

## **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SUPPORT (NCVS)**

**Submitted by:** Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships – Mark Bailey

**Portfolio:** Culture and Active Communities

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide Members with an assessment of a possible Partnership Agreement between the Borough Council and NCVS to help develop the voluntary and community sector response to the Council's Corporate Priorities, with a particular focus around delivering outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

**(a) Members consider the proposal for a Partnership Agreement between the Borough Council and the NCVS with specific reference to supporting the voluntary and community sector's contribution in delivering outcomes that support the Council's Corporate Priorities**

**(b) That, following this consideration, a Partnership Agreement is drafted and agreed in principle between the Borough Council and NCVS, with a view to further developing partnership working between the two organisations in a positive way prior to the re-commissioning of the 'Infrastructure Support' contract as part of the Third Sector Commissioning process and also taking into account the Staffordshire wide Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP) project, of which Infrastructure Support is a key element.**

### **Reasons**

NCVS is a key partner of the Borough Council in providing services to support and develop the voluntary and community sector in Newcastle.

It is proposed that a formal Partnership Agreement be drawn up to help cement this joint working and offer support to further development of voluntary and community sector work in the Borough.

The recent Partnership Agreement drawn up between the Borough Council and the New Vic Theatre could provide a template for a similar agreement with NCVS.

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Borough Council recognises the positive contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes towards developing social capital (i.e. the achievement of common objectives between key agencies and communities) within the Borough and creating opportunities for engagement with local communities.
- 1.2 NCVS is the Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO) for Newcastle-under-Lyme, and has a key role to play in partnership working between the Council and the voluntary and community sector operating in the Borough.
- 1.3 NCVS provides a range of services that supply access to help and support for all new and existing voluntary and community groups working in the Borough – please see the attached Position Statement for details.

- 1.4 NCVS is a partner in the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Consortium of Infrastructure Organisations (SCIO). SCIO aims to co-ordinate the activities of the LIOs in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to reduce duplication, and to manage activities and projects on a Staffordshire wide-basis.
- 1.5 As outlined in the attached Position Statement, there are also other organisations that provide services equivalent or similar to those that NCVS provide.

## 2. **Issues**

- 2.1 NCVS is currently commissioned, through the Third Sector Commissioning Framework, by the Council to provide Infrastructure Support services.
- 2.2 NCVS was the only organisation that submitted a tender for this contract. 2011/12 is the final year of the 3-year contract, although it has been proposed that a one-year contract be developed as part of the 2012 Third Sector Commissioning process.
- 2.3 Council, therefore, will shortly be seeking to commission Infrastructure Support services for 2012/13, albeit with some changes to the specifications and outcomes contained with the contract specification. It is reasonable to anticipate the NCVS will submit a tender for this contract.
- 2.4 This renewed contract will be for a 12 month period in order to allow for consideration of other developments (such as those set out below in relation to the Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP) and the ongoing Staffordshire County Council (SCC) review of this area of work).
- 2.5 There are two pieces of work currently being undertaken across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent that will significantly impact on the role of LIOs generally and NCVS in particular:-
  - Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP) – looking at public sector agencies jointly commissioning services – one of the areas being developed by the PSCiP process is for a common 'Infrastructure Contract' across Staffordshire. The service outline is currently being drafted by partner organisations prior to going out to the marketplace.
  - A review of feedback by Staffordshire County Council following a survey of infrastructure support in the region, the outcomes of which may impact on the overall service outline released to the marketplace for a delivery of services from 2013 onwards.
- 2.6 Taking into consideration these major pieces of work, and also the ongoing challenges faced by all sectors at present from an economic/delivery perspective. a Partnership Agreement with NCVS could be developed in order to take into account these developments by setting out what is the purpose of the partnership (i.e. what added value does it provide); what is expected of the main partner organisations involved; and providing a reiteration of the Borough Council's commitment to supporting the third/voluntary and community sector in delivering positive outcomes to the Borough in each of the main priority areas for the Council.
- 2.7 In developing such an Agreement, the Borough Council can utilise the experience gained from using a similar approach in relation to the ongoing partnership between the Borough Council and the New Vic (although there are differences between the two cases – especially around funding).

