

## **Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

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**Subject: Progress report Volunteering initiatives across the District.**

**Summary statement:** This report gives an update on the work of volunteering initiatives supported by the Council and external partners.

### **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Our work on supporting volunteering is designed to be inclusive and benefit all local service delivery across the district. Whilst this is right and consistent with the principle of equalities at the heart of everything we do; it is also the case that our investment needs to demonstrate how it is enabling us to make sustainable progress in equality, diversity and inclusion and culture.

All grant funded, contracted partners and projects recognise the single statutory duty to promote equality under the Equality Act 2010. All our partners ensure and demonstrate that services delivered have due regard to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area: Corporate**

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1** Bradford District has a strong and vibrant civil society sector with an estimated 5,000 plus voluntary and community groups, 30,000 regular volunteers and 100,000 occasional volunteers committed to making Bradford District a better place to live. Our projects are connecting more and more people to volunteering opportunities in which they can make a difference. We also support community organisations offering volunteering opportunities to provide valuable local services in challenging financial times.
- 1.2** Volunteering also provides a platform for communities to engage in neighbourhood activities through events and enabling them to self-identify the key issues that they want our support with. This collective working of people in common causes brings down barriers to integration and cohesion in neighbourhoods, helps to strengthen our communications generally and improve environments where they live.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** There are a range of projects and initiatives that support volunteering in the Bradford district. Some of these supported by the Stronger Communities Team include Covid Community Champions, Citizen Coin, Community Ambassadors, Big Lunches which will be part of the Jubilee celebration events this year, volunteer recruitment, training and a volunteer 'Kite Mark' for organisations that take on volunteers.
- 2.2** During the Covid pandemic there has been wide cross sector working between the public, voluntary and private sectors. The People Can brand continues to support council wide initiatives with local clean ups and the Spring Clean. It has also been used prominently with the Covid Hub response from the Council.
- 2.3** Our partnership with the VCSE sector has had national recognition with the 'Volunteering The Volunteers' guide and the Volunteer Coordinator's guide written by Volunteering Bradford to support management/training/induction of volunteers during the lockdown picked up by the National Council for Volunteering Organisations (NCVO) and used as an exemplar.
- 2.4** During lockdown we developed a new service called 'Link Up Letters' which provided an alternative 'befriending service' to residents of Care homes. This has proved very successful and popular and is on-going, with more volunteers coming on board on a regular basis. The feedback we've had from both care homes and residents has been tremendous. We have 120 volunteer letter writers supporting the Link Up Letters project. Volunteer recruitment was capped at 1800 to support response to pandemic during lockdown via the hubs. Since the first lockdown ended and the hubs were closed 685 COVID volunteers (plus approx. 200 in Keighley) have agreed to remain on our database to support on going and need. We are currently actively recruiting /placing drivers and befrienders. The 'People Can – Kitemark' or Volunteering Quality Standards as we now call it has been attained by 24 local organisations. Please refer to Appendix A for information on Volunteering Bradford's work during the last 12 months.

### 3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

**3.1** The first phase of the *Community Champions programme* ended in September 2021 where over 5,500 residents were reached and 247 champions were recruited within ethnic communities and those with disabilities to increase vaccination take up. Additional funding was received from Public Health to extend the work of the Community Champions to support with mental health awareness. Working with Equality Together, Race Equality Network, Skills House, Linking Network and the Bridge Project we rolled out the second phase of the project from 1 October, which will run up to May 2022. Within this phase; we are concentrating on ethnic groups, those with learning and disabilities, those who can't speak English or very little and those over 65 in day care centres and care homes; covering a range of physical and mental health activities, intergenerational volunteering, befriending and ESOL.

**3.1** Work is now underway to refresh Bradford Council's Volunteering Policy and develop effective monitoring, communications and guidance for employees. The refreshed policy aims to see more staff volunteering 2 days per year in our local communities, to enable staff to contribute to the ongoing efforts of residents and organisations in their neighbourhoods. Their contribution can be monitored through the internal online management system - ESS. Potential local projects can be brokered through the Citizen Coin app. <https://bradford.citizencoin.uk/>

**3.2** Citizen Coin Current Position:

- The technology was developed in 2020; with extensive concept and user testing with all stakeholders. The scheme went live in December 2020, Volunteer's Day. In the midst of a pandemic, the project has been over target by 300-450% in all areas. Due to Covid challenges, the project only really started to come to life after April 2021. Please refer to Appendix B for further information about the Citizen Coin project.

