



Rochford District
Council

REPORT TITLE:	Voluntary Sector Grants Cross Party Member's Panel Decision
REPORT OF:	Cllr Julie Gooding, Executive Lead Member Leisure, Tourism and Wellbeing

REPORT SUMMARY

The Voluntary Grants programme provides an opportunity for local organisations to apply for funding from the £10,000 discretionary grant pot for up to £1,000. The application process went live on the 2 February 2024 and closed on 29 February. Rochford District Council received **34** applications requesting a total **£32,596.99** funding. Officers provided a summary report to the Member cross-party evaluation panel with all the pertinent information to review and contribute to the panel's decision for 2024-25 voluntary sector grants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 -** To recommend the funding that the Member cross-party evaluation panel felt should be awarded as set in **Appendix A**.
- R2 -** Subject to agreement of the Executive Group that those organisations are allocated the funding to be paid out as soon as possible.
- R3** To note feedback from some of the organisations in regard to the funding they received in 2023-24 Voluntary Sector Grants as set out in **Appendix B**.
- R4** To note the annual update from Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Services (RRAVS) Annual report in **Appendix C**.
- R5** A report comes to the relevant committee once the outcome of the Essex County Council Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) infrastructure model is determined to understand the impact this will have on Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Services (RRAVS).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Rochford District Council received 34 applications for voluntary sector grants this year requesting a total of **£32,596.99**. The panel was provided with the applicant's relevant information with a clear scoring process for their individual scores.
- 1.2 The cross-party evaluation panel for this year was made up of the following members:
- Cllr Julie Gooding
 - Cllr Danielle Belton
 - Cllr Arthur Williams
- Cllr Lisa Newport declined as she had a previous appointment, Cllr Michael Hoy and Cllr Jack Lawmon declined due to sickness.
- 1.3 After scoring individually a mean score is agreed for each of the applicants and then this is ranked in order. The outcome of the cross-party evaluation panel is set out in **Appendix A**.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Applications need to support the priorities of the Castlepoint and Rochford Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy as well the priorities for the Rochford Business Plan.
- 2.2 At the 25 January Executive Group it was agreed to continue to run the £10,000 grants process for local organisations and projects. A cross party members valuation panel to be formed for March by the lead member and the panel sets a date for the meeting and officers provide the salient information from the applications to score against the RDC business plan and the Health and Wellbeing Board &WB Strategy Priorities. To change the current process and allow for a decision paper to come back to the Executive Group in April 2024 to include the results of the grants process for 24-25, provide an update on the new Essex model, agree RDC approach and funding allocation, and also provide full results and outcomes from the Voluntary Sector Grants given out in 23-24, including a full year report of activity from RRAVS. To support RRAVS resilience in the interim with a transition payment of £10,000 which has been identified within the business case for Homes for Ukraine grant monies.
- 2.3 The funding application process went live on 2 February and closed on 29 February 2024.
- 2.4 The Cross-Party Evaluation Panel was convened for the 20 March 2024.
- 2.5 The Council and RRAVS are still awaiting the outcome of the Essex VCS Infrastructure model. It is proposed that once the Council is aware of the outcome a further report will be brought back to the relevant committee.
- 2.6 Full outcomes and results from the 2023-2024 grants were reported at the 18 October 2023 Executive Group meeting.

- 2.5 Members were asked not to score any applications with organisations they were active with and considered this is to be a conflict of interest. The overall scores and a mean average score were not adversely impacted by any of these conflicts. This ensured a fair and independent process for all applications, made wholly on the information provided on the application forms submitted.
- 2.6 The grant pot has £10,000 but a total of £32,596.99 has been applied for. All grants that scored a mean (average) score of more than 8 have met the funding requirements but Members still needed to decide which of those organisations are allocated the funding as the pot has been oversubscribed.
- 2.7 Applicants that not been successful in this round of funding will be provided with alternative avenues for potential funding.
- 2.8 The decision made by the evaluation panel is set out in **Appendix A**.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 This is a discretionary pot of funding, so Members could decide not to allocate any funding or alternatively increase the discretionary funding pot.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 4.1 Failed applications where possible are guided to other alternative funding that is available locally and countywide that may support the outcomes of the projects.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Through the cross-party member's decision panel. The availability of funding has also gone out to over 122 individuals and organisations as part of the Health and Wellbeing e-bulletin.
- 5.2 Engagement with applicants to find alternative funding where possible.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All other costs are within existing budgets set aside for Voluntary Sector grants for this financial year.

