

Appendix C – grants panel review notes

Spelthorne grants panel review meetings 2016-17

The panel met on two dates – 19 and 26 November - to review performance and progress of the main six organisations funded by the annual revenue grants scheme.

Five of the six are on the second year of three-year agreements; the agreement with VAIS is one year at a time.

All six are subject to Service Level Agreements.

Prior to the meetings the panel is sent the organisations' annual reports including financial statements for 2014-15.

Panel members; Chair – Cllr Vivienne Leighton; Cllr Alfred Friday; Cllr Tony Harman; Terry Collier, DCX Spelthorne Borough Council; Mary West, Sports and Active Lifestyle Officer Spelthorne Council. Grants admin Joanne Jones Community Development Manager.

AgeUK Runnymede & Spelthorne.

Received £25,000 in 2015-16; second year of three-year agreement

Represented by Tony Docker – Chief Officer and Mark Bevan, Operations Manager

Tony highlighted the achievements over the first year of the agreement and explained that the grant goes towards AgeUK's Information and Advice service – for which no charge can be made and therefore it is reliant on grant funding.

He described it as the “Rolls-Royce” standard; three members of staff do home visiting and the service is sought after by older people. The staff receive training in safeguarding, health and safety, lone working, dementia recognition and so on.

A lot of welfare benefit money is brought into the local economy through AgeUK assistance - around £1m in the year across the two boroughs.

Outreach sessions are held at GP surgeries and hospitals, namely in Addlestone, Chertsey and Egham; the panel was keen to encourage AgeUK to extend this service across surgeries in Spelthorne. Tony said this was not by design – there is difficulty getting “a foot in the door” at surgeries – and the Councillors on the panel offered to assist with encouraging their local surgeries to take up the AgeUK outreach sessions.

Mark reported that the services enabling people to stay in their own homes were becoming increasingly in demand.

Volunteers are recruited from many different sources, with the mix of tasks including driving, office work and befriending.

There are around 70-80 volunteers on the books, with four or five new recruits each month.

Financially, things have been improving over the past couple of years and Tony

reported the books were balancing, after three years in heavy deficit. The appointment of Mark has brought about the chance to develop monitoring and reporting mechanisms as well as improved man management.

Age UK Runnymede and Spelthorne has also passed the Organisational Quality Standard with flying colours.

Tony said the aim was always to make the organisation self-sustaining and was talking with the CCG and locality hubs to ensure users can be get direct access to the services they need. Referrals to SBC services were included in this.

Discussion ensued on the Road To Recovery scheme where AgeUK assists people leaving hospital to ensure they have support at home; there are still cases where people “fall through the net” which is a result of referrals not being made at ward level. Tony said dialogue was ongoing with St Peter’s and the CCG to tighten up the system for safe discharge. There were hopes that Age UK (and Red Cross) could be included in meetings about discharges so the system can work better.

Shopmobility

Received £15,000 in 2015-16; second year of three-year agreement

Manager David Bisiker described Shopmobility’s operation as “hand to mouth” but judged that the worst of economic hardship was over.

Shopmobility’s new premises were very pleasant, with good accessibility – but still somewhat out of the way. Service users are steady at around 250 a year, with a recovery from the drop in 2013 when the organisation was in temporary accommodation in Norris Road.

Publicity was taking off, including static displays in the Elmsleigh Centre, Staines. It was suggested by the panel that a courtesy phone service – similar to free taxi call point – be investigated for installation in the Elmsleigh Centre, possibly sponsored by the traders. Raising awareness of Shopmobility’s availability and location has been identified as the key to growing numbers. David said various other agencies in the borough were helpful in promoting the service; no funding however was forthcoming from Runnymede Council, nor Two Rivers shopping centre.

Efforts are being made to find income streams, including Lottery funding.

Membership of the British Healthcare Trade Association would also bring benefits.

