

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Community Select Committee

26th June 2024

TITLE:	Working with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Anthony McKeown - Leader
CONTACT OFFICERS:	Kim Gilmore – Community Project Officer David Smith – Head of Communities and Climate Change
WARDS INVOLVED:	Non-Specific

Appendices Attached:

Appendix A: Services provided by organisations funded via High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) Community Support Grants.

Appendix B: Discretionary grants consultation – all impacted funding.

Appendix C: Community Support Grant - Review questionnaire.

Appendix D: VCSE Contributions to the Borough Plan

1. Reason for the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on:

- the Council's working arrangements with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations
- the use of the Council's Community Support Grant (CSG) funding
- Derbyshire County Council's consultation on ending discretionary grant funding; and
- how the Council intends to continue to collaborate with and support the VCSE sector to deliver the Borough Plan and achieving further efficiencies.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that:

The Community Select Committee supports the following proposals to the Executive:

2.1 The Executive notes the feedback from organisations on the state of the local voluntary sector.

- 2.2 The Executive notes that the County Council is consulting on proposals to end discretionary grant funding to voluntary and community groups, and prepares a corporate response to the consultation outlining the potential local impacts of ending the funding.
- 2.3 The Council uses the money raised from the High Peak Community Lottery and held in the central fund to promote and support the work of the VCSE sector (after fees for the Gambling Licence and associated costs are paid). It is expected that this will amount to around £5,000 based upon experience from the first year of operation.
- 2.4 The Council consults with the VCSE sector about developing an agreement (a Compact) between VCSEs groups and the Council, and possibly wider statutory sector, to enhance how both sides to work together and understand what to expect from each other.
- 2.5 The Council works with the VCSE Sector and other partners to identify how the work of the sector can be better publicly acknowledge and promoted.
- 2.6 The Council reviews the Community Support Grant fund prior to 2025/26 to take account of the priorities in the Borough Plan, funding decisions of statutory partners and the financial pressures experienced by VCSE organisations with a view to move to 3-year funding agreements.

The Community Select Committee:

- 2.7 Updates its work programme to reflect the items set out in Section 9.16 of the report.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Borough Plan 2023-27 highlights the importance of working with our partners and the community to create a healthier and safer High Peak. The Borough Plan identifies developing and enhancing our partnerships with the local voluntary sector to work cooperatively across the High Peak as a priority action to enable the objectives of the plan to be met.
- 3.2 Feedback from the recent Corporate Peer Challenge noted that: *“Good community capacity is being tapped into – particularly in relation to the environment”*.
- 3.3 High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) provides grant funding to several VCSE sector organisations within the High Peak. The services provided by each of these organisations are listed in Appendix A.
- 3.4 Derbyshire County Council opened a consultation¹ on 28th May 2024 on proposals to end discretionary grant funding to voluntary and community

¹ [DCC Consultation on End of discretionary grant funding](#)

groups across Derbyshire. The organisations in High Peak that are affected by the proposals are Age UK Derby & Derbyshire (High Peak and Dales), Connex Community Support (High Peak and Dales), The Bureau, High Peak CVS, and New Mills Volunteer Centre. The proposals would also impact on some Countywide organisations that provide services in High Peak such as Rural Action Derbyshire and Derbyshire Law Centre. The full list of impacted services is provided at Appendix B.

- 3.5 The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with each VCSE organisation has been reviewed and updated as required.
- 3.6 The Jericho Café, Gamesley has closed and therefore no longer funded by CSG. This funding has now been repurposed to Live Great Adventures to allow a delivery of a new healthy walks initiative.
- 3.7 Most of the funded organisations anticipate an increase in demand for service over the next 12 months with more than half expecting their costs to increase. All of the funded partners, prior to the announcement of the consultation on ending discretionary grant funding by DCC, reported that they will be affected by medium to long-term financial difficulties.
- 3.8 The Borough Council maintains links with local foodbanks and community pantries but does not provide grant funding to these organisations via the CSG.
- 3.9 The report draws a number of conclusions and sets out plans to further develop the partnership arrangements and the VCSE including the development of a Compact to set out the principles of the future partnership arrangements.