7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Any work undertaken by the Council, either by itself or in partnership will be in line with statutory legal guidance.

8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 [he Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that ‘marriage and civil partnership’ is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a). The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on anybody with a protected characteristic. The organisations awarded funding support some of the districts most vulnerable residents.

9.0 ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct environmental and climate implications beyond those noted in the report.

10.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct economic implications beyond those noted within the report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Outcome of Evaluation Panel funding allocation

Appendix B – Organisational feedback from 2023-2024 grant funding

Appendix C - RRAVS annual report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
VCS Funding	25 January 2024 Executive Group
Voluntary Sector Grants Cross Party Member’s Panel Decision	18 October 2023 Executive Group
Voluntary Sector Grants	13 January 2023 Executive Group

Appendix A – Outcome of the cross-party evaluation panel

A total of 34 organisations applied for a total of **£32,596.99**. The list of applicants and amount of funding requested is set out in the table below:

Number	Organisation	Amount requested
1	Stambridge Community Centre – New cooker	£550
2	Send the Right Message (STRM) – Increase capacity to deliver more services	£1000
3	The Kirste 5 Memorial Race – Hire of toilets for the race	£768
4	Supporting Carers and Families together (SCAFT) – rental of premises for respite care	£1000
5	London Bus Theatre Company – Drama workshops to Year 6 pupils on Alcohol	£1000
6	Yoga4All – new weekly seated yoga classes	£1000
7	Wyvern Community Transport – Volunteer expenses	£1000
8	Hockley and Hawkwell Day Centre – refurbishment of kitchen	£1000
9	Supporting Parents and Children in Esse (SPACE) – provision of additional activities and extend the reach for new families	£1000
10	Life Community Church (EPIC) - provide activities to build self-esteem and resilience for mums, dads and older teens	£1000
11	Lady McAdden Breast Cancer Trust – Wellbeing days and raising awareness	£1000
12	MegaCentre – Food vouchers	£1000
13	Rayleigh Community Boxing Club – Volunteer training costs and boxing equipment	£1000
14	MegaCentre 2 - Continuation of Ukrainian support with hot meals, language lessons, support and advice	£1000
15	Rankins Cricket Club – Roll on, roll cricket nets	£1000
16	Megacentre 1 – Increase range and availability of services for those living with dementia	£1000
17	East Essex Hackspace – STEM activities around BBC Microbit and hobby kits	£1000
18	The Calm Corner – workshops for teenagers needing support with their mental health	£1000
19	City Family Farm CIC – antenatal education classes to parents unable to afford NCT or other paid for classes	£1000
20	Megacentre 3 – Support family sessions for children with additional needs	£630
21	Megacentre 4 – Support men’s mental health sessions for younger men	£1000
22	England Netball – Support start-up sessions for community netball offer in Rochford	£999
23	Trustlinks – new potting shed for garden that surrounds Trustlinks centre – to support residents with mental health problems	£1000
24	Connect 4 - to expand their provision of family events and activities for teenagers and support for carers and training for parents	£1000
25	4th Rochford Scouts – replacement of kayaking safety	£1000

	equipment	
26	The Art Ministry – 10 x 2hr art and craft sessions with the social housing schemes across the district	£1000
27	Canewdon Community Association – replacement current gas water heater with electric	£750
28	1st Rayleigh Scouts – support those with hearing impairments with improved audio-visual equipment and acoustic ceiling improvements	£1000
29	Canewdon Cricket Club – new roller for cricket ground	£1000
30	Bar N Bus – mobile basketball hoop	£899.99
31	Cake Club – support parent groups across Rochford and Hockley	£1000
32	1st Hullbridge Scout Group – replacement of camping equipment and provision of a water heater (urn)	£1000
33	Ashingdon and east Hawkwell Village Hall – repaint the interior of the hall and kitchen	£1000
34	Old Peoples Welfare for Rochford – support running of the minibus	£1000
Total		£32,596.99

