endorse the value for money provided by the Voluntary Sector as a result of the grant payments made and further to this the groups are thanked for the work that they undertake.
- 6.2 That the Housing and Community Services Committee, recognising the value provided by the Voluntary Sector, investigates how the £100,000 of revenue funding can be used to augment the work of the Sector to further address the Corporate aims of the Council.
- 6.3 As part of this the Committee should explore the development of a system to ensure fair access to this source of support from the District. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee offers to undertake a further piece of Scrutiny work to support this, investigating how the monies could be best distributed to fund work across the District.
- 6.4 While most groups recognised that it was useful to have a representative of the Council on their Trustee Board / Steering Group it was recognised that both parties could make better use of this important communication channel. It is recommended that a more formal process of feedback by nominated Councillors is explored. Part of this recommendation is that Council representatives provide an annual report about the group that they sit on, this could form part of the Community Partnership Scheme Annual Report.

7.0 Appendices

- 7.1 Copies of the background information for this review are available:
- 7.2 For the documents relating to Sharpes Pottery, The Asian over 60's group, Homestart, Next Step (against domestic abuse) and Rural Action Derbyshire, the link is:
<http://cmis.south-derbys.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=1553>
- 7.3 For the background information on People Express, South Derbyshire Citizens Advice Bureau and South Derbyshire CVS, together with a copy of the Community Partnership Annual Report, the link is:
<http://cmis.south-derbys.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/PublicDocuments.aspx?folderID=7>