2.8 A Partnership Agreement with NCVS could provide an opportunity to promote positive working relationship between the two organisations and therefore be of mutual benefit prior to the re-commissioning of the Infrastructure Support contract under the Newcastle Third Sector Commissioning Framework and the longer term process of examining these arrangements as part of the PSCiP project across Staffordshire.

### 3. **Options Considered**

3.1 A Partnership Agreement with NCVS is developed outlining the manner in which the working relationship between the two organisations is managed, but with no specific link with funding.

3.2 A Partnership Agreement with NCVS is agreed, and that the Agreement is developed further to take into account issues of local commissioning and the wider PSCiP project/SCC review work.

### 4. **Proposal**

4.1 The principle of a Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS is agreed.

4.2 The Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS is developed as a complement to the Third Sector Commissioning Framework in Newcastle.

### 5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 A Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS could be a useful tool for both organisations and would be designed to strengthen partnership working between the two organisations.

5.2 The development of the Agreement is a key element in establishing good working relations between the Borough Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector and should form the basis for what is expected from the successful provider during the next round of the local Commissioning process with the Third Sector.

5.3 A Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS would need the agreement and approval, both to the principle and the details, of the NCVS Board.

5.4 The current round of local Infrastructure commissioning will run for 12 months, and any changes in the way in which Infrastructure Support services across Staffordshire are commissioned will take force in 2013/14. The development of a Partnership Agreement will play a key part in these commissioning processes in that it will help to establish clear expectations on both the part of the commissioning body/bodies and the supplier organisation, as well as emphasising the importance of partnership working in this area.

### 6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

6.1 Infrastructure Support links to the following Corporate Priorities:-

#### **CP1: Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough**

Support to community and voluntary groups working on projects that aim to improve the environment will help achieve this

#### **CP2: Creating a Borough of opportunity**

Support to community and voluntary groups will provide opportunities to access funding to develop their own capacity and encourage service diversity

### **CP3: Creating a healthy and active community**

The provision of opportunities for individuals to volunteer or engage with groups helps to develop social capital creating an environment that supports participation in community life

### **CP4: Transforming our Council to achieve excellence**

The Council recognises that certain services are better delivered by the Third Sector and has therefore created a Commissioning Framework with, and for, the Third Sector that will ensure genuine maximisation of opportunities.

- 6.2 Third Sector Support services links in with a number of the Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities, most notably:-

#### **PL02: To build stronger neighbourhoods enabling communities to actively participate and influence service delivery**

The development of new and existing groups will increase opportunities for individuals to engage at a local level, actively participate and influence local services and help to build social capital

### **7. Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council is required to take into account all relevant matters, and not take into account irrelevant matters, and to otherwise behave reasonably. Failure to do so may lead to legal challenge
- 7.2 The Best Value Statutory Guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government issued in June 2011 advised that Local Authorities do not, in response to public spending cuts, disproportionately cut funding to voluntary and community groups

### **8. Equality Impact Assessment**

Equality Impact Assessment to follow

### **9. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 The proposal does not look at the budgets for Third Sector Commissioning generally, or for the Infrastructure Support Service. There are, therefore, no direct cost implications

### **10. Major Risks**

Risk Assessment to follow

### **11. Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

None identified

### **12. Key Decision Information**

The report is not a Key Decision as defined in the Council's Constitution

### **13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

"Future Commissioning for Voluntary and Community (Third) Sector", 18 January 2012.

13.2 “Work of the New Vic Theatre”, 19 October 2011.

14. **List of Appendices**

There are none

15. **Background Papers**

NCVS Position Statement, October 2011 – updated February 2012