Due to sickness and other commitments the cross-party evaluation panel consisted of Cllr Julie Gooding, Cllr Arthur Williams and Cllr Danielle Belton. Any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests were declared by each Councillor who then scored the applications individually. The mean scores were then collated ranked in order by their overall score.

Criteria for scoring

The applications needed to demonstrate how they support the Roch District Council's Business Plan and the Castlepoint and Rochford Health and wellbeing Strategy. The evaluation panel also needed to consider that any project funded:

- Create or develop new community assets.
- Enhance existing community assets.
- Enhance or develop initiatives that enable communities to live healthy lives.
- Improve outcomes for residents.

Applications will be considered on their merits and on strong community presence and evidenced need,

Applicants must demonstrate clear evidence that the project meets a local need and has full community support. Applicants should provide strong evidence on co-production of their project's need, accessibility and benefits through engagement and consultation with their local community and community partners.

Councillors from the Evaluation Panel were keen for the funding pot to support as many organisations as possible, so it was agreed that £500 be allocated to those organisations that ranked the highest.

It is proposed that the following organisations be allocated the following funding subject to Executive Group approval.

Number	Organisation	Amount requested	Amount awarded
1	Stambridge Community Centre - New cooker	£550	£500
2	Send the Right Message - Increase capacity to deliver more services	£1000	£500
4	Supporting Carers and Families together (SCAFT) – rental of premises for respite care	£1000	£500
6	Yoga4All - new weekly seated yoga classes	£1000	£500
11	Lady McAdden Breast Cancer Trust - Wellbeing days and raising awareness	£1000	£500
12	MegaCentre - Food vouchers	£1000	£500
15	Rankins Cricket Club - Roll on, roll cricket nets	£1000	£500
17	East Essex Hackspace - STEM activities around BBC Microbit and hobby kits	£1000	£500
19	City Family Farm - antenatal education classes to parents unable to afford NCT or other paid for classes	£1000	£500
22	England Netball - Support start-up sessions for community netball offer in Rochford	£999	£500
23	Trustlinks - new potting shed for garden that surrounds Trustlinks centre – to support residents with mental health problems	£1000	£500
25	4 th Rochford Scouts - replacement of kayaking safety equipment	£1000	£500
26	The Art Ministry - 10 x 2hr art and craft sessions with the social housing schemes across the district	£1000	£500
27	Canewdon Community Association - replacement current gas water heater with electric	£1000	£500
28	1 st Rayleigh Scouts - support those with hearing impairments with improved audio-visual equipment and acoustic ceiling improvements	£1000	£500
29	Canewdon Cricket Club - new roller for cricket ground	£1000	£500
30	Bar N Bus - mobile basketball hoop	£899.99	£500
31	Cake Club - support parent groups across Rochford and Hockley	£1000	£500
32	1 st Hullbridge Scout Group - replacement of camping equipment and provision of a water heater (urn)	£1000	£500
34	Old Peoples Welfare for Rochford - support running of the minibus	£1000	£500
Total		£19,448.99	£10,000

Those organisations that have not been successful in securing funding will be signposted to other funding sources that might be available to them.

Appendix B – Organisational feedback from the 2023-24 VCS grant allocation

Megacentre

Application 1. £1,000 Supermarket vouchers

The Megacentre successfully applied for £1,000 from Rochford District Council for the Voluntary Sector Grant. The purpose of the grant was to provide funding to buy supermarket vouchers to support residents of Rochford District who were particularly adversely affected by the cost of living crisis.