4 How this report links to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The Council's Borough Plan 23-27 highlights the importance of working with our partners and the community to create a healthier and safer High Peak. The Borough Plan identifies developing and enhancing our partnerships with the local voluntary sector to work cooperatively across the High Peak as a priority action for meeting the objectives of the plan.

Aim 1: Supporting our communities to create a healthier, safer and cleaner High Peak

Objectives:

- Work with our partners and communities to address health inequality, food and fuel poverty, mental health and loneliness.
- Develop a positive relationship with communities.
- Effective relationships with strategic partners.

- Working cooperatively with local groups, and sports clubs to help people move more and enjoy our green spaces.

Key Priorities:

- Develop and enhance our partnerships with the local voluntary sector to work cooperatively across the High Peak.
- Increased levels of community support.

Aim 4: Protect and improve the environment including responding to the climate emergency

Key Priorities:

- Work with local businesses and community organisations to both deliver on climate change and biodiversity plans, and lobby other bodies including government where we lack the powers to take action directly.
- Implement the Parks Development Plan to support the widest community use of parks and support community / friends' groups.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 An alternative option has not been identified. The Council needs to continue to work with and support VCSE partners to deliver its corporate priorities.

6 Implications

6.1	<u>Community safety, including safeguarding and prevention of terrorism</u> Working with the VCSE sector to build resilient and supported communities can assist in improving the safety of our communities, safeguarding individuals and preventing radicalisation of vulnerable people.
6.2	<u>Workforce</u> The priorities of the Communities, Climate Change Service has been realigned to further improve our partnerships with the local voluntary sector and to deliver the Borough Plan.
6.3	<u>Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment</u> Working with the VCSE sector can help the Council to meet its equality and diversity duties.
6.4	<u>Financial Considerations</u> The Council provides funding to VCSE Sector organisations through various means including the Community Support Grant,

	Councillors Initiative Fund and funding to deliver specific projects and activities.
6.5	<u>Legal</u> None.
6.6	<u>Climate Change and Sustainability</u> VCSE organisations can play an important role in tackling climate change. In addition to the Community Support Grant, the Council also provides a Community Climate Change ² Fund to mobilise the resources of local communities, encourage people to work together in a voluntary capacity and empower individuals and communities to take actions which: reduce local CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions; increase the ability of nature to absorb and store greenhouse gas emission; and build resilience in nature to mitigate the impact of climate change.
6.7	<u>Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity</u> As above, VCSE organisations can play an important role in conserving and enhancing biodiversity.
6.8	<u>Consultation</u> Each of the VCSE sector organisations funded in 23/24 have completed a ‘health-check’ questionnaire that asks questions about the organisations current aims and objectives, service delivery, current and potential issues and how their delivery supports the Council’s priorities.
6.9	<u>Risk Assessment</u> A reduction in the capacity of the VCSE sector could negatively impact on the Council’s ability to deliver the Borough Plan 2023-27.

ANDREW P STOKES
Chief Executive

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

[DCC Consultation on End of discretionary grant funding
www.highpeak.gov.uk/CommunityClimateChangeFund](http://www.highpeak.gov.uk/CommunityClimateChangeFund)

[High Peak Community Lottery](#)

[LGA \(2022\), The state of strategic relationships
between councils and their local voluntary and
community sector](#)

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² www.highpeak.gov.uk/CommunityClimateChangeFund

