

**MKSM Social Infrastructure Group**

## **Invitation to Tender**

**for**

**Research Assignment**

**Valuing the Voluntary and Community Sector**

**Its Contribution to the Successful Development of  
the Milton Keynes and  
South Midlands Growth Area**

**3 February 2006**

## **Commissioning Agencies**

The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Growth Area (MKSM) Social Infrastructure Group (SIG) comprises the Councils of Voluntary Service for all the areas making up the designated Growth Area; these being:

Buckinghamshire Community Action  
Council of Voluntary Service Northampton & County  
Mid Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary Service  
Milton Keynes Council of Voluntary Organisations  
North Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary Service  
Vale Volunteers - Aylesbury & District  
Voluntary Action Luton  
Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire

Contact details of the Commissioning Agencies are given in Appendix A.

## Consultant Brief

# Valuing the Voluntary and Community Sector - Its Contribution to the Successful Development of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area

## 1 Introduction & Background

Civic society depends greatly on a sophisticated and ever evolving social infrastructure that enables people to have a good quality of life and take full part in society through activities that reflect their changing needs. The voluntary and community sector is the network within which individuals proactively establish key responses to this underpinning structure within society.

Experience shows that within new areas it can take a great deal of time for these networks to begin because a number of key support systems are not established from the outset, resulting in 'travelling out' of new residents because the social infrastructure is missing.

Social infrastructure comprises the organisations and activities that enable people to create, run and sustain the voluntary and community groups, volunteering opportunities and social networks required for sustainable existing and new communities. It focuses on creating communities of people, complementing work to create communities of place. Appendix B provides a fuller definition of *Social Infrastructure*.

The MKSM Growth Area is planning the growth of the region to accommodate significant growth in the population of the area. Co-ordinated planning for the whole sub-region is being conducted into the cross-cutting areas of land development, housing, employment and the economy, green infrastructure, education, health and social care services.

A key area of planning is to create an attractive and diversified green environment, and a high quality of life. The latter includes creating a sense of place, and places for which people feel a sense of belonging.

For businesses to be encouraged to locate and grow in the growing area, employers will need to be confident that workers will choose to move and/or stay in the sub region. People will choose to live and stay in communities if, as well as being serviced by education, health and other services, they provide a thriving, sociable, enjoyable and supportive social environment.

However, a clear gap in the formal plans developed to date concerns the need for developing the social infrastructure of new and growing communities. This is what individuals encounter, gain support and interest from, gain identity from, and contribute to in everyday human interaction.

This includes the activities, networks and support structures, both formal and informal, which provide the day-to-day environment for residents of all ages and locations. These are the things that happen within, between and around the built environment and the formal social services. They are the things that people like to do, engage in and benefit from, often informally, spontaneously and autonomously. Such issues are key in creating neighbourhoods that are attractive and enjoyable to live in.

Communities which are successful in providing these qualities do so because they offer a mix of services, activities, opportunities and social networks that help knit together the fabric of everyday life. Often these services and networks are informal, small scale and voluntary, and there will be parallel networks for people of different ages, circumstances and interests. Without them the targets and aims of the more formal infrastructure plans are unlikely to be achieved.

Examples of the sorts of questions to be asked were raised at the MK2031 Seminar in June 2005:

- *How do we deliver both the physical and human infrastructure/foundations to allow communities to form, develop and be nurtured over time?*
- *How do we design and define future neighbourhoods and places where people will want to call home?*

These qualities can be encouraged and stimulated in a community. The voluntary and community sector (VCS) has enormous experience in developing them. It is vital that the planning for them is programmed in advance of development.

The VCS within the MKSM Growth Area is well developed, and has experience of such developments both in new towns (markedly Milton Keynes) and in older communities and towns. It can be a key partner for the authorities creating the growth area, able to support and strengthen some of the key aims of the growth strategy.

The VCS is also diverse. Different organisations in different areas have different strengths, and they differ also in the pattern and extent of funding support that they receive.

## **2 Project Funder**

The national VCS Infrastructure and Capacity Building Strategy (*ChangeUp*) was published in June 2004. Its overall aim is to improve and modernise the infrastructure provision within the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).

Nationally the Home Office has invested £80 million to March 2006 to support activities that improve sustainability and improve the quality and reach of service provision by the VCS.

*ChangeUp* also forms the basis for the commissioning of activities by VCS infrastructure organisations. Funding for the research set out in this brief has come from the Government Office for the East of England, with additional contributions from the Government Offices the South East and the East Midlands (yet to be confirmed).

### **3 The Issues for Study**

#### **Researching the Capacity Required**

The proposed research aims to identify how to stimulate what we term the social infrastructure in the growing communities, and to assess what level and pattern of resources is needed to do that.

Different Local Authorities (and other bodies) fund different voluntary organisations and activities. With the planned dramatic growth of the sub region the current capacity of the VCS will be not be sufficient.

