



<b>Subject:</b>	DfC consultation paper on strategic support for the Voluntary and Community sector in N. Ireland 2017-2021
<b>Date:</b>	11 October 2016
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cate Taggart, Community Development Manager Clare Mullen, Community Resources Unit Manager

<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	<b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is for Members to consider and approve the draft consultation response in relation to the Department for Communities (DfC) consultation paper on Strategic Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in N. Ireland 2017-2021.
1.2	From the detail of the DfC paper (See Appendix 1), it is clear the proposals are in relation to regional support programmes and do not include any project related funding to individual VCS groups provided through central or local government for the delivery of services. A draft response is attached at Appendix 2 in relation to the DfC consultation paper.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consider and agree the draft consultation response in relation to the DfC consultation paper on strategic support for the Voluntary and Community sector in N. Ireland 2017-2021.</li></ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The existing regional support arrangements have been in place since 2012 and were last evaluated in 2015. At that time the evaluation concluded that arrangements were broadly effective but highlighted a numbers of areas for improvement including scope for greater efficiency and effectiveness, the need to focus on outcomes, a move away from grant funding for core costs and improved support to people from under-represented groups.
3.2	The paper notes that, since that review, the environment within which the VCS operates has continued to change noting some of the key drivers including the Programme for Government, a more challenging budget environment, changes in public sector commissioning approaches, a more actively online population, and a need to signal leadership in respect of change and transformation in the VCS. Council will welcome their reference to the Reform of Local Government and the need for any support arrangements to the VCS to 'dovetail' with the needs of councils and also references for more social innovation.
3.3	<p>The document sets out, for consultation, their proposed new arrangements for the provision of strategic support to the VCS in Northern Ireland for the period 2017-2021. The public consultation invites and welcomes Council to submit comments in particular about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A proposed new vision for the provision of strategic support to the VCS;</li> <li>▪ A series of high level desired outcomes; and</li> <li>▪ Key priorities and proposals geared to support the achievement of the desired outcomes (subject to the availability of funding).</li> </ul>
3.4	On behalf of the NI Executive, the Department for Communities has lead responsibility for supporting the VCS at a regional level across Northern Ireland – support that enables the sector to function efficiently and effectively across urban and rural areas. As noted, it is that support that is the subject of this consultation and which complements, but does not include, project related funding to individual VCS groups provided through central or local government for the delivery of services. This might be more easily recognisable by Members as including the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme which provides financial support to organisations such as Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, Volunteer Now, Rural Community Network, etc.

3.5	The current arrangements to the VCS relate to areas such as training board members, capacity building, handling governance issues, income generation, support to women in disadvantaged and rural areas and support to faith communities. They also support and promote volunteering activity across Northern Ireland.
3.6	This consultation seeks councils' views and alternative suggestions regarding the proposed vision, related outcomes and the identified proposals in relation to specific strategic support arrangements. The closing date for responses is 2 <sup>nd</sup> November.
3.7	Members are asked to consider and agree the draft response which has been formulated by internal officers. The document is attached at appendix 2.
	<u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u>
3.8	There are no financial & resource implications attached.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u>
3.9	There are no equality or Good Relations implications.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
4.1	Appendix 1: DfC consultation paper on proposals for the provision of strategic support to the voluntary and community sector in NI 2017-2021  Appendix 2: Draft BCC consultation response