

**STAFFORDSHIRE MORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cabinet**

**8 October 2024**

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Working with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder for Communities – Cllr Bill Cawley</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICERS:</b>	<b>Victoria Ellis – Communities Officer David Smith – Head of Communities and Climate Change</b>
<b>WARDS INVOLVED:</b>	<b>Non-Specific</b>

**Appendices Attached:**

**Appendix A: Community Support Grant - Review questionnaire**

**Appendix B: Reported VCSE contributions to the Corporate Plan**

**Appendix C: Extract of National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England 2018**

**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 Grant (CG) funding
- how the Council intends to continue to collaborate with and support the VCSE sector to deliver the Corporate Plan and achieving further efficiencies.

**2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

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

2.2 The Council uses the money raised from the Staffordshire Moorlands Community Lottery (SMCL) 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.

- 2.3 The allocation of a small budget should be set aside for the next 3 years to promote the Staffordshire Moorlands Community Lottery as a means to make community groups more self-sustainable. The promotion will include promoting the SMCL to new groups and encourage members of the public to play the lottery and support their given good cause.
- 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 Cabinet agrees to extend funding for the Volunteering For All Officer to continue to provide support for people within the district who are considering volunteering.
- 2.7 The Council reviews the Community Support Grant fund prior to 2025/26 to take account of the priorities in the Corporate Plan, funding decisions of statutory partners and the financial pressures experienced by VCSE organisations with a view to move to 3-year funding agreements.

### **3. Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan 2023-27 highlights the importance of working with our partners and the community to create a healthier and safer Staffordshire Moorlands. The Corporate Plan identifies developing and enhancing our partnerships with the local voluntary sector to work cooperatively across the Staffordshire Moorlands 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 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) provides grant funding to several VCSE sector organisations within the Staffordshire Moorlands. The services provided by each of these organisations are listed in Appendix A.
- 3.4 The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with each VCSE organisation has been reviewed and updated as required.
- 3.5 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.

- 3.6 The 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 Corporate Plan 2023-27 highlights the importance of working with partners and the community to create a safer and healthier Staffordshire Moorlands. Also, using resources effectively and to provide value for money, which can mean enlisting the support of the VCSE.

##### **Aim 1: Help create a safer and healthier environment for our communities to live & work**

Objective: Develop a positive relationship with communities.

Action: Review relationships to empower community and volunteer organisations.

- 4.2 Appendix B shows how VCSE organisations in the district report that they contribute to delivery of the corporate plan.

#### **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 Community safety, including safeguarding and prevention of terrorism  
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 Workforce  
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 Corporate Plan.
- 6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment  
Working with the VCSE sector can help the Council to meet its equality

and diversity duties.

6.4 Financial Considerations

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 Legal

None.

6.6 Climate Change and Sustainability

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity

As above, VCSE organisations can play an important role in conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

6.8 Consultation

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 Risk Assessment

A reduction in the capacity of the VCSE sector could negatively impact on the Council's ability to deliver the Corporate Plan 2023-27.

**ANDREW P STOKES**  
**Chief Executive**

**Web Links and**  
**Background Papers**

[Staffordshire Moorlands Community Lottery](#)

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/ClimateChangeFund>



## 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. 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.
- 7.5 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 Staffordshire Moorlands

- 8.1 Staffordshire Moorlands is fortunate to have a very active voluntary sector that delivers a wide range of activities across the District. 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 Support Staffordshire to provide practical support to other groups within the sector and to help with their development. The Council also introduced the [Staffordshire Moorlands Community Lottery](#) to help local groups with fundraising. The lottery currently supports 70 local groups and has raised around £20,000 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 £2,650 in cash prizes.
- 8.3 Staffordshire Moorlands District 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 B. The Council will attend meetings on a monthly or quarterly basis as described in the revised Service Levels Agreements (SLAs) that have been agreed with each organisation for 2024/25.
- 8.4 Appendix B shows how VCSE organisations in the district report that they contribute to delivery of the corporate plan.
- 8.5 The District Council provides financial support to local branches of Staffordshire North and Stoke on Trent Citizens Advice. The Council also funds Citizens Advice branch from other budgets to deliver 'specific money and debt advice' to our residents which is covered by the Housing Team.
- 8.6 SMDC 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 District Council has committed to:
- Providing funding from the Community Support Fund to support core service delivery;
  - Attending meetings with members of Support Staffordshire 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.
- 8.7 In return, funded organisations have committed to:
- Provide an quarterly/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 Districts creativity, culture and heritage.
  