To be able to supply vouchers for supermarkets meant that people were able to supplement the food parcels they were claiming from Hopeworx through TheHub@TheMegacentre and buy fresh food including dairy products, bread and bakery items and of course fruit and vegetables.

In total we supported:

Number of families Number of adults Number of children Total number of people helped with vouchers

55 families 72 82 154

Application 2. £500 funding for youth support

The Megacentre employs Youth Workers and Youth Counsellors, both of whom run youth clubs and “Your Space”, a youth wellbeing club. These groups are open to all young people between the ages of 11 – 18 (25 with SENDs). The idea of the groups is to promote friendships, positive relationships, support young people with the stresses and anxieties that many experience – around school, exams, growing up, peer pressure, pressure from social media, gangs, inappropriate relationships.

The funding provided activities, resources and refreshments for the groups to run, and continue to run, and the recruitment, training and management of volunteers.

Working with Hub partners, including other youth support such as bar & Bus and Essex Youth Service, local secondary schools and SEEVIC college, we have been able to reach more young people.

Application 3 – £500 funding for the activities of our Senior Citizens Co-ordinator

Our Senior Citizens Co-ordinator works in partnership with The Todman centre in Rayleigh. Pauline started with us in the summer of 2023 and has transformed the support available to older members of our community. With two weekly lunch clubs regularly over subscribed, a new dementia café and more activities in the pipeline, Pauline has been able to use the funding given to provide more activities and equipment, arrange guest speakers and entertainers. Another weekly lunch club is planned at the Todman Centre going forward.

Equipment specifically for people living with dementia is expensive and quite a specialist market, which is why we have applied again this year.

This support given to residents met all four of the priorities of the Castle Point & Rochford Health and Wellbeing Board –

1. Mental health and wellbeing – this support reduced stress and anxiety people were experiencing – wondering how to buy nutritious food for themselves and their children with costs rising, accessing age appropriate support – youth and older people, reducing loneliness, stress, anxiety and isolation.
2. Physical Health and wellbeing – promoting healthy food and giving people the means to buy it more easily. The youth groups promote and encourage exercise.
3. Community Resilience – working with partner agencies of TheHub@TheMegacentre we were able to reach more people, who may otherwise not have known about the support available to them. Now they do, and will be able to reach out for help in the future should they need it. Partners also benefitted, learning more about the services of TheHub and its partners, so enabling them to offer a wider support to their service users.
4. Ageing Well – the support the VSG has given to the older members of our community has been particularly welcome.

Trust Links

The Rochford VSG grant was used to purchase and instal a smart screen for Trust Links's conference room in our main building in Rochford. This room is used by a wide range of groups including therapeutic and recovery focussed activities for adults with mental health problems, educational groups for vulnerable young people, as well as meetings with partners and team members. The room is also used by other groups such as the South East Essex Organic Gardeners' monthly meeting. The screen is a fantastic addition to this facility, enabling us to show videos, presentations and explainers in an accessible way. It also enables people to videocall into the room. This adds huge value to the functioning of these facilities, in turn helping to improve the wellbeing of people in the Rochford area.

Bar N Bus Trust

£1000 granted towards Volunteer Training & Support

Bar 'n' Bus has continued to delivery a wide-spread youth work provision across the Rochford district, as well as in other areas of south Essex.

In Rochford District, our current programme includes the following weekly sessions:

- Mobile Unit Drop-In Space at Rayleigh Skatepark
- Being Me Young Women's Project
- Being Me Young Women's Self Defence
- Mobile Unit Drop-In at Pooles Lane, Hullbridge
- Lunch Time Wellbeing Space with Mobile Unit at Sweyne Park School

- Mentoring Programme in Sweyne Park School and Fitzwimarc School

In addition, Bar 'n' Bus have also delivered positive activities programmes in Hawkwell and Summer Outreach activities in Ashingdon.

Rochford District Council provided £1000 from their Voluntary Sector Grant scheme to support volunteer training within Bar 'n' Bus.

