

To: Herefordshire Council (by email)

20<sup>th</sup> December 2013



## Herefordshire Council Budget Consultation 2014/17 Response – Funding of local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Support Services

hvoSS (Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service) is a **local charity providing a range of support service to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**. Following a merger of three local organisations in 2012, hvoSS has established a strong member base of over **250 members and a wider network of 1,100** groups, organisations, charities, community activists and contacts. Our services are open to all in the local VCS. We provide: -

- 1. Development support** – Assisting voluntary & community organisations to be more effective and deliver quality services – Over **400 local organisations** advised during 2012/13 in relation to governance, funding advice, training & market development.
- 2. Volunteering** - Ensuring access to volunteers and opportunities for volunteering. Advice on managing volunteers and engaging the wider community in volunteering – **1500 individuals** helped into volunteering and **820 organisations** advised 2012/13.
- 3. Liaison** – Facilitating communication, networking, collaboration, policy research, campaigning and promotions. Regular e-bulletins, briefings, **annual Funding Fairs (85 attendees Nov 2012)** and **7 charity breakfasts (162 attendees during the last year)**.
- 4. Wider community development** – Supporting needs in the local community. **946 young people, 202 people from BAME communities, and 432 groups** benefitted from HERE FOR the CITY project since 2011. **312 rural groups and 40 ‘Community Contacts’ in rural areas supported by REACH project between 2010 and 2012.**
- 5. Representation** - Enabling diverse views to be heard including ‘quieter voices’ (regular **member networks and Interest Groups**, research and policy development).
- 6. Strategic partnership work** – Ensuring the sector is integral to planning and policy making to improve services, self help and use resources effectively.
- 7. Direct services** – including youth support (**252 youth outreach sessions 2012/13**) & Community Wheels transport (**95 volunteer drivers, c18,500 single journeys, and 232,000 miles covered by the scheme in 2012/13**).

A small part of Local Authority funding (current c£150,000 p/a) is allocated to local VCS support services. Herefordshire Council, our strategic partner, commissions hvoSS to provide and co-ordinate these services. This funding makes a vital contribution to activities hvoSS supports. Our first annual report 2012/13 is attached for your information. Detailed impact reports for our activities are available on request. Quarterly monitoring reports since April

---

t: 01432 343932 e: [info@hvoSS.org.uk](mailto:info@hvoSS.org.uk) w: [www.hvoSS.org.uk](http://www.hvoSS.org.uk)

Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service (a company limited by guarantee)

**Berrows Business Centre, Bath Street, Hereford, HR1 2HE**

Registered in England & Wales. Company number: 4625595. Charity number: 1096451.

2012 are also available from Alex Fitzpatrick, Voluntary Sector Liaison Officer, your Lead Commissioner. Herefordshire Council has been a vital partner in the development of hvoss since a review of local arrangements in the county. Eighteen months on from a formal merger of three support services, solid foundations have been laid and the organisations is **well placed to maintain and develop a vital leadership role on behalf of the VCS**. We believe this role will become increasingly critical given the Council's vision for communities to initiate self help and support in response to the financial challenges the county faces.

We understand from the consultation that it is intended that hvoss funding will reduce or end following the budget prioritisation process. It is suggested by the consultation that Herefordshire Council believes hvoss can be self sustaining in the future and can continue to access alternative sources of funding. In our second year of operation we are committed to a strategy of self reliance, an ethos evidenced through our merger; significant rationalisation and reconfiguration of support services, as well staffing reductions. We have made these changes over the last year in response to planned reduction in statutory funding. Our first annual response in October 2013 (128 responses) highlights hvoss is providing good or excellent levels of support services in most areas of current delivery. **It also highlights significant future support needs within the VCS and some opportunities for new income streams and charged for services**. However, it is also very true to say that many users, predominantly smaller and volunteer led organisations, are **not able to pay for our services**. Our intervention enables hundred of organisations (included newly established and emerging organisations) and thousands of volunteers each year to provide vital services, including preventative work with longer term outcomes. Many beneficiaries of hvoss support assist vulnerable people in Herefordshire, a priority focus of your future strategy.

It is also clear to us that we will play a **key role as a voice and interface between the sector and statutory services in the future**. We will support this role and broker and facilitate networks and responses amongst our network of over 1100 organisations. We believe this function has never been more important, particularly in light of the sector role envisaged by Herefordshire Council. We fully appreciate the considerable challenges faced by everyone in Herefordshire. That said we need Herefordshire Council to invest in its strategy of community self help as it is evidence to us that the role of the sector will not grow without support. This point is evidenced through the existence of a vibrant and resilient network of infrastructure organisations that has been existence in the UK since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Through continued assistance from Herefordshire Council, hvoss is well placed to **lever significant external funding opportunities to assist communities as local statutory funding reduces**. We believe this is a key consideration in any future proposal to reduce or end hvoss funding. Existing and future hvoss Big Lottery Fund funded projects and Marches LEP involvement are notable examples of our track record and ability to achieve this.

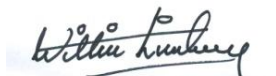
hvoss provides support to enable others to achieve more. As a result of our work, local groups, charities and organisations grow in confidence, become more involved and supported from sources other than hvoss; namely networks, partnerships and other providers. They are supported to become less dependent, towards more independence. groups “outgrow” intensive support, become more effective, confident, and self-managed.

Our organisation is able to generate significant value for money from your investment. It is clear from our impact statements, volunteer contribution (200 volunteers during 2012/13), social capital value, and external funding secured locally, regionally and nationally that your funding brings considerable added value and benefit to local communities.

It is also important for us to highlight the potential impact of any funding changes. Ending hvoss funding will have a fundamental impact on support arrangements for the sector in the future. Hardest hit will be volunteering, health and social care, community development, and children and young people services. Continued assistance would ensure vital infrastructure support, preventative work and market development can all be maintained.

In summary, hvoss believes VCS support services are needed more than ever as many groups develop alternative services in the face of funding cuts. Our interventions are crucial to fundraising efforts, forming partnerships, mergers, lobbying and campaigning. We provide much more than capability building – we connect, influence and develop activities to support local needs. A reminder if needed, that infrastructure is not a separate entity but “right at the heart of the sector”. We look forward to discussing our role with you.

Yours sincerely,



**Will Lindesay**

**Chief Executive**

**Enc.**