

Building Partnerships

One of the key features of GRCC's success is its ability to enhance activity through partnership. 2016-17 saw GRCC broaden the partnerships in which it was involved and widen the opportunities it offered other Gloucestershire organisations to network and partner.

GEM helps break down the barriers to work

With 70 partners, the Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Project marks the largest project delivery partnership involving

GRCC. GEM started delivery during 2016, following a period of bid writing over the previous year, with GRCC as a member of the 6-strong GEM bid writing team which brought £3.2 million into Gloucestershire.

Funded by The Big Lottery (Building Better Opportunities Fund), and the European Social Fund, the GEM Project helps people

who face multiple barriers to work and often the associated financial hardship. These can include physical or mental health barriers, age, cultural or language issues, housing problems or skills and experience gaps.

GRCC is one of 21 organisations to host a Navigator Developer to provide one-to-one support for people who may feel out of touch with the world of employment to access regular help to find work, training and volunteering opportunities or job placements. Crucially, since everyone is unique, people need one-to-one tailored support and GEM aims to deliver this.



A sporting chance to forge friendships



GRCC's In Touch Remembering Sport initiative grew during 2016 as our partnership with Kingsholm Rugby Club developed. What better venue in Gloucester than this hallowed ground to draw in (mainly) men to join in social activities and to combat possible loneliness and isolation in the heart of the city?

Friendships have been forged between attendees as a result of the work, which will continue, and we are exploring new partnership ventures in rural and urban Gloucestershire.



GRCC's Navigator Developer with Sandra

Sharing the load by 'speed dating'

GRCC's range of networks provide valuable opportunities for groups to meet, 'chew the cud' and learn – from each other and from GRCC staff and guest speakers.

for Volunteer Managers, youth workers in Cheltenham Borough and for Community Building Management Committee members. Nearly 50 of the latter gathered in March 2017 to find out more about good practice in insuring community buildings and took part in a 'speed dating' session, providing a chance to network and find out more about how other groups manage community buildings.

GRCC's generic voluntary sector networks became active in Cheltenham, Stroud and Cotswolds during 2016 and GRCC also supported sessions in Tewkesbury Borough. In addition, GRCC runs specialist networks

CASE STUDY

GRCC has provided a series of workshops specifically designed for the VCS, covering issues such as using social media, developing funding skills and working with businesses. Our support for youth workers in Cheltenham, funded by Cheltenham Borough Council, developed through the year with the Cheltenham Youth Work Network meeting regularly and the development of a group to work on sustainable funding for local youth work.

Just wild about waterways

Recognition of specialist skills in different organisations has led to successful co-working within the Water with Integrated Local Delivery (WILD) Project, active mainly in the south Cotswolds. The Gloucestershire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group is the farmer engagement lead, GRCC leads on community engagement, Cotswold Water Park Trust on biodiversity while the Countryside and Community Research Institute monitors and evaluates project outcomes. The WILD Team works closely with the Environment Agency – the main funder – and local authorities.

In early 2017 the partnership secured funding from the Thames Water Community Investment Scheme to enable the WILD approach to be extended upstream along the River Churn through Cirencester. This involves using the WILD approach to identify water-related issues, restore habitat, promote volunteering to improve water quality and identify and install measures to help control flow and increase water storage capacity.

We look forward to working with wider partners throughout the project including Cirencester Town Council, Cotswold District Council and numerous voluntary organisations in Cirencester.



Upper Up cattle drink

Children's centres take-over

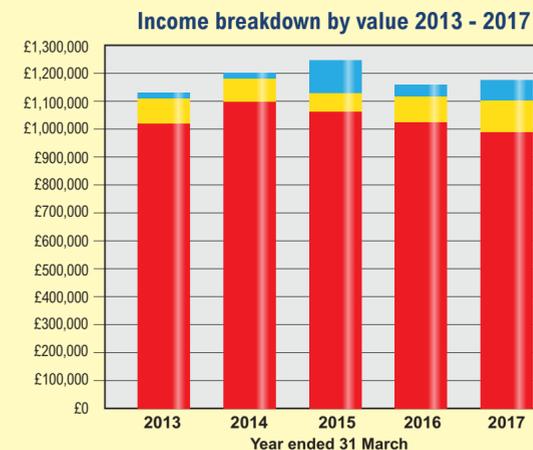
The Parent and Community Support Service is a partnership project between GRCC and PATA (Parent and Toddler Association) to support asset transfer of children's centres across the county following reorganisation of centres by Gloucestershire County Council. GRCC has concentrated on helping schools and community groups test the feasibility of taking over the asset and construct a robust business plan, while PATA has provided training to parents and other volunteers to enable 'home grown' methods whereby communities support families with young children.