HomeStart

Received £15,000 in 2015-16; second year of three-year agreement

Manager Mandy Groves was accompanied by Treasurer Anne Damerell and chair of trustees Beth Scott.

Homestart had a very interesting year. Referrals were way up, with 36 in the first quarter of the year, slowing down to around seven a month. The cases were also becoming more complex.

Referrals were coming from schools – especially with four-year-olds – because problems that would have been flagged up by health visitors were no longer coming forward, with the demise of the HV role.

Mandy mentioned Homestart's 36 "fantastic" volunteers; some have been lost as they return to work, but the new preparation course meant joiners would have a qualification, as the course was accredited.

Mandy said Homestart had known the HV situation would happen and started to make sure people had information about their service; referrals then came pouring in.

Concerned about potential strain on the staff, Homestart has delayed a quality appraisal and made efforts to expand to get more staff.

A successful bid for Children In Need money will bring in £15k for three years, enabling the employment of a second co-ordinator. A fundraising sub committee has been set up, with a Friends of Homestart group being established. More than half the £26k shortfall for the year has been raised so far, and new volunteers have been coming forward.

Work had been started with the Red Cross where short visits could be arranged in emergencies; collaboration with other agencies was being pursued.

Mention was made of the toy library at Stanwell youth centre – managed separately for Surrey Early Years, which is now a thriving "stay and play" group serving a diverse group of parents, carers and children.

CAB Runnymede and Spelthorne

Received £75,000 in 2015-16; second year of three-year agreement

Manager Pat Thompson and treasurer Trevor Mudd attended.

Pat provided a "dashboard" assessment; an increasing number of black, Asian and minority ethnic clients were being seen in Spelthorne – tending to have multiple problems. In Spelthorne particularly there are difficulties in communication because of non-English speaking clients coming forward, without translation help available. This leads to things taking longer to resolve. Pat reported there were 37 different languages in use by clients at the Sunbury branch alone.

The outreach in Stanwell was going well; this popular service is something CAB would like to build on.

The tightening up of regulations relating to payday loans had resulted in a drop in debt problems – but the use of foodbanks was masking debt to some extent.

Pat revealed that 75 per cent of clients had mental health problems; either contributing to their situation, or as a result of being beset by misfortune.

Finance is still the major headache; Trevor described the organisation being at a tipping point – they cannot sustain the current activity and will overspend by £45k by the end of the year. In three years this will be a major problem. The alternative is to find income or cut back on services.

Pat had bid for project money with no success and funding from the NHS would continue until the end of next year.

The chairman asked if there was any assistance forthcoming from local legal practices; Pat said it did happen now and again but not as much as in previous years. Legal Aid was practically non-existent nowadays.

Volunteer numbers were steady – with a continuing stream of students being taken on. Other agencies who CAB works with include AgeUK, SBC Housing dept; VAIS

and Voluntary Support North Surrey.

The panel considered that finding a solution to the problems of translation should be addressed.

The panel regretted the necessity for expenditure on the name change, dropping the word Bureau from the title – a decision made at national level.

It was noted that Spelthorne Council now has a representative on the management committee – Cllr Alfred Friday.

Spelthorne Rentstart

Received £30,000 in 2015-16; second year of three-year agreement

Bryan Pilgrim, Manager; Linda Marshall Chair/secretary; Meena Chahal project support worker; Hilary Stokes Treasurer.

Bryan reported a quite successful year – the busiest ever in Rentstart's history. They had seen around 350 clients and housed up to 100 compared with finding homes for 86 last year. The shortage of accommodation was the biggest headache and a struggle.

Rentstart has focussed on tenancy support – to gain and retain landlords. There's a good deal of "handholding" required to help landlords feel comfortable with payments, tenancies and so on.

Potential tenants are encouraged to look for properties themselves and given guidance on how to go about this effectively.

There are only problems in a very few exceptional circumstances.

