

EXTERNAL GRANT FUNDING REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2024 at 6.00 pm in the Online Only.

Present: Councillor Tricia Austin (Chair); Councillors Davis, Manners, Pope, Edwards, Fellows and W Scobie

In Attendance:

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies made at the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

3. GATHER EVIDENCE FROM INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING ORGANISATIONS

The Chair introduced the item for discussion and said that the purpose of the meeting was to gather information from infrastructure and funding organisations on their experiences regarding working with Thanet District Council and what the Council could do to support efforts for bringing in external funding of voluntary sector activities in Thanet. Members of the working party each asked a question that helped shape the discussion.

Councillor Pope asked the following question:

- What's your experience of working with TDC to help Thanet groups access funding/build their skills to do so?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- Funding For All have worked with a number of voluntary organisations in Thanet, embedding confidence so that they become self-sustaining. Training was provided and conferences and webinars were also conducted for these organisations;
- The Social Enterprise Boost Programme helps grow social enterprise groups in the district. This programme comes to an end in December this year;
- The programme was delivered under the Community Champions Programme;
- The Kent Community Foundation has an office in Margate and worked with groups in the district providing infrastructure funding support;
- The Equality Finding and Movement Fund spent about £100k in Thanet. Currently there are scoping activities taking place. A capital works programme is being developed, that includes workforce training for Thanet community groups;
- UKSBF could set up a Thanet Hub to support voluntary groups in the district;
- UKSBF were working closely with the Thanet Community Safety Team and Thanet Games;
- The Kent Coast Volunteering produced a monthly volunteering bulletin to encourage new volunteers to join;
- They also go to the Job Centre to engage potential volunteers and reach out to marginalised communities not well represented in volunteering;

- Six networking and knowledge sessions where community voluntary groups meet to network would start in September 2024;
- There is also a training forum on best practices in addition to networking;
- There is also a TDC funded volunteering activity for young people;
- Birchington Parish Council was not working with TDC at the moment;
- There is a Sports Facilities project that the Parish would like to see how they can work with TDC on this project;
- Funding For All has received funding from TDC for the Community Champions;
- There is a conference that has been planned for October in Ramsgate and another February in Margate;
- Funding For All also provided one on one mentoring for groups and parish councils. This information will be shared with parish clerks;
- They also provide funding applications bid writing support to community groups.

Councillor Edwards asked the following question:

- What works well & what doesn't?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- Good communication was key. Part of the work Funding For All has been doing with Nicola Wood, Shared Prosperity Project Co-ordinator is very good;
- Nicola Wood has been very supportive to local voluntary organisations and she managed to set up the Thanet Community Champions website in a short spell of time;
- However UK Shared Prosperity Fund which funds Nicola Wood's current post would be coming to an end next year;
- It was important for the Council to find an alternative funding for that role to continue beyond the UK Shared Prosperity Fund funding period;
- This post has been key in creating communication conduit between TDC and voluntary sector organisations in Thanet.

Councillor Manners asked the following questions:

- How do you work with other Councils? Do they do things differently? What works well?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- Kent Coast Volunteers historically used to work with KCC. They won a volunteering award role to host the award ceremony on behalf of Folkestone District Council;
- The organisation also applies for funding from Members Grants at other councils;
- TDC should consider having a similar Members Grants Fund for voluntary organisations to apply;
- Sports Connect FA has applied for funding to the Medway SPCFA and was awaiting a response. They also work with Canterbury City Council's RISE Strategic Grant to carry out some youth work in the City Centre;

- The application process for this RISE grant is straight forward;
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund has the best funding approach to organisations that really helped;
- Funding For All worked across districts in Kent and Medway and provided infrastructure funding for a number of activities;
- Thanet has a more structured approach for supporting community organisations. That model worked well and other districts could learn from.

Councillor Scobie asked the following questions:

- How is your role changing? Do you anticipate any future funding changes?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- The role for some of the infrastructure organisations was to provide support to community voluntary organisations to be ready to apply for funding;
- That includes support for organisations to be strategic about funding approaches and co-ordinate work so that funding opportunities are spread around more local voluntary organisations;
- It was important to have some intelligence information that can be used for a co-ordinated approach to support funding efforts;
- Infrastructure organisations help organisations to apply and navigate through the jargon used in the grant funding application process;
- Funding For All has 2 specialists who work on maximising funding. The organisation has a five year vision;
- There are upcoming challenges that include support with funding replacement opportunities for those activities that are coming to an end and getting experienced facilitators to work with new voluntary organisations to access funding;
- Kent Coast Volunteers have a best practice co-ordinator working across three councils and a volunteer connector based in Thanet;
- However funding for some of the infrastructure organisations is coming to an end and this is now posing a major challenge on how they will continue to support voluntary organisations;
- Organisations could try to source and secure partnership;
- It is a constant battle to secure funding or partnership working;
- It was important for information sharing by TDC regarding available funding. Organisations should be able to come to the Council and be sign-posted to where they can get funding information;
- There is a web page on the TDC website that has been running for about a week which sign posts organisations to funding sources;
- KCC has a Find Funding page on their website, which contains useful information.

Councillor Davis asked the following question:

- How can TDC help you maximise the support you offer?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- Circulating links or information about events and mentoring would be helpful;
- TDC should find funding for Nicola Wood's role in order to retain the skills and experience she brings to the post;
- Could Nicola Wood make a presentation at the Parish Forum meeting on funding opportunities for local voluntary organisations and Parish/Town Councils? This would help spread the message;
- Funding for All are happy to make a presentation at the Parish Forum, if invited.

Councillor Edwards asked the following question:

- Do voluntary organisations go to big funders to raise funding and is there a Hub for approaching corporate sponsorship?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- Funding For All has 16 funding streams and one of them is corporate funding;
- One the mentors for Funding For All focuses on this type of training and some of the community groups have been quite successful with corporate funding;
- Kent Community Foundation raises corporate funding, generally for up to £5k;
- It is easier to get project funding for actual work activities than it is for recurrent expenditure like paying for rent, salaries and other office expenses.

Councillor Manners asked the following question:

- Is there any contact with large companies operating in the district to have senior employees seconded to voluntary organisations to transfer skills, e.g. as trustees of a charity organisation?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- A number of construction based companies have been approached;
- Previous Kent Community Foundation had mentor who helped on procurement of cheap food for a food kitchen in Ramsgate;
- A director at Price Waterhouse Coopers is a trustee on the Kent Community Foundation Board, which was a great way of transferring skills to voluntary organisations;
- It was worth noting that getting goods and services in kind was also a good way of funding;
- There are some national bodies that support funding trustee volunteers;
- Organisations could try and explore how to find trustee volunteers.

Councillor Fellows asked the following question:

- What other ideas do you have for how TDC might help you and local voluntary organisations to bring more grant funding into Thanet?

In the discussion that ensued in response to the questions, infrastructure and funding organisation representatives and members of the working party made the following:

- Organisations would be best advised to keep applying for the Town Deal and other funding opportunities in the district that trickle down to organisations;
- Gift aid was a brilliant approach to use. It is free money and is available;
- Voluntary organisations should think of diversifying funding sources as there are different routes that can be used;
- Community funding was a good way of crating publicity on the work of voluntary organisations;
- Organisations should help tell the story in order to get funding for their activities.

The Chair thanked participants and said that issues that came from this discussion would be raised in the report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Meeting concluded : 7.19 pm