7 Introduction and Background

- 7.1 The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector, also known as the third sector or voluntary sector, includes any non-government, non-profit organisation (incorporated or not) working for social or environmental purposes rather than financial gain. This can range from small community-based groups/schemes through to larger registered charities that operate locally, regionally or nationally.
- 7.2 The operating model of VCSE sector organisations varies and can include one or more of the following:
- Direct service provision;
 - Infrastructure support (development and practical support for other groups within the sector and representation of the sector at a strategic level);
 - Campaigning (to increase awareness of issues and encourage change in behaviour, opinion, etc); or
 - Grant distribution (eg Comic Relief).
- 7.3 Feedback from the Council's recent Corporate Peer Challenge noted that: *"Good community capacity is being tapped into – particularly in relation to the environment"*. These arrangements need to be further build upon given their importance to the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.
- 7.4 The Local Government Association (LGA) published the results of research that they commissioned into the state of strategic relationships between councils and their local voluntary and community sector in 2022.
- 7.5 The research highlighted many common barriers for both Councils and the VCSE sector to working in a strategic way, including:
- Low capacity;
 - Reduced budgets and resources;
 - A lack of clarity over priorities;
 - Poor senior buy-in;
 - A failure to plan together; and
 - Differences in structure and process.
- 7.6 The research also highlighted four principles to provide the building blocks for successful relationships:
- **Shared foundations:** clarity of purpose, values, and roles, built on shared understanding, knowledge and a commitment to partnership working.
 - **Relational culture:** behaviours and ways of working that enable the power of community to flourish, with both sides giving generously to the process and being open to receiving feedback.
 - **Effective structures:** systems, mechanisms and processes that are fit for purpose and enable innovation and sustain long-term commitment.
 - **Capacity and resources:** having the wherewithal to take action.

8 The VCSE Sector in the High Peak

- 8.1 High Peak is fortunate to have a very active voluntary sector that delivers a wide range of activities across the Borough. These voluntary sector organisations are locally rooted and have a wealth of local knowledge and connections that makes them well-placed to identify local needs and any gaps in provision. They also have the ability to harness the commitment and passion of local communities.
- 8.2 The Council seeks to support these groups such as by funding High Peak Community and Voluntary Support (HPCVS) to provide practical support to other groups within the sector and to help with their development. Many Councillors and Council Officers are active supporters and members of local groups. The Council also introduced the [High Peak Community Lottery](#) to help local groups with fundraising. The lottery currently supports 73 local groups and has raised around £26,000 for good causes in its first 12-months. This includes approximately £5,000 to be used to support good causes from the Council's central fund. In addition, local players have won £2,850 in cash prizes.
- 8.3 High Peak Borough Council also provides grant funding via the Community Support Grant (CSG) to several VCSE sector organisations as shown in Table 1. The services provided by each of these funded organisations is described at Appendix A. High Peak Community and Voluntary Services (HPCVS) organise a weekly 'Alliance' meeting which brings together representatives from HPCVS, Connex, The Bureau and New Mills Volunteer Centre (NMVC). The Council attend Alliance meetings on a monthly basis as described in the revised Service Levels Agreements (SLAs) that have been agreed with each organisation for 2024/25.
- 8.4 The Borough Council provides financial support to local branches of two national organisations through the CSG: Citizens Advice (Derbyshire Districts branch) and the Samaritans (Buxton and High Peak). The Council also funds Citizens Advice from other budgets to deliver specific money and debt advice to our residents.
- 8.5 HPBC Officers have met with each of the funded organisations to discuss and agree a Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for the 2024/25 CSG funding period. Under the revised SLAs, the Borough Council has committed to:
- Providing funding from the Community Support Fund to support core service delivery;
 - Attending monthly meetings with members of the High Peak Voluntary Sector Alliance where invited and subject to officer availability; and
 - Providing such ongoing support and liaison as is reasonably required to ensure the effective delivery of the Fund.

