

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **A review of the Community Investment Grant given to Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA)**

**25 January 2016**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed.

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1 The council's current grant agreement with GAVCA runs to March 2016. This report is brought to Scrutiny to seek members' views about the potential renewal of the grant.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council has a long standing relationship with GAVCA; over the past five years, the council has invested £34,000 per annum in GAVCA through a Community Investment Grant (CIG) so that it is able to provide support for voluntary and community sector organisations in Cheltenham. The details of the CIG agreement is set out in section 3.

- 2.2 This investment has enabled GAVCA to employ a dedicated worker for Cheltenham who has delivered advice, support, training and networking opportunities for local VCS organisations. As a council, we know that this investment pays a significant dividend in terms of the strength and vibrancy of the local VCS sector that is collectively contributing to our vision that Cheltenham delivers the best quality of life for all of its people. Some of the outcomes from GAVCA's work are set out in section 4.

- 2.3 The council's current grant agreement runs until March 2016, and as part of the review process, the council has carried out a survey of local VCS organisations about the value they place on the work of GAVCA and what they see as some of the priorities for any future agreement. These findings are presented in section 5.

- 2.4 Members of Scrutiny are invited to review the findings from the survey and comment on the value that the council achieves from its funding relationship with GAVCA.

#### **3. Details of the Community Investment Grant**

- 3.1 The current Community Investment Grant agreement was signed off in April 2011. Before then, the council had a three year agreement (2008-2011) with GAVCA, who were operating in Cheltenham as Cheltenham Voluntary and Community Action.

**3.2** The agreement set out an initial three year funding commitment that would then be reviewed and, subject to the satisfactory performance by GAVCA, the continued availability of funding, and the grant continuing to meet our corporate priorities, would then be extended by a further two years to March 2016.

**3.3** The agreement sets out the high-level service scope. This being:

- To support the development of the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- To coordinate the representation of and to advocate on behalf of the voluntary and community sector, including the promotion of the Compact.
- To facilitate a Voluntary and Community Sector Forum in Cheltenham.
- To continue to focus on its internal organisational development.

**3.4** More detail is shown in the table below.

<b>Key Service Requirement</b>	<b>Service Delivery Element</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
To support the development of the VCS.	To assist the local VCS to function more effectively through, for example:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information dissemination</li> <li>• Signposting to providers of funding advice, core skill development, training opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The VCS have an awareness of current local and national developments, and of support available to build their capacity</li> <li>• The VCS are able to develop their capacity to deliver effective services for their users</li> </ul>
To coordinate the representation of, and to advocate on behalf of the VCS, including the promotion of the Compact	<p>To promote liaison between the VCS and the public sector and other potential commissioners/funders.</p> <p>To support VCS in development and operation of working agreements and compact</p> <p>To represent the sector, in order to ensure that the VCS has an effective role at a strategic level. In particular to represent the VCS on the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The views of the VCS are adequately represented to the public sector</li> <li>• Feeds back to the VCS on key local strategic initiatives</li> </ul>
To facilitate a VCS Forum in Cheltenham	To facilitate effective communication amongst the VCS through the co-ordination of a VCS Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The VCS have a shared understanding of local issues and developments</li> <li>• The VCS are able to work collaboratively on key issues and opportunities, such as joint funding bids</li> </ul>
To continue its focus on internal organisational development	<p>To ensure that the organisation and its business is developing, has robust governance and is working towards financial independence</p> <p>To regularly assess the views, issues and the needs of the VCS, to ensure that the services provided remain relevant to the sector, ensuring in particular that there is fair representation from 'seldom-heard' groups.</p> <p>Ensure internal governance complies with the 'Good Governance' Code.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service is tailored to meet the needs of the VCS</li> <li>• The VCA provides a strong role model for the VCS</li> </ul>

**3.5** In terms of ongoing review of GAVCA's performance, there are quarterly round table meetings between council representatives and representatives of Cheltenham's VCS. Once a year, the Strategy and Engagement Manager meets with the GAVCA Service Manager to review overall service performance and identify any pressing issues for the next 12 months.

#### **4. Outcomes from the current Community Investment Grant agreement**

**4.1** GAVCA's activities fall into four broad areas, the outcome of which has been recognised with the national externally accredited NAVCA Quality Award.

- **Development:** GAVCA supports the identification of needs in the local community and facilitates innovation and improvements in service provision to meet those needs.
- **Support:** GAVCA supports local voluntary organisations and community groups to fulfil their missions more effectively
- **Networking:** GAVCA facilitates effective communication and collaboration amongst local voluntary organisations and community groups and between different sectors.
- **Voice:** GAVCA supports local voluntary organisations and community groups to influence policies, plans and practices that have an impact on their organisations and beneficiaries

**4.2** During 2014-15 GAVCA supported 35 organisations with specific issues around organisational development, and in this financial year by September 2015, 23 organisations have received support. The most prevalent presenting issues being around information services, governance support and funding. When organisations contact GAVCA for help, a development worker meets with them to discuss what the issues are, which are invariably complex and numerous rather than the one issue which they initially identified.

**4.3** A number of new and emerging groups have used GAVCA to help them develop their governing structure. For example EduFun and Cheltenham Science Group have both established themselves as Community Interest Companies (a type of social enterprise established for community benefit) and more recently Green Space Volunteers for Winston Churchill Memorial Garden/Honeybourne Line North and a residents group in the new Circa Cheltenham development are both community groups that have received support to ensure that the group adopts the right type of governance structure to enable them to carry out their activities.