Since April 2023, we have provided the following training programmes for our Volunteer Team:

- Mentoring Training (3 Session Introduction Course) – training 6 new youth work mentors to support our in-school mentoring programme
- Introduction to Youth Work (3 session course) – training 8 potential new youth work volunteers to support existing and developing youth work programmes
- Volunteer Training Programme on Saturday mornings including:
 - o LGBTQIA+ Awareness – provider Terrance Higgins
 - o Domestic Abuse and Young People – provider Restore Beacon Chelmsford
 - o Consent and Young People – provider Terrance Higgins
 - o Substance Misuse Awareness – provider EYPDAS
 - o Gangs and County Lines – Essex Police
 - o Team Building and Group Supervision

The grant have been incredibly helpful in covering the costs of venue hire, refreshment and tutor costs to ensure that we are offering exceptional quality training for our committed volunteer team.

We'd like to thank Rochford District Council for this support which was enabled us to provide a better service to young people across the district.



RRAVS Annual Report

Over the past 12 months RRAVS has had an exciting year. We have engaged with our residents via online and face to face and have looked a new way of funding through collaboration and partnership.

RRAVS groups have gone from strength to strength. New Steps Bereavement Friendship Group meets on a weekly basis with a regular attendance of 25 people and supported by a superb team of 6 volunteers. They have been entertained at their Christmas and Birthday events by Joe Palmer and Paul Jerrom. They have had quiz events and fish & chip lunches and at the same time supporting each other through difficult times. Hockley Social Group also meets weekly and has a regular attendance of 15 residents and are supported by an amazing team of 7 volunteers. They have had different events including tai chi demonstration, gardening talk, reflexology demonstration, afternoon tea, coronation party, and quizzes. All of the volunteers at Knit to Nurture have shown so much love and dedication in making items for the Baby Basics charity in Hockley. A representative from the charity said "The items that the ladies donate are beautiful with so much care and attention. They are a lovely gift for new mums who really appreciate them and help to clothe and keep the new baby warm. You are making a real difference to these people's lives". There are 15 members of the knitting group. All these groups will continue through 2024.

In October we launched the My Weight Matters healthy living program. The 2 volunteers support people each week to adapt their lifestyles to help them loose weight and have better health outcomes. The program is for 12 weeks, and you can join at any time through the 12 weeks. The first week started with 4 people and now there is a regular attendance of 15 people. This group has been the most successful launch in Essex for 2023.

Dementia has been on a steady rise and to support the families of those suffering from the disease, we started a fortnightly Dementia Navigator service. The sessions have proved popular with at least 3 people being seen at each session. We also support the work of Rayleigh Town Council to create a Dementia Friendly Community and this support will continue through 2024.

There has been 4 successful first aid courses and over 65 people have been trained from grassroots organisations and 2 bid writing courses with 12 people trained. Our prices are competitive to ensure that they are open to all. In 2024, we will have a larger training calendar and will include new courses that support groups with evaluation techniques, setting up a charity and governance. Details will be posted in due course. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lyndsey for organising all aspects of the training and she will be your contact for further information on future training courses and events.

The school uniform reuse project has continued to be very successful with more community drop off points, market stalls for distribution and families helped. This project led by Cllr's Vilma Wilson and Christine Mason will continue. Through

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funding from the Household Support Fund we have supported our local foodbanks with enough items to assist 244 households. The Winter Warmth fund supported 36 families with items to keep them warm in their homes, improve attendance at school and reduce health inequalities. A couple of comments from the families:

I would like to say how much me and my family appreciate your help when really needed the heated blankets have been a god send my daughter loves hers and also her new coat which she wears to school and keeps her warm without your kind help we would of been freezing."

I honestly cannot express how much this grant has helped my family and me. After becoming a single parent to five children so abruptly I was worried about the financial difficulties I was facing and as a mother you want to be able to provide your children with everything they need. The winter warmth grant was such a help to be able to buy clothing for my children that would fit them well and keep them warm during the colder months. It broke my heart to see my children in clothing that was too small or worn to pieces and not being able to provide, but this grant has restored my hope and faith that there is always someone out there who can and will help and you are not alone in this world. Thank you so much to all the supporters/funders, you are all amazing and help make this world a better place.