8.6 In return, funded organisations have committed to:

- Provide an annual report detailing the services provided in that financial year and including statistics of the number of clients engaged with across all services and projects delivered in that financial year
- Complete an annual Partner Health-Check that provides feedback on the organisation's successes and challenges and also details how they support delivery of the Council priorities:
 - Health inequality.
 - Food and fuel poverty.
 - Mental health.
 - Loneliness.
 - Community safety.
 - Supporting access to services (including digital inclusion).
 - Supporting local businesses and encouraging start-ups and economic growth.
 - Protecting the environment.
 - Improving and/or encouraging the use of parks and open spaces.
 - Access to physical activity and leisure facilities.
 - Supporting the enhancement of the Borough's creativity, culture and heritage.
- Make the most of any opportunities to acknowledge the contribution made by HPBC in any publicity gained for the service and co-operate with HPBC's Communications Officer.
- Attend update meetings with HPBC, as is reasonably required, to ensure the effective delivery of the Fund and to highlight any issues or concerns that may arise over the duration of this SLA.
- Work with HPBC to coordinate and host an annual 'Meet and Greet' for local ward Councillors to highlight the work of the organisation.

Table 1: Community Support Grants

Organisation	Area Covered	Annual Grant Amount	Aims
Citizens Advice Derbyshire Districts (CADD)	Borough-wide	£50,000	Provide an accessible, free, confidential and impartial advice service for those in need, ensuring targeted services for the most vulnerable and identifying root causes of problems to allow advocacy locally and nationally
High Peak Community and Voluntary Support (HPCVS)	Borough-wide	£10,000	Promote and assist any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community. Challenge all forms of oppression and inequality and to give priority to working with people who are limited by economic, political and social disadvantage. Improve the quality of life for individuals, groups and communities and to build the capacity of the VCSE sector to support development and sustainability
Connex	Some services cover the whole Borough and some are place-specific	£5,000	Enable voluntary activity that supports strong, thriving communities. Deliver lifeline services that help people, in need, to live fulfilled lives
The Bureau	Glossopdale	£5,000	Encourage local people to volunteer and support others. Offer advice and practical help. Connect people with other relevant services. Support the growth of community activity and action and responding to community needs as they arise
New Mills Volunteer Centre (NMVC)	New Mills, Whaley Bridge, Chapel, Furness Vale, Birch Vale, Hayfield, Chinley and the smaller villages in between	£5,000	Identify gaps in community care, to respond to the needs of the elderly, disabled and isolated people in the New Mills District; meeting those identified gaps, which can be met appropriately by volunteer activity. Recruit, support and train volunteers and offer opportunities for integration, therefore enhancing the quality of life for both client and volunteer.
Buxton & High Peak Samaritans	Borough-wide	£2,500	Provide 24/7 emotional support to anyone in distress or despair
Glossopdale Furniture Project (GFP)	Borough-wide	£1,000	Help relieve people in need, hardship or distress and supporting these people with furniture and essential household items at affordable prices (or in some cases for free) via partnership referrals Provide, where possible, volunteering and work experience opportunities for all ages
Live Great Adventures	Borough-wide	£1,000	Mental Health Support and Suicide Awareness and Prevention, offering free 'Walks and Talks', Men's Minds Matter in-person sessions, family hikes, podcasts.

8.7 As noted above, many Councillors and Offices are actively involved in supporting local groups – often in a personal capacity. The Borough Council is also formally represented on some of the CSG funded VCSE sector organisations as non-voting Board members:

- New Mills & District Volunteer Centre - Councillor Evans
- The Bureau - Councillor Baker
- Connex Community Support - Councillor Sloman
- High Peak Community and Voluntary Support - Councillor Clarke

State of the Sector

8.8 Each of the funded VCSE sector organisations (2023/24) was asked to complete a 'health-check' and outline the issues that they were currently facing. These health checks were completed prior to Derbyshire County Council beginning its consultation on ending discretionary grant funding (see below). The feedback from the health checks is summarised in Table 2. Live Great Adventures did not complete a health-check document as they did not receive CSG funding in 2023/24.

8.9 The health-checks highlighted several key points:

- All the organisations anticipate an increase in demand for service and medium to long-term financial difficulties. Both HPCVS and Glossop Furniture Project (GFP) reported short term financial concerns.
- More than half of the organisations are facing issues with staff capacity. The Samaritans, GFP and Connex Community Support reported potential issues with volunteer capacity
- GFP noted that they are currently struggling to find the funds to repair their current premises with anticipated costs totalling approx. £100,000. They are looking at the possibility of purchasing this property from DCC but have also looked at other local properties but find the rental costs to be too expensive.

