

# NORTHUMBERLAND

## Northumberland County Council

### Proposals for Future Funding for Voluntary and Community Support Services

#### Introduction

The current VCS Support Services Commission comes to an end on 31 March 2016. The Council remains committed to the original aim of the Support Services Commission as outlined in 2011. This is

*“to maintain the continued development of a vibrant, independent and sustainable sector that will work in partnership with the Council and other partners to ensure the best outcomes for individuals and communities of place, interest and identity in Northumberland”*

#### Proposal regarding delivery

The current provider, Northumberland Community Voluntary Action, has performed well against the Council's monitoring criteria, making significant progress to a countywide service. NCVA have also gathered momentum around the Northumberland VCS Assembly, increasing membership and putting in place elected governance structures. NCC is concerned this progress would be hampered by recommissioning. Existing staff would be put at risk of redundancy and the development and strengthening of new relationships would be undermined due to uncertainty. As a result we are proposing to extend the contract for another two years.

The current Commission contains a number of lots, going forward this will be simplified into one package that will contain the following workstreams:

- a. Funding Advice
- b. Support and Training for Trustees
- c. Training programme for organisations
- d. Online support for “Safe and legal” and general volunteering
- e. Providing infrastructure for Supported Volunteering Activity
- f. Support for Volunteering co-ordinators working in the County
- g. Continuing support and development for the VCS Assembly
- h. Corporate Social Responsibility development for the Sector
- i. Develop effective relations with Town and Parish Councils re community activity

#### Proposal regarding funding

It continues to be a very difficult time for Council finances. Due to central government funding cuts the council needs to make a further £44m of savings over the next two years. This is on top of the £160m that has already had to be saved over the last five years. The current budget for VCS Support

Services has been protected for two years unlike the Council's service budgets, however we are not able to maintain this situation. Within the budget for 2016 we are proposing the following:

- £65,000 that was commissioned to develop Community Led Local Development is offered up as a saving as the Council is now leading a bid for further funding from the European Strategic Investment Fund (ESIF).
- £60,000 previously available for Enterprise and Innovation activity within the sector is brought back into the Council to continue to support Social Enterprise Northumberland as European Funding for this service has now ceased.

The saving of £65,000 does represent a cut of 25%, however we have a bid in to the ESIF CLLD Programme that is estimated to be worth around £1m over 3 years that would replace this funding if successful.

The services of the Council based Social Enterprise Northumberland have been used extensively by the VCS in Northumberland. Feedback that is collected on an ongoing basis and it is very positive. There may be some comments made regarding this resource being taken in house but this money is still being used to support the sector.

**Please give us your view**

We are now seeking the views of the sector on these proposals.

Please find below a questionnaire regarding these services and proposals. We would welcome your views to help inform and shape these proposals. Please submit your questionnaires by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016.

Many thanks

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