



Report to: Communities Committee, 22nd July 2020

Report of: Corporate Director, Homes and Communities

Subject: WORCESTER COMMUNITY TRUST (WCT) - ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT 2019/2020

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the contents of the report are noted and in particular, the WCT Annual Update Report 2019/2020 at Appendix 1.

2. Background

2.1 This report introduces Members to the WCT Annual Update Report 2019/2020 which can be found at **Appendix 1** and which will be supported at Committee with a presentation.

2.2 WCT manages six Community Hubs on behalf of the council, through a management agreement which commenced in April 2015. The hubs include –

The Green Hub, Gresham Road, Worcester, WR2 5QS	The Horizon Hub, Midland Road, Worcester, WR5 1DS	King George V Hub, Ash Avenue, Worcester, WR4 9TL
Ronkswood Hub, Canterbury Road, Worcester, WR5 1PJ	The Tolly Hub, Rowan Avenue, Worcester, WR4 9QW	Warndon Hub, Shap Drive, Worcester, WR4 9NX

2.3 WCT employs thirty-three staff in part time and full-time positions and has access to over 100 volunteers, delivering a range of services primarily for residents across Worcester but in some cases South Worcestershire.

2.4 During 2019/2020 WCT confirmed Ruth Heywood as its new Chief Executive Officer and finalised its management team later that year. In addition, four new trustees have been appointed to the WCT Board to fill identified gaps in key areas for the organisation moving forward.

3. Information

3.1 The report at **Appendix 1** confirms that WCT's purpose links very closely with the aims and objectives of the Worcester City Council City Plan and individual projects delivered by WCT include –

Youthwork (positive activities)	Kidzplay (physical activity & social inclusion)	DAWN Project (domestic abuse)	JOY Project (training, volunteering & employment for women)
Community Connectors (community building)	Snack & Chat (older people)	Reconnections (social isolation)	Building Block (skills, training & employment)

- 3.2 Towards the end of 2019/2020 WCT commenced the Care Package Project to support the COVID-19 response effort. This has seen 262 individuals receiving a regular care package from WCT including a hot meal, reading material and games. These individuals are likely to have been shielding, vulnerable or isolated and is likely to have proven extremely important to health & wellbeing. Although delivery of a small number of services referred to at para 3.1 have been paused as a result of COVID-19 (others continuing to have been provided virtually or via the telephone) each and every person registered as a service user of WCT has been kept in regular touch with via the telephone in order to provide reassurance, support and prevent social isolation.
- 3.3 A significant impact of COVID-19 has been on WCT's lettings income, which as of March ceasing overnight when the Country went in to lockdown. In order to support WCT during this period to protect their reserve levels the Council provided a grant of £30,000 to WCT to cover the period April 20 – June 20, and this was taken from the WCT Reserve outlined at para 3.6.
- 3.4 Please note that Section 7 of the attached WCT Report is considered as exempt due to the commercial nature of information provided, and this part of the report will be discussed in closed session if Members wish to do so.
- 3.5 WCT recognise that although lettings income for 2019/2020 was nominally up on the previous year, it still fell short of the target the organisation set itself. Moving forward WCT and City Council officers will be looking to plan improvement works across the 6 Community Hubs in line with the the Asset Management Plan (subject to approval at a future Policy & Resources Committee) in order to improve facilities and reduce energy costs.
- 3.6 Although there is no doubt that WCT are delivering a wide range of services for residents across Worcester and are harnessing an increasing amount of external funding opportunities to support much of this work, there is a need to review the level of financial support that has been provided by the council over the last two years.
- 3.7 This piece of work will be undertaken during the remainder of 2020 with the focus being a review of progress against a set of recommendations set out in a 2017 independent evaluation of the WCT delivery model. The key recommendation of this evaluation was a phasing out of grant funding provided by the council, and this was taken into account during budget setting for the period up until 2023/24 as set out below -
- 1) £72,000 p.a. (index linked) for five years (2019/2020 – 2023/2024) for core funding (i.e. building maintenance)

2) A contingency budget in the event of additional emergency funding being requested. In recognition of the fact that the WCT business plan projects a financial surplus in 2019/20, this contingency reduces through the life of the MTFP as follows:

- 2018/2019 - £85,000
- 2019/2020 - £42,000
- 2020/21 - £21,000
- 2021/22 - £nil
- 2022/2023 - £nil

3.8 As we enter a period of COVID-19 recovery that will include amongst other things reintegrating communities with the 'new norm' and harnessing the significant amount of community goodwill that has been displayed, the council will have a key role to play as an enabler and supporter of Communities and this offers further opportunity to co-design our community engagement work with existing organisations such as WCT.

3.9 Further opportunities to work closer will also result from the council committing to develop a new Homes & Communities Strategy which will require extensive engagement with many stakeholders including WCT and the Governments Towns Fund Investment Scheme.

Ward(s): All
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Background Papers: N/A