Funding: Rentstart is in the fourth year of a four-year funding from Crisis. Bryan said Rentstart had a keen new committee member who will be concentrating on funding sources.

Close collaboration with Elmbridge Rentstart was also proving useful and there were thoughts of working with the Runnymede scheme as well. The panel commended Rentstart on seeking to reduce overheads by working closely with other organisations.

Discussion turned to how the model works, with landlords agreeing to quite low rents – which are acceptable if the "package" suits them – guaranteed rent, close working with Rentstart to monitor the tenancy.

The issue of lack of rental accommodation is major; the council's hopes to improve supply were mentioned, as well as the private landlords' forum which has formerly been consulted over how to increase the availability of private rental homes.

Bryan spoke about the value of being located within the Council building – right among the Housing department.

He also touched on the increasing role played by Rentstart in getting young homeless people, to reconsider their options and work on going back home. An increase in rough sleepers – people from the borough and from various walks of life – is also placing extra pressure on the service.

Voluntary Action In Spelthorne

Received £5,000 in 2015-16; one-year agreement

Robin Sider, Chairman; Celia Leggett, Vice Chairman; Elizabeth Mackendar-Moore, Chief Officer; Katherine Peters, Voluntary Action Development Officer; Robert Allen, Voluntary Action Development Officer; Roberta Vargas De Biase, volunteer book-keeper

Elizabeth drew the panel's attention to the annual report.

Volunteer statistics had improved over the previous year, both in quantity and quality.

VAIS had cut its number of engagement events to focus its priorities in different places. It has set about engaging with the community and organisations – specifically to deliver drop-ins to reach the community in libraries, JobCentres, High Streets, cafes – to reach potential volunteers in various areas.

Libraries and JobCentres were deemed a good location – given they have a “captive audience”.

Volunteers, placements and follow-up were then discussed; the process of interviewing potential volunteers, offering three matches from Vbase (database) and then following up both the volunteers and the placement. Elizabeth said it was more successful to meet face to face as this meant people were not “lost” and they could be followed through.

VAIS's work with corporate volunteers and businesses was also covered although the panel was surprised to learn of the work undertaken to source and service placements outside the borough.

Asked about the financial future – given the large reserves and a projected overspend of £46,000 in the current year – VAIS Chairman Robin Sider said the reserves were needed for potential redundancy payments.

Elizabeth told the panel the jobs and work and staff numbers would be re-evaluated in order to counter the forecast negative figures.

Working with other organisations takes the form of being part of a network of other Surrey CVS organisations, using the same database, although no joint projects had been undertaken recently.

The panel Chair asked whether, given other organisations' close working with Runnymede counterparts, VAIS had considered doing so with North Surrey VA (formerly RAVS)

Celia said this was not something the board wanted or had talked about and Elizabeth explained it would not be practical, given how dissimilar she said the two boroughs were.

VAIS did have a significant number of Runnymede volunteers on its books – around 35 from Egham.

Assistance that VAIS would welcome from the Council included inclusion in promotional material such as the Bulletin; having messages on the electronic noticeboards at the library – which would be looked into. The Bulletin already covers VAIS material.

VAIS Chairman said a lot had been done over the past year; VAIS had reduced expenditure; made savings; satisfied the SCC and CCG commissioners and addressed all comments. He was however disappointed that when the county council is monitoring the CVS sector, it asks for statistics relating to volunteers dealt with by VAIS but did not take into account all the other volunteers which do not come

into VAIS's orbit – such as those who work with Rotary clubs.

The panel noted that Roberta had done an excellent job and was keen to see the standard of book-keeping maintained; the new appointment of Spelthorne Principal Accountant Adrian Flynn as a trustee was welcomed.

The panel would urge VAIS to investigate the potential of a merger with another CVS organisation; to provide a seamless service and reduce overheads.

The panel decided that any grant award would be subject to further conditions relating to the other outcomes and outputs in the Service Level Agreement apart from volunteering. A six-month review would be required.