To even consider taking this project on would have appeared daunting without the help of GRCC

Paula Needham
Head Teacher
Kingsway Primary School

GRCC FINANCE

The year to 31 March 2017 showed a decrease of 0.58% in Income and 1.75% in Expenditure, to £1,172.7k and £1,138.5k respectively. This resulted in a year end surplus of £34.2k (2015/16 £7.2k), before movement in investment assets unrealised. Sources of funding continue to be project based rather than from Service Level Agreements.



Income breakdown - Year ended 31 March 2017



Facts and Figures

Healthwatch Gloucestershire

- 107 community engagement events
- 1,741 individual views and experiences of health and social care collected from patients and the public
- 1,069 members representing all six districts of the county
- 150 volunteer roles
- Patient representation on 62 Health and Social Care Working Groups
- Eight 'Enter & View' visits and 16 PLACE (Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment)
- 1,200 calls to the Health and Information Advice line, with 88% dealt with in house, and 12% requiring onward referral
- 129,832 visits to the Healthwatch website, 758 e-alert subscribers, and 1,928 Twitter followers

Gloucestershire Village & Community Agents

- 2,185 individuals were helped and assisted by Village and Community Agents
- 1,475 (68%) being new clients to the service – an increase of 3% from the previous year. The number of new clients accessing the service has grown steadily year on year, testament to the high profile the Agents maintain within the county.

Community-led planning

- 160 parishes supported through core enabling work such as community led planning, rural housing enabling and capacity building support for organisations on business planning, finding funding, organisational management and governance.
- 26 Neighbourhood Development Plan groups actively supported across Gloucestershire by the end of 2016/17 – seven Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Plans had been 'made' and were being used to determine planning decisions in their area. A further four had been submitted for examination and seven had completed Draft consultations.

Our Funders



Befriending Service

In 2016/17 our befriending services had a total of 124 volunteer visitors. We asked clients and volunteers of our south Cotswold service People For You to take part in a survey about their experience of our support.

- 100% of clients said they felt less lonely/isolated
- 100% of clients said they had improved confidence/wellbeing
- 86% of clients said they did not feel the service could be improved
- 61% of volunteers said they learnt new skills and gained experience
- 75% of volunteers said they had made new friends/contacts
- 100% of volunteers said they would recommend volunteering

Enabling Affordable Rural Housing

- 10 parish housing needs surveys.
- 2 rural exception sites granted planning consent – totaling 44 homes (including 24 affordable).
- 2 rural exception sites with affordable homes under construction and due to be completed by end of 2017 – 16 dwellings in total.

GRCC Annual Review 2016/17

A bright future following a year of change

The key theme of last year's Annual Review was: 'Stability and strength during changing times'. Little did we all realise at the time how apt this would be. Taking over as Chair of the Board of Trustees from Lesley Archer last autumn I knew would be a challenge, and so it has proved.

During the year the Healthwatch Gloucestershire contract was re-tendered. Although we submitted a robust proposal, we were not successful and the reconstituted service is now delivered by another organisation. Let me take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in ensuring such a smooth transition of service delivery, particularly Barbara Piranty who gave such distinguished service to us over so many years.

Hot on the heels of this challenge was the reorganisation of the Village Agents Service and its incorporation with Social Prescribing to create the new Community Connectors Service, which came into operation at the beginning of October 2017. I am delighted to say we were successful in securing the contract for the Cotswold District and we send our thanks to those Village Agents and volunteers who have recently transferred to new providers in other parts of the county.

Throughout the year stability and strength have been maintained by our superb staff, each of whom has played their part in ensuring continuity of service delivery while maintaining the ethos of team working and creativity.