Table 2: Issues facing funded organisations

ORGANISATION	ISSUES														
	Access to equipment and supplies	Cost Increases	Accommodation difficulties	Increase in service demand	Cash-flow problems	Additional staff and volunteer training needs	Med. To long term financial difficulties	Short-term financial difficulties	Volunteer capacity	Staff Capacity	Additional Advice and guidance	Immediate short-term impact	Longer-term impact on beneficiaries/clients	Tech ICT/Software limitations	Other
Citizens Advice		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓								
High Peak Community and Voluntary Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
Connex		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	
The Bureau		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓		✓			✓*
New Mills Volunteer Centre	✓			✓			✓			✓					✓
Buxton & High Peak Samaritans				✓			✓		✓						✓*
Glossopdale Furniture Project		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
<p>* Other Issues:</p> <p>The Bureau: Lack of funding for essential services (mental health, community buildings/assets) will have short- and long-term detrimental effects on people.</p> <p>Samaritans: "We are totally reliant on our volunteers but conscious that many have other commitments including the need to work longer hours/other jobs in these difficult economic times. We'd like to be able to pay travelling expenses to all volunteers (who come from all parts of the Borough) but can't afford to do this at present"</p>															

Derbyshire County Council Discretionary Grant Funding

- 8.10 Derbyshire County Council opened a consultation on proposals to end discretionary grant funding³ to voluntary and community groups across Derbyshire on 28th May 2024 which runs until 20th August 2024.
- 8.11 The proposal to stop adult social care and health (ASCH) grants would affect 30 community and voluntary groups across Derbyshire. In total these currently receive annual grants totalling just over £722,000. A further 20 groups would be affected across the county by the proposal to stop corporate services and transformation (CTS) grants. These receive grants totalling just over £333,000. Seven organisations are affected by both proposals.
- 8.12 The organisations in High Peak that are affected by the proposals are Age UK Derby & Derbyshire (High Peak and Dales), Connex Community Support (High Peak and Dales), The Bureau, High Peak CVS, and New Mills Volunteer Centre. The proposals would also impact on some Countywide organisations that provide services in High Peak such as Rural Action Derbyshire and Derbyshire Law Centre. The full list of impacted services is provided at Appendix B.

	Grant per annum (£)	Area
Telephone and one to one Befriending Activity (ASCH)		
Age UK Derby & Derbyshire	48,099	High Peak & Derbyshire Dales
Connex Community Support	3,000	High Peak & Derbyshire Dales
New Mills Volunteer Centre	250	High Peak
Social Activity to Prevent Isolation (ASCH)		
The Bureau (Volunteer Centre Glossop)	21,936	High Peak
Connex Community Support	16,306	High Peak & Derbyshire Dales
Specialist Advice Services (CST)		
Derbyshire Law Centre	90,124	Countywide
VCS Infrastructure (Joint funded ASCH and CST)		
Connex Community Support	27,236 (ASCH)	High Peak & Derbyshire Dales
High Peak CVS	4,124 (ASCH) 15,378 (CST)	High Peak
New Mills Volunteer Centre	21,513 (ASCH)	High Peak
The Bureau	19,175 (ASCH)	High Peak
Rural Action Derbyshire	15,378 (CST)	Countywide

- 8.13 The proposed reductions in ASCH and CST discretionary grants could potentially lead to a reduction in funding for The Bureau of £41,111, £46,542

³ Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) discretionary grants and Corporate Services and Transformation (CST) discretionary grants

for Connex, £21,763 for New Mills Volunteer Centre, and a £19,502 for High Peak CVS.

