

Council
23rd April 2014



Business of External Organisations	Agenda No: 16b
Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency (BDVSA)	
Corporate Priority: Encouraging Flourishing Communities Report presented by: Cllr Sandra Howell Report prepared by: Cllr Sandra Howell	
Background Papers:	Public Report
	Key Decision: No
<p>The BDVSA is a registered charity whose aim is to give help and support to the many voluntary and community groups in the Braintree district. It is envisaged that approx. 150 voluntary organisations benefited from the grant received from Braintree District Council and Essex County Council.</p> <p>The charity maintains close liaison with the voluntary and community sector through its newsletter and regular e-bulletins. These communications ensure that the voluntary and community sector, especially the smaller groups, are kept up-to-date with developments in the charity world and the public sector/policy affecting voluntary groups.</p> <p>BDVSA still feel their most important role is to enable local statutory and voluntary organisations to work together openly and to help small groups in the community with funding advice, training and governance and management issues.</p> <p>One such project this year has been the Winter Warmth Project which has been funded by Essex County Council Public Health. 180 packs were delivered by Community Transport and the Village Agents. In addition to the practical winter warmth items such as gloves, hot water bottles etc. the packs also included a thermometer and information from BDC, energy saving advice from CAB, benefits advice leaflet from Age UK Essex, advice on bogus callers and doorstep safety from Trading Standards and an additional goody bag from Community Transport. The feed- back from recipients has shown this to be a resounding success.</p> <p>There have been several changes in the voluntary sector including a newly formed Essex wide voluntary sector alliance. At present it is focusing on structures within the Alliance and has formed four sub groups on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Community mobilisationEmployment, worklessness, education and trainingHealth and well beingCrime prevention and justice	

There is also a consortium of Essex based charities called 4SX being formed. The purpose of which is to create an entity of tender ready charities who can respond to contracting opportunities issued by the County Council.

There have also been changes at BDVSA during the 2013/14 financial year, a new Chief Executive Officer, Rachel Fahie, has been appointed and two other members of staff retired recently.

BDVSA was also the subject of an Overview and Scrutiny review, a copy of the Task and Finish Group report was circulated to all members and ratified by full council.

A brief summary of the recommendations is as follows:

- For BDC to continue to provide financial support and maintain close partnership working.
- For BDC to identify ways in which it could provide non-financial support to BDVSA
- To increase members awareness of the service BDVSA provides
- BDVSA (through Cabinet) should investigate alternative premises to provide a higher standard of accommodation and a more positive environment.
- To consider ways of raising its profile to ensure more organisations could benefit from their services.

Since the report was published there has been a closer working relationship with BDC which has resulted with BDVSA having a place on the Responsible Authority Group and the Health and Wellbeing Panel. There is also a possibility that accommodation may be found within Causeway House.

Every year volunteering enquiries continue to increase and in 2013 they received nearly 1400. About 250 people go on to register and another 300 are referred directly to other agencies. Figures show that 90% of all volunteers come from the 18 to 35 years age group, followed by 8% of 36 to 60 years and 2% over 60 years.

Finally could I remind members that BDVSA produces a regular newsletter, copies of which are now emailed to you and which I hope you enjoy reading.