

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	2 September 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Rother Voluntary Action – Healthy Aging through Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE) Project

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That a total grant of £40,000 be awarded to Rother Voluntary Action, towards the cost of match funding for a European Union Interreg 2 Seas funded project – Healthy Aging and Innovation in Rural Europe (£15,000 in Year 1 FY 2019/2020), £15,000 in Year 2 FY 2020/2021), and £10,000 in Year 3 FY 2021/2022), to be met from the Community Grant budget within Earmarked Reserves, subject to the condition that sufficient funds are secured from other sources, to enable the project to be completed.

Head of Service: Ben Hook

Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Prochak

Introduction

1. A request has been received from Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) for a grant towards the cost of match funding for a European Union (EU) Interreg 2 Seas funded project – Healthy Aging and Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE). HAIRE is a project designed to increase rural community capacity in Rother by empowering people to play an active role in the design and delivery of local services. This will be accomplished by supporting rural volunteering and rural community action to decrease rural isolation and increase the health and wellbeing of its older rural population, particularly those who are most vulnerable.
2. RVA had considered applying through the Community Grant Scheme, however the application does not meet the criteria

Rother Voluntary Action

3. RVA is a charity that operates across Rother District with its main office in Bexhill and a satellite office in Rye. RVA was formed in 2006 as the result of the merger of three organisations in Bexhill, Battle and Rye. The aims of RVA are to:
 - promote local community action;
 - improve the quality and effectiveness of the local voluntary and community sector;
 - proactively identify changing community needs and facilitate the development of services to meet those needs with the voluntary and community sector playing a key role;
 - establish effective working relationships between the voluntary sector, statutory sector and other outside bodies;

- enable the local voluntary and community sector to influence strategic policies and priorities; and
 - support volunteering.
4. RVA's current strategic plan <http://www.rva.uk.com/who-we-are/aims-and-objectives/> also gives priority to working with people whose full participation in society is limited by economic, physical and social disadvantage.
 5. Over the last 10 years, RVA has worked to serve the interests of local communities and community groups with over 700 groups, charities and social enterprises operating in Rother regularly receiving updates, information, briefings and support. Typically, RVA handles over 100 enquiries per month on subjects ranging from how to find or manage volunteers, how to set up a charity, what kind of financial systems should a group have or what types of insurances a charity should seek. RVA runs payroll and account holding services for very small groups and provides free advice to any voluntary organisation operating in Rother. Their services were ranked as excellent or good by over 99% of respondents in the 2019 RVA Annual Survey <https://www.rva.uk.com/rva-annual-survey-2019/> and they have consistently held the NAVCA National Award for Quality Excellence in the delivery of these services since 2007.
 6. Since their formation, the Council has consistently contributed core funding which has enabled RVA to bring in an additional investment into Rother of over £4m since 2006 in the form of other grants and payments to RVA from a range of sources such as BBC Children in Need, The Big Lottery or statutory agencies. In addition, RVA support local groups in making their own funding bids and estimate that these groups themselves currently raise in excess of £2m per year.
 7. RVA work with a range of statutory partners including Rother District Council (RDC), East Sussex County Council (ESCC), The Environment Agency, Safer East Sussex, The Hastings and Rother Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Safer East Sussex and Sussex Police, and Brighton University. Working with these agencies and working with local communities RVA deliver a range of community projects including the environment, befriending, poverty alleviation, safety, health, sport, education, young people, community networks and volunteering. RVA sits on several strategic making bodies and boards including the Rother Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and promotes a range of partnership working with other voluntary organisations.
 8. RVA are currently involved with one EU funded project (I-Know-How), working with Universities in Belgium, Holland and partners in France looking at ways of supporting people with cancer to remain in work. Lastly, RVA are working closely with Hastings Direct and are their current Diversity Partner of the Year enabling them to establish stronger links between Hastings Direct and the local community.

Project Background

9. The over 65s now represent a quarter of the county's population and are projected to make up nearly a third of all people by 2031. Rother already has a higher proportion of older persons (aged 65+) within its community than many other districts, and that proportion is projected to further increase

through to 2031, such that older persons will comprise 37.9% of the district's total population. 32% of people in rural Rother live alone. 17% of these are over 65 and some villages have a very high proportion of one person households (2011 census) 45% Rye Foreign, 40% Rye, 32% Battle, 31% Icklesham.

10. Higher housing, food and utilities bills for single people in rural areas leave little spare to pay for services or social activities; costs are not just financial but emotional and physical too. Voluntary and community groups report that local people have very little spare money to pay for activities that help combat loneliness and social isolation. Patients living in rural areas are being forced to spend up to £100 on taxis to attend routine hospital appointments amid the closure of local services.