8.14 Those wishing to respond to the consultation can do so at [Cessation of Grant Funding Consultation Online Questionnaire](#) or by requesting a paper copy from policy@derbyshire.gov.uk or by telephone: 01629 533520. DCC has committed to carrying out direct consultation with all the organisations affected as well as people who use them. It has also arranged library drop-in sessions between 10am and midday at Chapel-en-le-Frith Library on 28th May 2024 and Buxton Library on 2nd July 2024.

8.15 Following the announcement of the consultation, HPBC arranged a meeting with representatives from the locally affected organisation (High Peak CVS were unable to attend). The main points raised by the VCSE organisations were:

- The loss of funding doesn't only impact on service delivery but also on the capacity and sustainability of organisations because some of the funding is used to cover running costs.
- VCSE organisations play an important role in advocating for their service users and sector, such as by attending partnership meetings and trying to influence the strategies, priorities and work of statutory agencies; however, attendance at such meetings must be balanced with organisational priorities and so it is likely that attention will be increasingly focussed internally and on income-generating activities reducing the capacity of the VCSE Sector to participate more widely.
- Voluntary services rely on infrastructure support which means the proposed reductions will impact on both service delivery and the overall capacity to run and develop the organisation. This includes volunteer brokerage and the capacity to engage in meetings with partners.
- The VCSE sector relies on the discretionary grants as anchor funding to allow them to demonstrate capacity and sustainability to other grant providers.
- The impact on befriending services, which is sometimes the only support in place for those facing social isolation, is likely to be particularly high. This includes one-to-one services and the capacity to move individuals onto other social activities to increase social contact. Some of the people accessing such services are the most vulnerable within our communities.
- Organisations will have to consider reducing hours and losing posts which will affect the capacity to deliver and contribute to the wider sector.
- Fundraising has become more competitive and the pots available from grant makers have not increased in response to inflation and increasing costs.
- A reduction in service provision by the voluntary sector will have knock-on impacts on the provision of statutory services such as health. The savings made by statutory services through commissioning services from the voluntary sector should be considered.
- A reduction in service provision also impacts on the workforce of the Councils and other local employers because many rely upon the support services provided to older parents, those with mental ill health, etc. It makes it much more difficult for carers to be economically active.

- A reduction in capacity of the voluntary sector will have implications for Derbyshire’s ability to respond to emergencies. COVID was a perfect example of where the voluntary sector was asked to provide the frontline response to the pandemic. “*If we don't exist, or we're materially damaged and our resilience is therefore damaged then we won't be there to pick up the pieces*”.
- There will be less capacity to recruit, train, support and retain volunteers. If volunteers are lost as a result of the funding changes, then it will be difficult to replace them in the future. If services are later reintroduced as problems emerge then they are likely to have to rely more heavily on salaried roles making them more expensive to deliver.
- The sector has not been invited to take part in a strategic consultation about how and what the sector provides and the most effective use of public funds.

Council Performance

8.16 The Local Government Association (LGA)’s [National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England 2018](#) recognises the ‘critical and integral role’ of VCSE organisations in achieving community benefits as service providers, advocates and through representing the voice of service users. The LGA provides a toolkit to support delivery of the Strategy and to help councils to set objectives in relation to the maturity levels in each of the key areas of the strategy, which includes “*Enabling voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) engagement*” and to assess their own progress against those objectives.

	Minimum	Developing	Mature	Leader	Innovator
High level principle/ specific behaviour	Organisation does not see any benefits to be gained from VCSE engagement	VCSE organisations are engaged in a few key contracts only	Taking a proactive approach to integrating VCSE organisations into procurement and commissioning	VCSE engagement is embedded into corporate strategy	VCSE engagement is a core operational way of doing business, integrated into all directorates/ departments and activities with regular reporting against targets.

8.17 It is suggested that the Borough Council is currently at the ‘Mature’ level: *Taking a proactive approach to integrating VCSE organisations into procurement and commissioning.*

Foodbanks and Community Pantries

8.18 The Borough Council maintain links with local foodbanks and community pantries but at this time does not provide specific CSG funding to these organisations, a number have however received support via the CIF. The foodbanks and community pantries have continued to play a vital role in providing food and other essential household items to local communities and particularly those experiencing food poverty.