We propose a sub-regional study into the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to support fully the economic and social aims of the growth plans. That capacity assessment needs to be aligned with a review of the other public and not-for-profit organisations that are or may be engaged in developing the social infrastructure.

To be effective, the study will need to consider the respective needs of helping new communities develop successfully *and* of continuing support in areas and communities already established. It will need to assess the pattern and timing of additional support across the whole area, to match the voluntary and community sector's contribution with that of the developments of new build communities and other areas of population growth.

It will also need to consider the different ways in which the social infrastructure can be encouraged and sustained in different areas and in different communities. There is a range of experience around the country to suggest appropriate roles and interventions for different types and ages of community. The nature and pattern of those interventions will clearly influence on value, or cost, of such work. The resource implications of those alternative strategies will need to be assessed.

The research will be expected to produce recommendations on how the interventions of the VCS can be integrated into the plans and programmes of public sector and other not-for-profit bodies, and to explore effective methods by which the VCS could present these findings.

The research is to be undertaken in consultation with the commissioning agencies. This will help with the organisation of the research, and with accessing directly relevant experience in the sub-region. It will also ensure that

the plans being developed are consistent with actual or potential capacities in the sub-regional VCS.

The research will be managed by the MKSM Social Infrastructure Group, but be conducted by an independent research firm, selected through competitive tender. The report will be jointly addressed to MKSM Social Infrastructure Group and the Environment and Quality of Life Growth Implementation Group (a sub-group of the MKSM Board).

## **The Research**

The Research should inform and advise the voluntary and community sector, both to identify the role it can play in the development of growth area communities and to provide evidence on which the VCS may present key arguments to substantiate its case.

Given the growth agenda for the sub-region, the study is to explore how the VCS can be involved in contributing to the development of successful new and growing neighbourhoods and towns. It is to make recommendations about where, when and how key interventions will be needed, to estimate the staffing and number of volunteers likely to be needed, to make recommendations on the most effective ways of integrating that work within the plans and work of other bodies, and is to estimate the total cost per annum at each stage of the sub-region's development.

Specific components of the brief will include:

- an assessment of the patterns of growth planned across the sub-region in terms of new and growing settlements, and the consequent need for VCS support in the development of those communities;
- a review elsewhere in the country of strategies and models that have been effective in developing and sustaining thriving communities in different circumstances and stages of their life;
- identification of key roles for the VCS in the sub-region's growth plans, specifically to support the development of successful communities, and recommendations for the most effective roles and interventions to be considered;
- identification of the resource implications for the VCS in different areas of the sub-region and at different stages of its growth, together with identification of possible resource bottlenecks: this is to include:
  - an estimate of the added numbers and roles of both paid staff and volunteers that will be needed;
  - an estimation of the additional capital and revenue funding needed in the sector if the recommendations are to be adopted, and the pattern of such funding needed by sub-area and at different stages of growth; and
  - consideration of innovative ways of funding the sector;

- an assessment of the current capacity of the VCS in each Local Authority area falling within the MKSM Growth Area: this review to include identification of:
  - specific and/or major gaps, pressures or needs;
  - the capacity implications of different approaches to developing social infrastructure;
  - the gap between current provision, the need to address any infrastructure deficit and the desired levels of provision; and
  - an assessment of the relevant experience in different CVS's work in supporting growing and new communities;
- recommendations on how the engagement of the voluntary sector can best be integrated into the plans of Local Delivery Vehicles and the MKSM EQOL Group, and into the plans of, for example, Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships.
- the research should explore effective methods of presentation by the VCS of the study findings in the form of expected demand for infrastructure growth by the community, the identification of key voluntary and community sector services that support a healthy community and/or case studies that provide appropriate frameworks within differing settings e.g. market town and urban conurbation.

#### **4 Output**

The research findings should take the form of a written report supplied in electronic format, suitable for distribution by email. The Final Report should also be provided as a paper version, in a form suitable for copying.

Prepared text and identified pictures for the production of a leaflet showing the key argument and benefits of the VCS involvement in developing sustainable communities, and in developing new social infrastructure for presentation to Local Delivery Vehicles, local authorities and other public sector bodies.

Presentation of the report and findings to the MKSM Social Infrastructure Group and the MKSM EQOL Group on dates to be arranged.

#### **5 Timing and Pricing for Study**

The contract will be for a fixed price, estimated to be £25,000, to include the costs of travel, subsistence, and the production and distribution of the draft and final reports.

The final written report and the prepared text for the proposed leaflet are to be provided by or before the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

## **6 Management**

This study will be managed by Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire, with a Commissioning Group that will undertake the short listing and selection of the consultant. This Group will also act as a reference group for the consultant appointed.

The consultant will be asked to attend a briefing prior to the commencement of any work and to provide at least one oral interim report, on work undertaken and planned, in mid April. The detailed timing of such meetings will be agreed with the consultant upon appointment.