**4.4** GAVCA has a well-established voluntary and community sector forum (VCS Forum), which GAVCA co-ordinates, and meets bi-monthly. They enable the VCS to play an active part on the Cheltenham Partnership through this accountable system of representation and the forum elects VCS Reps that sit on various partnerships and groups.

**4.5** GAVCA ran a successful Funding Fair with 87 people attending from groups across the county, 27 organisations from Cheltenham participated in funding workshops and a funder's marketplace where they were able to meet and talk directly with funders including the Big Lottery, Children in Need and the Summerfield Charitable Trust.

**4.6** GAVCA also ran the annual Cheltenham Volunteer of the Year Awards which recognises outstanding voluntary contribution to the sector in Cheltenham. It supported Cheltenham Civic Society to run the Civic Day in June 2015 with the theme of volunteering.

**4.7** Information is sent out on a regular basis to 275 organisations and a regular email to

299 contacts within the sector, which includes invitations to the VCS Forum, events, training and other information relevant to the VCS e.g. funding opportunities.

**4.8** GAVCA also undertakes an annual survey of the sector to identify its needs and to receive feedback on its work. The results are then used to determine GAVCA's plan for the following year. The results of the latest survey are attached as an **appendix 1** to this report.

**4.9** Other achievements for GAVCA in 2014-15 include

- Increased use of social media – GAVCA now has over 1500 followers on Twitter
- 310 volunteer and job vacancies were advertised on the GAVCA website
- E-bulletin is sent to over 2000 individuals
- Annual state of the sector survey
- Training programme provided bursaries for 'Community Champions' to attend training (14 were from Cheltenham community groups).
- Runs a successful network for Volunteer Managers to share good practice and new developments in volunteering (13 Cheltenham groups attended) and runs an accredited Volunteer Management Qualification.

## **5. Survey of local VCS organisations**

**5.1** On 15 October 2015, the council launched a survey of local VCS organisations and invited them to complete an online survey which had 11 primary questions. The closing date for the survey was 13 November 2015. The primary questions were:

- Are you aware of GAVCA?
- Value of contact with GAVCA
- Value of support and advice from GAVCA
- Value of training from GAVCA?
- Value of GAVCA representing your organisation's interests?
  
- What do you see as GAVCA's current strengths?
- What do you see as GAVCA's current limitations?
- What do you see are your organisation's main challenges for the future?
- What external support do you feel you need to address these challenges?
- What external support would you look to CBC to commission via a grant?
- Do you feel GAVCA could be best placed to deliver this support?

**5.2** In total, there were 25 completed responses – the link to the survey was sent to 299 groups. A summary of the responses to the last six questions is set out in the attached **appendix 2**. In summary the results for all questions are as follows.

<b>Question</b>	<b>How many answered</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Are you aware of GAVCA?	25	100% of respondents were aware of GAVCA
Value of contact with GAVCA	25	On average, respondents rated the value of contact 8.76 (out of 10)
Value of support and advice from GAVCA	24	On average, respondents rated the value of support and advice 8.88 (out of 10)
Value of training from GAVCA?	17	On average, respondents rated the value of training 8.94 (out of 10)
Value of GAVCA representing your organisation's interests?	21	On average, respondents rated the value of representation 9.24 (out of 10)
What do you see as GAVCA's current strengths?	24	Most common references were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the sector (30%)</li> <li>• Quality of service (22%)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connections (17%)</li> <li>• Information, advice and support (17%)</li> </ul>
What do you see as GAVCA's current limitations?	22	<p>Most common references were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of sustainable funding (36%)</li> <li>• Under-resourced (27%)</li> <li>• Communications and marketing (9%)</li> </ul>
What do you see are your organisation's main challenges for the future?	25	<p>Most common references were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to fundraising (52%)</li> <li>• Access to volunteers (16%)</li> <li>• Coping with service demand / growth (12%)</li> <li>• Harnessing the benefits of collaborative working (8%)</li> </ul>
What external support do you feel you need to address these challenges?	25	<p>Most common references were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to fundraising skills and resources (52%)</li> <li>• Access to communications and marketing skills (16%)</li> <li>• Harnessing the benefits of collaborative working (12%)</li> <li>• Harnessing the benefits of innovation (8%)</li> <li>• Access to volunteers (8%)</li> </ul>
What external support would you look to CBC to commission via a grant?	20	<p>Most common references were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harnessing the benefits of collaborative working (19%)</li> <li>• Continue with GAVCA funding (19%)</li> <li>• Access to fundraising skills and resources (50%)</li> </ul>
Do you feel GAVCA could be best placed to deliver this support?	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 78% (18) of respondents said yes</li> <li>• 4% (1) respondent said no</li> <li>• 17% (4) were unsure.</li> </ul>

- 5.3** Overall, the council should be pleased with the results of the survey. Respondents to the survey place a high value on the support, training and representation that GAVCA provides to local VCS organisations and almost 80% of the respondents to the final question felt the GAVCA are best placed to deliver support on the future.
- 5.4** The survey does throw up some challenges; local VCS organisations want to see more support on areas where they may lack specific skills. There is a particular focus on access to fund-raising skills but also mentioned are some of the “softer” skills of communications, marketing and developing more collaborative working opportunities. If we decide to renew the grant with GAVCA then we will need to reflect on these areas and consider including them in any future grant agreement.
- 5.5** Scrutiny members' views on the survey results and any other thoughts about the potential renewal of the grant will be welcome.

## 6. What happens next

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles will consider the results of the survey and thoughts of Scrutiny members before making a final decision about whether or not to renew the grant with GAVCA.

<b>Background Papers</b>	None
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