- Make the most of any opportunities to acknowledge the contribution made by SMDC in any publicity gained for the service and co-operate with SMDC communications team.
  
- Attend update meetings with SMDC, 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.
  
- SMDC to link with the annual volunteering event hosted by Support Staffordshire that showcases some of the work taking place across the district by the VCSE.



**Table 1: Community Support Grants**

Organisation	Area Covered	Annual Grant Amount	Aims
Staffordshire North and Stoke on Trent Citizens Advice	District Wide	£61,530	General advice services: Money and Debt Advice for tenants or home owners at risk of losing their home
Staffordshire North and Stoke on Trent Citizens Advice	District Wide	£7,500	Homelessness prevention: Flexibility between specialist and generalist advice to be afforded where possible in accordance with customer needs.
Support Staffordshire <b>Volunteering For all Officer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Residents of the Staffordshire Moorlands district taking up volunteering opportunities</li> <li>•VCSE organisations gaining new volunteers for their volunteering roles</li> <li>•The wider community from an increase, or maintaining of, voluntary sector activities and services</li> </ul>	£21,500	<p>The aim of Volunteering for All is to increase the number of volunteers in the district to benefit those local residents becoming volunteers and to increase the supply of volunteers to voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations providing activities and services in the Staffordshire Moorlands, particularly those that help address the cost of living issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 residents receiving volunteering advice and support</li> <li>• 40 volunteers placed into volunteering opportunities with voluntary groups delivering services in the Staffordshire Moorlands</li> </ul>
Support Staffordshire <b>Community Support Officer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The individual members of the community groups who directly receive Support Staffordshire's advice and guidance</li> <li>•The community groups and the wider community sector in general</li> <li>•The members and beneficiaries of the community groups</li> </ul>	£11,780	<p>The Community Group Support service is to build capacity within community groups serving Staffordshire Moorlands by enabling local residents to take effective action based on good practice to address the issues that are important to them and their community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 different community groups supported</li> <li>• £50,000 secured in grants</li> </ul>
Haregate Community Centre	The beneficiaries of this service will be mainly the residents of Haregate, although not restricted.	£10,500	<p>The aim of the service is to manage and develop a vibrant, accessible and sustainable community centre that reflects the needs of the local community and is run by the local community</p> <p><b>PROJECT OUTCOMES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An active and empowered community</li> <li>• Increased social capital and social networks within the community</li> </ul>

Organisation	Area Covered	Annual Grant Amount	Aims
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of community needs identified and addressed</li> </ul> <p>PROJECT OUTPUTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 different monthly activities/groups to be held at the centre</li> <li>• An estimated 200_users per month</li> <li>• 15 different volunteers helping to run the centre or activities run from the centre</li> <li>• Variety of activities/groups reflecting the needs of the community</li> <li>• Consultation exercises to identify needs of the community and collect their feedback about the centre throughout the year</li> </ul>
Cost Of Living Community Fund	District Wide	£33,000 rolling amount £15,769 remains	<p>Funding for voluntary and community groups in Staffordshire Moorlands providing vital support to people most affected by the rise in the cost of living.</p> <p>Demand for the services provided by the voluntary sector in the Staffordshire Moorlands remains high as people grapple with the increase in the cost of living. In recognition of the critical role they play in our communities, the Council's financial support for organisations that are struggling financially is being extended to include more voluntary and community groups. The Staffordshire Moorlands Community Fund will <b>provide match-funding</b> for third-sector organisations providing vital support to people most affected by the rise in the cost of living up to the value of £3,000. You can apply to the scheme if your service delivers one of the Council's priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer support/advice for those most at risk due to increased cost of living</li> <li>• A welcoming (warmer) spaces</li> <li>• Tackling fuel poverty</li> <li>• Tackling food poverty</li> </ul>
Village Hall Grants	Village Halls – District Wide	£7,500	Village Halls can apply for a maximum of £2,500 every 4 years for repairs or improvements to Village Hall facilities.