**3.3** Some achievements to note:

- 817 registered users
- 112 retailers offering discounts off goods and services
- 60 rewarding organisations using the scheme to advertise activities
- 3117 coins earned
- Some exciting sign ups to highlight include: Bradford Bulls; Bradford City; Bradford College; St Cuthbert's School; Dr Sohail Ahmed, GP
- Several promotional T&A press articles
- Summer Campaign – 1 June to 4 July 2021 - "Lockdown to Lift off" as part of Thank You Day
- Social Media Reach: LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook

**3.4** Project Outcomes:

- increase civic participation
- Increase opportunities for social interaction to take place between people who are different from each other
- increase spend with local services and retailers
- change perceptions around doing social good
- increase involvement and engagement in local activities with those people who would not normally participate
- increase participation by people from low income households in civic and social activities

- 3.5** Covid Community Champions: Our community response was built on a rapid response from organisations and partners and was designed to reach people most acutely affected by the pandemic. The first phase of the Covid Community Champions programme ended in September 2021 where over 5,500 residents were reached and 247 champions were recruited within minority communities and those with disabilities to increase vaccination take up. Additional funding was received from Public Health to extend the work of the Community Champions to support with mental health awareness. Working with Equality Together, Race Equality Network, Skills House, Linking Network and the Bridge Project we rolled out the second phase of the project from 1 October to May 2022. Within this phase, we are concentrating on minority groups, those with learning and disabilities, those who can't speak English or very little and those over 65 in day care centres and care homes; covering a range of physical and mental health activities, intergenerational volunteering, befriending and ESOL.
- 3.6** Over 1500 people volunteered through People Can (The Council's volunteering campaign) - 35 volunteers were deployed for community reassurance walks, 10,000 leaflets handed out to residents in parks and public areas, 80,000 COVID-19 Advice and Support booklets have been disseminated. There was also coordinated community response over Ramadan and Eid to support Scholemoor Cemetery. We also developed innovative ways of partnership working with a 'Befriending Platform', designed and built to support residents with social isolation and mental health. The 'Befriending Network' was also established where volunteers provided support in a range of languages.
- 3.7** We've retained our existing volunteer workforce and grown it to 299 with additional Champions over 65 years. 80% of our Champions have been trained on mental health and they have already engaged with over 3,500 residents. Further funding has been announced from DLUHC in December 2021. Further work is being developed to roll out a much more targeted and concentrated phase of the Community Champions with the employment of 20+ casual Champions. Deadline for applications is the 28 February and it is envisioned delivery will commence at the end of March 2022 to July 2022.
- 3.8** We deployed a Youth Ambassador's initiative led by the Youth Service to engage with young people. Messages were tailored for three main groupings; the fearless, the fearful and unaware. In addition to a comprehensive induction training programme, the Ambassadors have received social media; culture change training and behavioural science workshops too. Please refer to Appendix C for further information on Covid Community Champions.
- 3.9** The award of the new VCSE Service Improvement Programme contract beginning 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 which replaces the current Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Support Grant will deliver a refreshed volunteering opportunity for residents and organisation in the district. Please refer to Appendix D which outlines the model of delivery for this service.
- 3.10** The Stronger Communities Team are also starting a process to recruit staff and a post of Volunteer Coordinator will be advertised to undertake the following key duties:

- To be the champion of social volunteering by promoting Citizen Coin, Ambassador Programme, People Library and People Can and any other volunteering initiatives committed by Bradford Council; both internally and externally, to increase the number of volunteers, scope and range of initiatives across the district.
- To develop a Bradford Council volunteering policy; connecting staff with volunteering opportunities and reporting to the Equalities Plan.
- To report and provide regular briefings on outcomes, social value, progress, impacts, benefits and best practice in volunteering in line with programme protocols at various committees, boards and partnerships as appropriate.

#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1** There are no additional financial or resource matters. Funding for the above schemes and projects is provided through existing Council budgets and externally funded sources such as The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1** There are significant risks arising out of the implementation of the proposed recommendations.

#### **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1** There are no legal issues arising from this report.

#### **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- The contribution of volunteers in all aspects of the delivery of services across the district support the principle of sustainability. For example, community clean ups of green spaces, recycling of waste, better use of resources and provision of activities for all demographics which include better health outcomes and maintenance and use of community assets.

##### **7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

- There are no impacts on greenhouse emissions arising from this report

##### **7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- There are no Community Safety implications arising from this report. DBS checks and safety equipment are available when required for specific projects.

##### **7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

- There are no Human Rights issues arising from this report

##### **7.5 TRADE UNION**

- There are no Trade Union issues arising from this report

##### **7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

- The volunteering support and initiatives, such as the Spring Clean Up and Citizen Coin, are available in all wards and are coordinated with the area offices.

## **7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- Volunteering initiatives benefit services provided to children through organised local activities, examples are scout clubs, youth clubs, play schemes etc.

## **7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- The confidentiality of personal data is paramount in all of the work we do relating to our workforce and resident volunteers. We do not anticipate that any additional actions arise from the work outlined in this report.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

**8.1** None

## **9. Options**

- 9.1** That the initiatives and projects promoting volunteering both internally and external to the council are supported by officers.
- 9.2** The Council officers and departments cease to support all volunteering initiatives and projects.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1** That the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee acknowledge the initiatives and volunteering that support services to local communities.
- 9.2** That a further report is brought back to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the impact of the VCSE Service Improvement Programme and the Volunteer Coordinator to support volunteering across the district in 12 months.

## **10. APPENDICES**

- 10.1** **Appendix A** Volunteering Bradford information and statistics for the last 12 months
- 10.2** **Appendix B** Citizen Coin
- 10.3** **Appendix C** Community Champions
- 10.4** **Appendix D** New VCSE Service Improvement Programme Volunteering support