8.19 Foodbanks typically operate on a referral basis with appropriate individuals being referred by frontline professionals to access emergency food supplies which is normally intended to last a minimum of three days. There are currently five foodbanks operating in the High Peak:

- High Peak Foodbank;
- Whaley Bridge Foodbank;
- Chapel Good Neighbour Food Distribution Network;
- Glossopdale Foodbank; and
- New Mills Helping Hands Foodbank

8.20 Grace's Kitchen in Whitfield also offer food parcels on a first-come first-served basis

8.21 Community Pantries typically operate on a membership basis, providing a subsidised service and access to fresh produce for a small weekly fee (into the scheme) to low income families and individuals. A number of these groups work with the organisation 'Fairshare' alongside work with local supermarkets and other businesses to reduce food waste by redistributing surplus food that would otherwise go to waste. There are currently five Community Pantries operating in the High Peak:

- G52 Community Pantry;
- People of Whitfield (POW);
- Fairfield Endowed Pantry;
- Hadfield Coming Together (HTC) – Bellies not Bins;
- Residents of Fairfield Association (ROFA).

9 Next Steps

9.1 The recommendations presented in this section, to further develop collaborative working with the VCSE Sector, are underpinned by the following propositions:

- An independent and diverse VCSE Sector plays an important role in improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the High Peak.
- The local VCSE Sector is central to both building social fabric and delivering services in our area.
- HPBC's engagement with the VCSE Sector should be primarily focussed on delivery of the Council's Borough Plan 2023 – 2027 and opportunities to contribute to the Council's Efficiency Programme.
- Councillors play important roles in championing the VCSE Sector as community leaders and scrutinising how the Council works with the sector.

Statement of Future Relationships

- 9.2 The Council has taken steps to formalise working arrangements with those VCSE organisations that receive CSG funding through revised Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- 9.3 The Council proposes to build on these SLAs and consult with the VCSE sector about developing an agreement (a Compact) between VCSEs groups and the Council, and possibly wider statutory sector, to allow both sides to work together and understand what to expect from each other. This would provide an opportunity for the Council to publicly declare its support for the VCSE Sector and to establish and document:
- A shared vision and values and how funded VCSE organisations contribute to the delivering the priorities of the Council's Borough Plan 23-27.
 - The Borough Council's commitments to the VCSE Sector (e.g. obtaining VCSE views on policy development (as appropriate), maintaining good lines of communication and actively seeking opportunities for collaborative working.
 - VCSE Sector commitments (e.g. maintaining high standards of governance, demonstrating value for money, promoting equality and inclusion).
 - A no 'Supprises' partnership with open communications between all partners.
- 9.3 Appendix D shows the ways in which the funded VCSE Sector organisations consider that they currently assist with delivery of the objectives within the Council's Borough plan.
- 9.4 In addition to the annual health checks, Officers will carry out a mini-review after approximately 6-months to document delivery of the SLA, and identify any risks and opportunities. Officers also propose to meet with the High Peak Voluntary Sector Alliance on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. This will enable the Council to maintain good relationships with the VCSE Sector and to obtain valuable community intelligence. The Council also proposes to introduce a similar approach with foodbanks and pantries and ask them to complete an annual and six-monthly health check, whilst recognising that the Council does not provide regular funding to these groups.
- 9.5 The Council also intends to work with the VCSE Sector and other partners to identify how the work of the sector can be publicly acknowledge, supported and promoted using the approximately £5,000 in the central fund. This will also include promoting the work of one of the members of the High Peak Community Lottery each week to celebrate their work and encourage support for their work.

