

CABINET

**COUNCILLOR HALLEH KOOHESTANI
CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

26TH NOVEMBER 2024

KEY DECISION: NO

REPORT NO. ACE2415

**REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REGARDING
RUSHMOOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES (RVS) SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT**

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

At the Overview and Scrutiny meeting (OSC) on 24th October, Rushmoor Voluntary Services (RVS) gave a presentation to Members reporting on the performance of Quarters 1 and 2 for 2024/25 and the 2023/24 Annual Report, in line with the Service Level Agreement with the Council.

The Committee recommended that the Cabinet:

- consider a multi-year funding agreement from 2025/26
- consider bridging the gap in funding as a result of any withdrawal of the Hampshire County Council grant to RVS from 2025/26
- consider waiving the rent of £20,000, due to Rushmoor Borough Council through 100% rent relief

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. At the Overview and Scrutiny meeting (OSC) on 24th October, Rushmoor Voluntary Services (RVS) gave a presentation to Members reporting on their performance, in line with the Service Level Agreement with the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. The Council has a Service Level Agreement with RVS and provides them with an annual core grant. The existing grant is £64,550

2.2. The grant was reduced by 10% in 2021 with a further 5% reduction in 2022. The grant has not accounted for inflationary pressures.

3. DETAILS

3.1. The presentation from RVS included the following:

- The role of RVS as an umbrella organisation supporting local voluntary and community groups
- Key projects and activities supported or delivered by RVS
- Income and expenditure information
- Impact of RVS on the local community including trend in volunteer numbers over time
- Support to the Council and other organisations including funding they have supported others to secure for the Borough
- The financial challenges and risks to the organisation

3.2. CHALLENGES AND RISKS IDENTIFIED BY RVS

3.3. **Financial Position.** The level of grant from core funding partners has declined since 2021. RVS have operated at a deficit for the last two years and utilised their reserves to mitigate the reduction in funding and the increased inflation pressures.

3.4. **Continued financial challenges for funding partners** RVS are reliant upon external grants to support the delivery of their core services. Continued funding pressures on Rushmoor Borough Council and Hampshire County Council has resulted in a reduced level of funding for RVS and increased long term risk to their future sustainability.

3.5. **Rushmoor Borough Council.** Due to financial pressures the Council reduced the grant to RVS by 10% in 2021 with a further 5% reduction in 2022. This created additional pressure on their ability to maintain staffing levels and deliver core services.

3.6. **Service Level Agreement:** The Council provides RVS with a one-year funding agreement. RVS outlined that a three-year funding agreement would help their long-term financial planning.

3.7. **Hampshire County Council** - As part of the recent savings programme HCC are removing the £29,000 infrastructure grant, they currently provide RVS. This will significantly impact their ability to sustain services at their current level. In addition, HCC are also reviewing the Community Transport Agreement which will require RVS to reconsider their existing operational model to make it financially viable.

3.8. **Rent Relief:** RVS currently pay £20,000 pa to lease space at the Council offices. This is placing an increasing pressure on the organisation given the existing financial challenges outlined above.

4. IMPLICATIONS (of proposed course of action)

Risks

Legal Implications

- 4.1. In recognition of the Council's financial position and on-going financial challenges the Council's legal advice to date has been to provide a Service Level Agreement for one year only which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Financial Implications

- 4.2. An increase in the core grant or provision of 100% rent relief would have a significant financial impact on the Council.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.3. An equalities impact assessment has not yet been undertaken and will follow (if necessary) following consideration of this report.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Committee recommend that the Cabinet

- consider a multi-year funding agreement from 2025/26
- consider bridging the gap in funding as a result of the withdrawal of the Hampshire County Council grant from 2025/26
- consider waiving the rent of £20,000 through 100% rent relief

LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:

Appendix 1 - Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 24th October 2024.

CONTACT DETAILS:

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 24th October, 2024 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)
Cllr Nadia Martin (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr S. Trussler (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr Bill O'Donovan
Cllr M.J. Tennant

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Leola Card, Cllr Thomas Day and Cllr G.B. Lyon.

Cllrs S.J. Masterson, T.W. Mitchell and Sarah Spall attended the meeting as Standing Deputies.

16. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 12th September and 19th September, 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

17. RUSHMOOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES - SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT - ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee welcomed Rushmoor Voluntary Services' Chief Executive, Donna Bone, Chair of Trustees, Andrew Lloyd and the Council's Community and Partnerships - Service Manager, Emma Lamb, who were in attendance to report on the 2023/24 Annual Report and Quarters 1 and 2 for 2024/25, in line with the Service Level Agreement with the Council.

Ms Bone, gave a presentation which explained that Rushmoor Voluntary Services (RVS) were the umbrella organisation, referred to as a Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), in place to support local voluntary and community groups. Its mission had been to support the people of Rushmoor to play a full and active part in the life of the local community in partnership with the voluntary, statutory, and business sectors. It was noted that RVS provided information, guidance and support to 340 member organisations.

The Committee were advised that RVS had 120 established 'Rushmoor Responder' volunteers who were available to do ad hoc, bite sized volunteering, on a flexible basis. In addition, it was noted that since April 2023, 425 local staff and volunteers

had been trained, 481 volunteers had been placed in local groups and staff had assisted with funding bids worth over £1.4million.

Key activities for RVS included:

- Community Transport – it was noted that an average of 791 passenger journeys were made every month across Hart and Rushmoor and the minibuses were hired out by organisations on average 570 times a year.
- Home Support – it was noted that RVS provided Home Help to over 200 households across the Borough and the befriending/buddying service had been thriving, with 326 telephone calls and 445 visits being made by volunteers.
- Partnership working – It was advised that RVS worked with partners to provide services/initiatives across the Borough. Examples included the Repair Café, Grub Hub, Warm Hubs and Rushmoor Link. In partnership with the NHS, RVS had also supported work on reducing healthcare inequalities for children and young people – the initiative had helped to foster volunteering skills/interest in younger people.

The Committee reviewed RVS's core CVS service budget income which came from grants totalling £134,800 for 2024/25. Looking to the future, it was advised that Hampshire County Council (HCC) would be removing their grant contribution, which had totalled £29,000 in 2024/25, for 2025/26. It was estimated that RVS could operate for one year at a cost of around £650,000 and had been operating at a deficit for the past two years. It was recognised that HCC and the Council were both facing financial challenges, however some growth was required to keep operating going forward.

The Committee discussed the report and presentation and when asked how the Council could assist, Ms Bone advised that a three year funding agreement from the Council would help plan for the future and assistance with a new lease for the space occupied at the Council Offices. A discussion was also held on the demographic of volunteers, it was advised that since the pandemic a number of volunteers with lived experience naturally retired leaving a huge deficit. The Rushmoor Responders, which had been established from the volunteers who had come forward during the pandemic, were a vital database of people who could be called upon for volunteering opportunities. It was also important to foster and continue to engage with young people through the local schools and colleges, creating opportunities for Duke of Edinburgh volunteering and build understanding of what can and can't be done in the sector as a young person.

It was advised that RVS and Hart Voluntary Action (HVA) intended to work jointly going forward, condensing the number of meetings held per year by hosting jointly and using survey data to seek opportunities for more collaborative working.

In response to a query on how key performance indicators (KPI) were measured, Ms Lamb advised that quarterly performance meetings were held with RVS, and the

excellent partnership with the Council had been highlighted in the recent Peer Review. Ms Lamb, was very confident that RVS delivered on its KPIs.

The Committee discussed the implications should RVS cease to exist, and opportunities for funding from alternative sources.

The Committee RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet:

- consider a multi-year funding agreement from 2025/26
- consider bridging the gap in funding as a result of any withdrawal of the Hampshire County Council grant to RVS from 2025/26
- consider waiving the rent of £20,000 due to Rushmoor Borough Council through 100% rent relief

ACTION

What	By Whom	When
Provide a spreadsheet of costs showing income and expenses for 2024/25 to date.	Donna Bone, Chief Executive, RVS	November 2024
Share survey results from 2023/24	Donna Bone, Chief Executive, RVS	November 2024

The Chairman thanked Ms Bone, Mr Lloyd and Ms Lamb for their presentation.

18. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan and the items for the meeting on 28 November, which included the Leaders Priorities and the Risk Register.

The Committee discussed a recent Record of Executive Decision which related to the delayed release of Union Yard. It was agreed that the option of an additional meeting would be considered to look at the situation in more depth.

The meeting closed at 8.56 pm.

CLLR HALLEH KOOHESTANI (CHAIRMAN)

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