

Voluntary Sector Barometer Survey

People & Places Advisory Committee 1 March 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places

Status: For Information

Also considered by:

- Cabinet 17 March 2022

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 undertook a second barometer survey in September 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, where possible, compares and contrasts the findings with the May 2021 barometer survey.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Providing Value for Money and the Community Plan Vision for Safe & Caring Communities, a Green & Healthy Environment and a Dynamic & Sustainable Economy.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Dyball

Contact Officer(s): Jenny Godfrey, Ext. 7112

Recommendation to People & Places Advisory Committee:

- (a) That it be recommended to cabinet to note the report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- (a) That the report be noted.

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. The Forum

continues to informally discuss the impact and in May 2021 undertook its first barometer survey to quantify the impact.

- 3 The Voluntary Sector Forum, chaired by Angela Painter, agreed to undertake a second barometer survey in September 2021, to track the continued impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary, community sector in the Sevenoaks District. The Forum discussed and agreed a slightly revised set of questions whilst ensuring some comparisons and contrasts could be made between the May and September results.
- 4 The results of these surveys 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 approximately 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 again to make it quick and easy to access and complete.

Survey results

- 7 There were 17 responses (the Forum usually has between 20 and 30 organisations regularly attend) as compared to 26 for the May 2021 survey. This survey had 22 questions as opposed to the 15 in May. Given some of the feedback, the Forum has agreed that the next survey will have less questions to encourage more participation.
- 8 Whilst similar themes from the May 2021 results remain prevalent, there seems to be emerging the need for the Voluntary Sector Forum to provide the sector with support, guidance and training on:
 - Digital inclusion. In May 2021, 80.77% responded to say that there had been an increase in the proportion of support services taken online. In the September 2021 survey, 50% responded that COVID-19 had significantly impacted on the digital exclusion of their clients and that for 25% there was moderate impact;
 - Supporting voluntary groups and organisations to improve the wellbeing of the sector's leaders, staff and volunteers with training; speakers; support via the Kent & Medway Healthy Business Programme;
 - Recruitment and support for volunteers. There is an evident need to continue work with Imago Volunteer Centre and supplement with additional volunteer training, keynote speakers, other initiatives including those that are being organised by KCC;

- Fundraising. The Forum is being asked to consider how opportunities for fundraising and grant streams can be disseminated to the sector and consider the potential for more collaboration and partnership working;
 - Government restrictions and confidence in returning services 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.
- 9 These results and the above areas have been shared with the voluntary sector and will be discussed at a future Forum meeting. We will continue to use the Forum to work on any identified opportunities or challenges.
- 10 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. More recently, the Council has successfully bid for funding on behalf of the voluntary sector through KCC's COVID support funding, including the Containment Outbreak Management Fund and Helping Hands. For example, the Council successfully secured funding for the voluntary sector, including local foodbanks, counselling and befriending services, Dementia Friendly Communities and digital inclusion activities through COMPAID. The Council regularly shares funding opportunities with the sector and is looking to divert funding it received for an alternative cancelled project towards the cost of expert speakers and training to Forum members, and, other support initiatives, such as volunteer recruitment and deployment and networking opportunities.

Key Implications

Resource (non financial)

11 None.

Financial

12 None.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

13 There are no legal issues relating to this report.

Equality Assessment

17. 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 summary results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

18. This barometer survey assists the voluntary sector itself and the Council with monitoring the health of the voluntary sector organisations and with identifying key issues. The voluntary sector works to support Sevenoaks District residents, particularly those in greatest need. Therefore, the results being shared through this paper do not have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community.
19. As no negative impacts have been identified, no further mitigating steps need to be taken.

Conclusions

27. The work of the voluntary sector across the Sevenoaks District is highly valued. These regular barometer surveys enable the Council to continue to understand issues facing the sector and provide appropriate and more targeted support. Members are asked to note the September 2021 barometer survey results from September 2021 as set out in Appendix A.

Appendices

Appendix A - detailed results

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places