VCSE Collaborative Working plan

- 9.6 The Council's Heads of Service will be asked to revise the 2021 Voluntary Sector Collaborative Working Plan (CWP) and consider new ways in which

they can collaborate with and support the VCSE sector as a means of delivering the Borough Plan 2023-27. This may include exploring opportunities for delivery by or in conjunction with the VCSE sector, information exchange, provision of in-kind support, assistance in skilling-up the sector, and opportunities for co-location or transfer of community assets, employee volunteering scheme.

- 9.7 Heads of Service will be asked to populate the CWP and delivery of the plan will be overseen by the Alliance Leadership Team; with an annual report to Councillors to allow them to scrutinise performance. This will help to ensure that working with the VCSE Sector is a central consideration when planning service delivery and is not just a marginal “nice to have”.
- 9.8 The structured approach will assist the Council to meet its corporate objectives and to ensure that its work with the VCSE is focussed on those objectives as much as possible.
- 9.9 The CWP will assist the Council in developing their working relationships with the VCSE sector and support the Council in moving up to ‘Leader’ level: *VCSE engagement is embedded into corporate strategy.*

Funding the VCSE Sector

- 9.10 The funding arrangements for the VCSE Sector, as outlined in Table 1 (above), have been developed over time in response to demands and priorities.
- 9.11 A more strategic approach could ensure that funding:
- Supports the delivery of the Council’s Borough Plan.
 - Meets an identified need within agreed timescales.
 - Achieves value for money.
 - Encourages high standards of governance.
 - Contributes to the sustainability of the VCSE Sector.
 - Supports both infrastructure and delivery organisations.
 - Promotes active citizenship and voluntary activity in local communities.
 - Benefits all areas of the Borough and all groups across the whole funding portfolio.
 - Supports the delivery of the Council’s public sector equality duty.
- 9.12 Future funding arrangements should consist of core funding to key organisations and project-specific funding to help deliver projects identified through the CWP. Smaller grants to organisations that benefit their local community, for the purchase of specific items, and to undertake specific pieces of work or to support the development of the organisation can continue to be provided through the Councillors Initiative Fund (CIF).
- 9.13 The levels of Community Support Grants will remain the same for 2024/25 but the Council may wish to review the CSG fund prior to 2025/26 to take account of the priorities in the Borough Plan, funding decisions of other statutory partners and the financial pressures experienced by VCSE organisations. New

funding arrangements for 2025/26 will be considered as part of the annual budgeting process with a view to moving towards 3-year funding agreements to provide a greater degree of financial security for VCSE partners.

Councillor Involvement

- 9.14 Councillors have a key role in both supporting and scrutinising work with the community/voluntary sector and partnership activity. As noted previously, the Council is well represented on the boards of the local VCSE Sector 'Alliance' organisations. Councillors also actively support a variety of local groups and provide funding for community activities and projects through their Councillors Initiative Fund.
- 9.15 The following actions are proposed to formalise and further develop the involvement of Councillors with VCSE Sector organisations:
- The Leader of the Council will have responsibility for promoting working with the VCSE.
 - As part of the new SLA agreements, funded partners will help coordinate an annual 'Meet and Greet' (for local ward Councillors) to highlight their work in the locality and surrounding High Peak wards (that funded partners work within).
 - The Community Select Panel should play a key role in guiding and shaping work with the VCSE and partnership activity.
 - Councillors should be provided with regular updates on work with the voluntary sector with an emphasis on how this has helped to achieve the Council's corporate objectives.
 - Officers should assist Councillors to provide support for local groups and to make effective use of the Councillors Initiative Fund.
- 9.16 The Community Select Committee has a key role in scrutinising the work with the key partnerships and use of the funding provided to the VCSE Sector, including receiving annual:
- Updates on performance of the VCSE Compact/Protocol and delivery of the Council's Collaborative Working plan and use of the CSG.
 - Reports from each organisation in receipt of HPBC CSG funding.
 - Reports from key partnerships: Health and Well-Being Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, Place Alliance.
 - Update on Councillor Initiative Fund; and
 - Thematic reports on progress towards addressing the priorities set out in the Borough plan: health inequality, food and fuel poverty, mental health, and loneliness.