The winter hub has been supporting with discharge from hospital for those people returning to their own homes. The demand has not been as high as expected and the future program of works will look at discharge throughout the year not just over the winter and linking in with the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams for health, to support people in their communities to try and prevent admission to hospital. This is the model that will be at the heart of health delivery in the future and RRAVS is proud to part of the leadership group for this bringing our local insight and knowledge.

By organising some of our own events or collaborating with partners we have supported general health advice, winter wellness, falls prevention and cost of living support. These have been held in Great Wakering, Rochford and Rayleigh and more locations will be delivered by Easter. These events have enabled us to be able to talk to our residents, share information, offer advice and support and gather their feedback. Partners have included those from the third sector, local GP surgeries, district council, adult social care and primary care network. The slipper exchange at these events have proved extremely popular with over 100 pairs of new slippers being exchanged. As well as doing these in the community, Sanctuary Housing has funded RRAVS to deliver Falls Prevention sessions with slipper exchanges in 3 of their sheltered schemes and these will be completed by Easter 2024. We will look to do these events next winter as long as funding can be secured.

In 2024/2025, partners from the third sector, health alliance, NHS and other partners will come together to create a calendar of events to ensure that resources are being used effectively and we are creating best value for our residents rather than all trying to run events and they are not meaningful or receive the engagement we need. Details of the events will be posted in due course.

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RRAVS continues to have places on the strategic boards of the Health & Wellbeing Board and South East Essex Health Alliance. These boards support the residents of our district, and we work together to reduce health inequalities. Keeping health support local is an essential work stream to reduce the pressure on the hospital and NHS as a whole and the voluntary sector plays a key in part in this, but we need to be financially supported to deliver as we can and will not do it for free. The knowledge and expertise in our staff and volunteers need to be recognised and rewarded.

Our engagement on social media and the website has increased significantly but we also understand that this is not the communication method for all and therefore we have started to promote our groups in free publications and will continue to look at other non-digital methods over the next 12 months.

We have seen an increase in volunteering opportunities from organisations and volunteers looking for opportunities over the past 12 months. We are now back to pre-pandemic levels. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen who has worked extremely hard to work with organisations to look at different opportunities and has worked hard to promote exciting new opportunities on a weekly basis. Karen is your contact for all volunteering enquiries.

Volunteers are at the heart of our organisation and without them our groups would not operate. They all go above and beyond and over the past 12 months RRAVS 32 volunteers have completed 2960 volunteering hours and if they had been paid the National Living wage, it would total £30843. This is an enormous contribution of people's free time and dedication and I cannot thank them enough for the difference that they make to the lives of the attendees at our groups and through other roles in the organisation.

For people that know we well, know that I have to be involved in everything and 7 years ago when I joined RRAVS, I thought I had to do everything but now I have the most outstanding staff team who give 200%. Karen, Lyndsey and Chris are the strongest staff team that RRAVS has ever had. They are dynamic, forward thinking, reactive and outstanding and the best wing men I could ask for. Thank you for everything.

We have some new and exciting projects to look forward to:

- Fella's Fair focusing on men's mental health in partnership with Healthwatch Essex on 24 May 2024 in Hullbridge
- A community supermarket – currently a work in progress with the hub@themegacentre and details will be shared soon. It is a step up project from a foodbank that builds more resilient communities.
- Stop smoking project linking with My Weight Matters
- Multiply to support digital inclusion

Funding continues to be challenging within the sector but we are looking at a collaborative way of working with others whilst remaining a sovereign organisation. Partnering with others and not going it alone is the way forward, as we leap forward and enjoy and relish the challenges that the future brings.

RRAVS looks forward to working with you all.

Victoria Marzouki
Chief Executive Officer
RRAVS