

Briefing Note 26-19

Wiltshire Voluntary Sector Organisation of the Month

Service: Community Engagement and Partnerships
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Date Prepared: September 2026
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Background

The Wiltshire Council and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Framework was agreed in April 2026, signifying a renewed approach between the partners. Its vision is to deliver “a trusted, respectful partnership that uses the strengths and increases the resilience of both sectors to support communities, reduce inequalities, and improve lives. The framework aims to “improve the sustainability of the VCSE sector through increased collaboration and innovation”, with a specific action to improve the recognition, recruitment and retention of volunteers and trustees. The importance of this work is highlighted within the Wessex Community Action, State of the Sector Survey 2025, where 57.5% of organisations found difficulty in recruiting volunteers and over 45% reporting challenges recruiting trustees.

The ambition of this proposal is to address these challenges and deliver against the ambitions of the VCSE-WC Partnership Framework through a Wiltshire Volunteer recognition scheme. In a partnership approach with Wessex Community Action, feedback has been sought from the Wiltshire Volunteer Managers Forum to understand the best approaches to achieve this. The overwhelming response to this was to provide continual awards and recognition as opposed to one off celebration events, and that the focus should be on the voluntary sector organisations as opposed to a specific, individual volunteer. In addition to this, research has been VCSE research has shown a direct correlation between increased voluntary sector reward and recognition with improved recruitment and retention.

Wiltshire Proposal

Each month a group from the VCSE sector is awarded with the Wiltshire Voluntary Sector Organisation of the Month award. This award will include a certificate, photocall and an award of £100. Local Wiltshire Councillors (local Member and Area Board Chair) will be invited to present the award to the winning group each month, facilitated by the Engagement and Partnerships Team at Wiltshire Council. This could take place at the Area Board business meeting or be facilitated outside of this, whichever is more suitable locally.

The £100 for each winner is to be funded through the proceeds of the Wiltshire Community Lottery, delivering to local good causes as set out within the financial requirements of the fund. It is

estimated that Wiltshire Council will receive approximately £26,000 per annum through the Community Lottery, with this volunteer scheme requiring £1,200.

This scheme officially commences in January 2027, with nominations opening in November 2026. Further information will be provided in due course regarding this.

Nominations process

Nominations for the award will be submitted via an online form. The form will be kept open permanently so that nominations can be made and received at any time. Nominations can be made by any Wiltshire resident, however, it is anticipated that the majority will be received from Wiltshire Councillors, Town or Parish Councillors, those residents in receipt of VCSE sector services and VCSE sector organisation representatives.

Promotion

The awards will be promoted through all the channels available to Wiltshire Council, Wessex Community Action and the wider VCSE sector. This will also include direct promotion to Wiltshire Council members, town and parish councils, residents and voluntary sector groups themselves. Any Wiltshire based VCSE sector organisation is eligible, including those that have paid employees. The organisation must have a charitable purpose, objectives and be of public benefit.

The volume of nominations is difficult to anticipate and therefore communication will be clear to applicants to manage expectations accordingly.

Governance

A panel of Wiltshire Council and Wessex Community Action representatives will meet every three months to decide the subsequent three winners. It may be appropriate to additionally provide a 'highly commended' organisation of the month, or similar should the volume and quality of nominations exceed expectations. The panel members will consist of a combination of WCA trustee, a Wiltshire Cabinet Member and Officers from both organisations.

The awards will be presented to the monthly winner by the local Division Councillor and/ or the Chair of the local Area Board. This will be facilitated by Community Engagement and Partnerships Team. The presentation of the certificate and the £100, will be presented at either the local Area Board business meeting, or at the host organisations regular activity, whichever is more appropriate locally. The pictures and details of the photocall will be published on social media each month and local press will also be informed for good news stories to be published.

Role of the Area Boards

- **Provide local recognition and visibility** - The Area Board is asked to help publicise the scheme through their networks. Councillors are asked to promote with residents, parish councils and community groups and encourage and submit nominations.
- **Present awards** - The Area Board Chair, alongside the local Wiltshire Councillor Division Member, will be invited to present the certificate and £100 award to the successful organisation, when a local organisation wins the award. This will be arranged by the local Engagement and Partnerships Officer.

