

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT - VOLUNTARY SECTOR BAROMETER SURVEY

Cabinet - 14 October 2021

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Information

Also considered by:

- People & Places Advisory Committee - 6 October 2021

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary COVID-19 has had a major impact on the voluntary and community sector both nationally and locally. The Voluntary Sector Forum, agreed to undertake a barometer survey in May 2021 to track the impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary and community sector in the Sevenoaks District. This report presents the findings of the survey and the steps being taken to action issues raised.

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Councils Corporate Plan

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Lesley Dyball

Contact Officer(s): Jenny Godfrey x7112

Recommendation to People and Places Advisory Committee:

To receive and note the report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

To receive and note the report.

Reason for recommendation: The survey findings provides data on the impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary and community sector in the Sevenoaks District. The report outlines the steps being taken by the Council to support the sector.

Introduction and Background

- 1 COVID-19 has had a major impact on the voluntary and community sector both nationally and locally.
- 2 Sevenoaks District Council established the Sevenoaks District Voluntary Sector Forum in April 2020 as a response to the pandemic. Whilst the Forum has been informally discussing the impact throughout the pandemic, the impact had not been quantified.

- 3 The Voluntary Sector Forum, chaired by Angela Painter, agreed to undertake a barometer survey in May 2021, to track the impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary, community sector in the Sevenoaks District. The Forum discussed and agreed a set of 15 questions for the barometer survey.
- 4 The results of the survey provide a sample of the sector's health and recovery in the district and provides information for the Council, Kent County Council (KCC) and others including decision makers and potential funders.
- 5 The Voluntary Sector Forum will revisit the questions and survey the sector every quarter to continue to track the impact of COVID-19 and highlight areas for particular intervention, support and collaboration.
- 6 Survey Monkey was used to make it quick and easy to access and complete.

Survey results

- 7 There were 26 responses (the Forum usually has between 20 and 30 organisations regularly attend) and five key issues were identified from the results of this survey. These issues and the approach being adopted to support the voluntary sector in addressing them are set out below:
 - Working with those organisations that anticipate not being in operation this time next year, linking them with others including other voluntary organisations and free mentoring/support.
 - Continuing to find and share potential funding opportunities and facilitate good collaboration.
 - Digital inclusion - work with newly appointed Digital Inclusion Officer at Compaid (joint funded by Sevenoaks District Council and West Kent Housing Association) to ensure maximum reach and support in the district.
 - Continue to work with Imago on promoting volunteering opportunities in the district and support voluntary sector with signposting to free/good value for money training for new volunteers.
 - Government restrictions and confidence in returning to face-to-face: continue to share information and support regarding compliance with restrictions and best practice for returning to some face-to-face interactions.
- 8 These results and the above areas are being shared with the voluntary sector and will be discussed at a future Forum. We will continue to use the Forum to work on any identified challenges. For example, at the last Voluntary Sector Forum, we invited a speaker from Medway Council Public Health to tell us about the free Workplace Health Project commissioned by KCC and Medway Councils and endorsed by Public Health England. KCC are rolling it out throughout the county and voluntary sector organisations can participate and help improve the health of their workforce including volunteers. Going forward, again by way of examples, we have speakers booked from 'Funding For All' offering voluntary sector organisations free mentoring and wide expert support (HR, Finance, fundraising etc.), and,

from a national co-production project which will provide tried and tested resources and information useful for good collaboration/partnership.

- 9 It should be noted that the Council continues to support the voluntary and community sector in the District through the provision of its Community Grants scheme, the Local Strategic Partnership Community Wellbeing Fund, Community Safety Partnership grants and Service Level Agreements. In 2020 and early 2021, particularly through the lockdown periods, the Council undertook a Crowdfunding campaign for the voluntary sector and distributed additional funding via Government's Containment Outbreak Management Fund.

Key Implications

Financial

None.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this report directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:

Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	No disadvantage or discrimination identified.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have	Yes	The steps being taken to address issues identified by the survey will support the voluntary and

Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
the potential to promote equality of opportunity?		community sector in delivering their services to those most in need. The Council will work with the voluntary sector to achieve this.
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		No negative impacts identified

Conclusions

This paper asks that you note the findings from the May 2021 barometer survey of the voluntary and community sector in the Sevenoaks District.

Appendices

Appendix A - Results in Detail from May 2021 Voluntary Sector Barometer Survey
Background Papers

N/A

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer People & Places