### *State of the Sector*

8.8 Each of the funded VCSE sector organisations (2024/25) and those applying for funding via COL - Community Fund were asked to complete a 'health-check' and outline the issues that they were currently facing. The feedback from the health checks is summarised in Table 2.

8.9 The health-checks highlighted a few of key points:

- The majority of the VCSE organisations are struggling to find volunteers to help provide the services they offer. This also means they can't expand on their current offer as it would just put more pressure on the volunteers.
- The majority of the organisations anticipate an increase in demand for service and some suggest this could cause medium to long-term financial difficulties.
- Space to run activities and storage space is also an issue for some of the VCSE.

**Table 2: Issues facing funded organisations**

ORGANISATION	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/client	Tech ICT/Software limitations	Other
Staffordshire North and Stoke on Trent Citizens Advice				✓					✓	✓					
Support Staffordshire															✓
Haregate Community Centre			Space shortage	✓											✓
Borderland Voices		✓	Space shortage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Biddulph Youth & Community Zone		✓			✓				✓						✓
Keatesys Boxing Academy	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
The Green Tree house (Biddulph)	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓				✓

**\* Other reported Issues:**

**Haregate Community Centre** - Struggle for storage to be able to provide all the support that we would like to, and we have a waiting list of groups wanting to use space at the centre

**Support Staffordshire** - It is always a challenge to source enough funds to deliver our services but we plan ahead well and there are no immediate issues. It would be good to be clarity on SMDC funding to us for 2025/2026

**Biddulph Youth & Community Zone** - The ever increasing rising energy costs are having a massive impact on our provision and the services we offer.

**The Green Tree house (Biddulph)**- The demand for our services is growing each month, we have been asked by other councils if we can provide a social supermarkets in their areas.

## 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 District 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 District Council maintain links with local foodbanks and any community pantries but at this time does not provide specific CSG funding to these organisations. 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 three foodbanks operating in the Staffordshire Moorlands:

- Leek Foodbank;
- Cheadle Foodbank;
- Biddulph Foodbank;

8.20 Haregate Community Centre, Biddulph Youth & Community Zone, The Green Tree House also run community pantries or similar schemes to help with food poverty.

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.

## **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 Staffordshire Moorlands.
- The local VCSE Sector is central to both building social fabric and delivering services in our area.
- SMDC's engagement with the VCSE Sector should be primarily focussed on delivery of the Council's Corporate 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 Corporate Plan 23-27.
- The District 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 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. 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.
- 9.4 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 Lottery central fund. This will also include promoting the work of one of the members of the Staffordshire Moorlands Community Lottery each month to celebrate their work and encourage support for their work.

#### *VCSE Collaborative Working plan*

- 9.5 The Council's Heads of Service will be asked to consider ways in which they can collaborate with and support the VCSE sector as a means of delivering the Corporate 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. It is proposed that this will result in the production of a Voluntary Sector Collaborative Working Plan (CWP).
- 9.6 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".
- 9.7 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 Corporate 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 District 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 Corporate 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. 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 Portfolio Holder for Communities will have responsibility for promoting working with the VCSE.
- The Community Overview & Scrutiny 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 Overview & Scrutiny Panel 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 SMDC CSG funding.
- Reports from key partnerships.
- Update on Councillor Initiative Fund; and
- Thematic reports on progress towards addressing the priorities set out in the Corporate plan: health inequality, food and fuel poverty, mental health, and loneliness.