HAIRE – The Project

11. The project will seek to tackle the issues that contribute to rural isolation and the negative health and wellbeing consequences that can follow and develop solutions as identified by local people over 60. These could include developing local transport solutions, good neighbours' schemes, improving usage of the internet, accessing benefits and other services, and help communities become directly involved in partnerships with statutory agencies to develop more local services. The Project will use the combined ideas and approaches from a number of European Universities and delivery organisations to develop an accessible and free package of support, including a volunteer training programme and toolkit for rural communities to use.
12. To fund RVA's participation in this project RVA will use up to £33,000 in total from its own resources. However, to participate, RVA needs a minimum of £73,000 (over a 3 year period) meaning they need to find an additional £40,000 over a 3 year period. If this is secured it would bring an additional investment of £110,000 into Rother from the EU 2 Seas Interreg Fund.
13. The funding will pay for RVA staff and associated costs. RVA staff will work as part of an international project team (including people from the UK, France, Belgium and Holland) to develop and test systems that empower and enable isolated older people (aged 60+) in rural areas to:
 - a. define what support and activities they need;
 - b. participate in the design and delivery of services including community led, volunteer services; and
 - c. develop solutions for themselves to improve their quality of life, health and wellbeing, based on their interests, capabilities and preferences, supported by the voluntary, private and public sectors.
14. The project is being designed to ensure that the knowledge transfer to volunteers and voluntary groups and the upskilling of local communities in how to develop new services will mean that once the initial project funding has stopped (in 2022) participating rural communities will have:
 - created new local services and assets;
 - developed stronger linkages with statutory and voluntary services;

- access to better tools and methods to identify and help those in most need in their community including training and toolkits that will be free to use on an ongoing basis;
- more skills to continue to develop services that are relevant and accessible to their community;
- widened the pool of volunteers; and
- created more resilient rural communities.

15. It is also anticipated that much of the knowledge and many of the tools created by the project will be able to be transferred into Bexhill which are also seeing a sharp increase in the numbers of isolated older people.

Costs

16. RVA have provided costings for the project as set out below:

HAIRE - project budget				2020	2021	2022	
				y1	y2	y3	Total
Year total				£ 65,000	£ 66,950	£ 51,719	£ 183,669
Staff costs				£ 46,500	£ 47,650	£ 36,619	£ 130,769
Office costs				£ 7,000	£ 8,000	£ 6,000	£ 21,000
Travel costs (inc travel to Europe)				£ 8,000	£ 8,800	£ 5,600	£ 22,400
External services with audit				£ 1,500	£ 2,500	£ 3,500	£ 7,500
Equipment				£ 2,000	£ -	£ -	£ 2,000
				£ 65,000	£ 66,950	£ 51,719	
Interreg 2 Seas Funde 60%				£ 39,000	£ 40,170	£ 31,031	£ 110,201
Match funding needed 40%				£ 26,000	£ 26,780	£ 20,688	£ 73,468
RDC				£ 15,000	£ 15,000	£ 10,000	£ 40,000
RVA				£ 11,000	£ 11,780	£ 10,688	£ 33,468

17. Staff costs are likely to include at least one new part-time post (in addition to RVA CEO and senior management time).
18. Office costs are provided for by Interreg 2 Seas at a flat rate of 15% of staffing costs under the rules of the EU funding scheme. They would largely pay for the increased financial administration (staff cost) of the project.
19. RVA has committed £33,000 to the project and will receive £110,000 funding from the EU 2 Seas Interreg Fund, on the condition that the £40,000 gap is funded.
20. The issue of continued funding of both new and existing projects after the UK has left the EU was raised at a workshop hosted by the UK Interreg 2 Seas Secretariat and the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government that was attended by RVA representatives earlier this year. There was a categorical assurance that ALL Interreg 2 Seas project UK partner funding was underwritten by the UK Government and that all projects would be fully funded to their stated end dates. Further details of the UK Government's guarantee are set out here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-governments-guarantee-for-eu-funded-programmes-if-theres-no-brexit-deal/the-governments-guarantee-for-eu-funded-programmes-if-theres-no-brexit-deal>

21. The wider project, which includes delivery across Cornwall in the UK, Pas de Calais in France, Flanders in Belgium and Southern Holland, has an estimated cost of £4.7m with funding of £1.8m in match funding from partners secured to date.

Financial Consideration

22. No specific budget provision exists for this project. Whilst the scheme does not meet the community grants scheme criteria, if Members were minded to support the proposal, then £40,000 of funds from this scheme could be earmarked from the Community Grant fund for the project over the next three years as shown in the table above (£15,000 in Year 1 Financial Year 2019/2020), £15,000 in Year 2 Financial Year 2020/2021), and £10,000 in Year 3 Financial Year 2021/2022). This would avoid making any further call on the Council's earmarked reserves to meet this cost.

Conclusion

23. RVA are a longstanding and respected organisation, who has invested significant resources into the Rother District to develop community groups, encourage community action and support volunteering.
24. The recommendation is that a grant of £40,000 be awarded to RVA; to be funded from the Community Grant Scheme funding, subject to the condition that sufficient funds are secured from other sources, to enable the project to be successfully match funded and delivered, and the EU portion of funding is guaranteed until 2022.

Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director

Risk Assessment Statement

Failure to support this grant application could result in the loss of opportunity to secure £110,000 of Interreg 2 Seas funding into the Rother District and to deliver on this project to support an increase in volunteering, and deliver more resilient rural communities.