## **7 Payments**

Payment will be made in three stages:

- 10% upon meeting and verbal report in Mid April;
- 45% upon completion of the draft report;
- 45% upon acceptance of a satisfactory final report and prepared text for leaflet.

## **8 Time Scales**

Deadline for Receipt of Tenders	10.00am Monday 27 February 2006
Tender Short Listing	3 March 2006
Invitation to present	10 March 2006
Award of Contract	by 15 March 2006
Briefing Meeting	week commencing 20 March 2006
Meeting and Verbal Report	mid April 2006
Interim/Draft Report Presented	mid May 2006
Deadline for Receipt of Final Report and Text for Leaflet	on or before 30 June 2006
Presentation to MKSM SI Group	June 2006
Presentation to MKSM EQOL Group	July 2006

## **9. Intellectual Property**

All information gathered as a result of this study will become the property of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Social Infrastructure Group and the commissioning agencies.

## **10 Tender Requirements**

The tender should include a proposed working brief identifying the anticipated elements of the work, the nature of the research and the number of related days involved with costings.

You should show your understanding of the voluntary and community sector and how this will enable you to undertake this work.

**Tenders must be sent electronically** (so as to enable them to be shared with members of a geographically spread Commissioning Group) to: [john@action-southbeds.org.uk](mailto:john@action-southbeds.org.uk) Emails should include the email address of the principal contact and the subject line should state MKSM TENDER.

Hard copy of tenders and other supporting documentation may be sent to:

John Gelder  
Director  
Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire  
Bossard House  
West Street  
Leighton Buzzard  
Bedfordshire  
LU7 1DA

Telephone: 01525 850559.

Short listed Tenders will be invited to make a presentation to the Commissioning Group on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006. This will be held at the Leighton Buzzard offices of Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire. Directions will be included with an invitation to present.



## NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS OF COMMISSIONING AGENCIES

John Gelder

Director

**Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire**

Bossard House

West Street

Leighton Buzzard

Bedfordshire

LU7 1DA

Telephone: 01525 850559

Email: john@action-southbeds.org.uk

Anne Laing

Executive Director

**Voluntary Action Luton**

15 New Bedford Road

Luton

LU1 1SA

Telephone: 01582 733418

Email: anne.laing@valuton.org.uk

Ruth Stone

**Milton Keynes Council of Voluntary Organisations**

Acorn House

351 Midsummer Boulevard

Central Milton Keynes

MK9 3HP

Telephone: 01908 661623

Email: ruth.stone@mkcvo.co.uk

Paul Chaplin

**Council of Voluntary Service Northampton & County**

13 Hazelwood Road

Northampton

NN1 1LG

Telephone: 01604 624121

Email: cvs@cvsnorthamptonshire.org.uk

Karen Boddy  
**Vale Volunteers**  
Rycote Place  
30-38 Cambridge Street  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
HP20 1RS

Telephone 01296 337456  
Email: valevol@bucksnet.co.uk

Mark Smith  
Chief Officer  
**Mid Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary Service**  
10 Bedford Street  
Amphill  
Bedfordshire  
MK45 2NB

Telephone: 01525 841160  
Email: mark@midbedscvs.org.uk

Martin Trinder  
Chief Officer  
**North Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary Service**  
Bedford Centre for Voluntary Services  
43 Bromham Road  
Bedford  
MK40 2AA

Telephone: 01234 354366  
Email: martin@northbedscvs.org.uk

## MEETING THE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS OF NEW COMMUNITIES

*The objectives of the Sub-Regional Strategy [include]: .....to create sustainable communities by ensuring that ... social [and other] infrastructure needs are met in step with growth.*

Source: MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy [page 11], March 2005

### A Definition of Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure is the organisations and activities that enable people to create, run and sustain the voluntary and community groups, volunteering opportunities and social networks required for existing and new communities. It focuses on creating communities of people, complementing work to create communities of place.

Social infrastructure includes:

- the voluntary organisations and community groups that operate in new (and existing) communities by providing services and activities
- the communities of interest, place and culture that exist in and across localities
- the volunteers and volunteering opportunities that exist within local volunteer-involving organisations
- the networks of people and organisations that provide contacts, links and association with one another
- opportunities for active citizenship and community involvement
- social interaction between people, neighbours and communities
- capacity building activity to support new community groups
- the recruitment, development and support of community leaders
- opportunities for social inclusion, lifelong learning and community development.

To develop effective Social Infrastructure new communities need:

- a meeting place or a base that is available, welcoming and accessible to all;
- access to start-up funding/small grants to stimulate grass-roots activity and capacity building;
- access to support provided by workers with community development skills;
- a forum or network that is inclusive, open and participatory, which is owned by and accountable to the community (e.g. a community or residents association);
- access to appropriate learning and skills development opportunities to equip people for active involvement and to support their own groups.