Chair's Review
Charles Coats

To ensure the continued relevance and vibrancy of our services across the county the Board initiated a fundamental review of the organisation which led to the decision to re-instate the post of CEO. We felt, during this period of change, we needed a figurehead to raise our profile, creatively promote our services, positively explore new market opportunities, and review our operational structure. From a very strong field of candidates we were delighted to appoint Janice Banks. Janice has a wealth of highly relevant experience within the RCC movement nationally, including a period as Interim CEO of ACRE. Janice joined us at the beginning of August 2017 and has already begun to make her mark. She will continue to lead our review, and I am confident this will enable us to retain our position as a major player in helping communities help themselves.

Finally, on a personal note, what a pleasure and privilege it has been to chair the organisation throughout the year. I continue to be surprised by the sheer breadth and diversity of the services we provide and the influence we bring to bear across so many communities. I am indebted not only to my fellow trustees, but to all staff, in particular Elin Tattersall and Kate Darch who have been such pillars of strength. I have every confidence that the future is bright.

At Board level there has been major change: at last year's AGM Lesley Archer, Mike Heenan and Shaun Parsons stood down as trustees,

and during the year Rosemary Lynn and Roger Wilson relinquished their roles due to competing pressures and priorities. We thank them all for their incalculable support, wise counsel and commitment. We are pleased to welcome Simon King and Duncan McGaw as new trustees, and I am confident they will bring new insights and fresh ideas to the work of the Board.

Sadly, we have recently learnt of Stephen Wright's passing after long illness. Stephen was Chief Executive of GRCC for 22 years from 1984 to 2006 and was the driving force behind the establishment of the Village Agents Service. His passion, vision, and championing of the rural voice left a lasting legacy which many across the county have benefitted from.

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Charles Coats
Chair, GRCC Board of Trustees



This GRCC Annual Review is dedicated to the memory of Stephen Wright, GRCC Director from 1984 to 2006, who died shortly before publication.

Supporting people

Relatively simple measures can make a huge difference to people's lives and GRCC continues to work with communities to instigate and grow projects which encourage neighbourliness, local connectivity and mutual support.

Birthday celebrations for the 'go to' service

In 2016 Village and Community Agents celebrated 10 years of providing support for vulnerable members of Gloucestershire's communities.

Since 2006, thousands of individuals have been assisted by one of the amazing team of Agents who integrated themselves into local communities and became the 'go to place' for information and learning about services to help people to remain independent and living in their own homes.

Over the years the scheme evolved from working in solely rural areas to become a countywide service.



providing assistance in Gloucester, Cheltenham and market towns.

GRCC is proud to have instigated this Gloucestershire-grown scheme, which has been nationally recognised and widely replicated across the country.

I used to get confused about who to ring or ask about things. It made me feel despondent. Now I know I can ask you and you will always try and help me.

When it comes to health, friendship really matters

Loneliness is a bigger problem than simply an emotional experience. Research indicates it can be harmful to the health, linked to increased risks of heart disease, raised blood pressure, and dementia.

GRCC's volunteer befriending service aims to tackle the issue of loneliness and isolation head on, by introducing a reliable, local volunteer visitor to older people looking for company.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of the service, bringing joy, pleasure and maybe a bit of gossip – but most importantly they bring themselves.



CASE STUDY

One gentleman was referred to us following a severe stroke which left him with sight loss and a loss of mobility. His carers got him up every day and switched on the television, but he was unable to see it or even change the channel. GRCC introduced a volunteer who visited regularly and read books to him on subjects that were important to him. This simple action gave this gentleman something to look forward to and engaged his interest.

It's wonderful to have Kevin visit. It makes my day, he's the best friend I have ever had. It makes such a difference knowing he is coming. I feel cared for. He is very kind.

Befriending Service Client

Champions of the childcare cause

GRCC's volunteer Parent Champions are parents and grandparents drawn from the local community.

They cascade key messages such as how to access support for childcare and reach parents by attending local events, going to the school gate, supermarket checkouts and baby groups.

During 2016-17 the volunteer Champions have had additional opportunities to undergo training courses as the project worked with a wider range of partners including Relax Kids (Adult Education), Mental Health First Aid Lite (Trust in You) and Oral Health training (Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust).

Our volunteers attended the annual The Family and Childcare Trust conference for Parent Champions in London.



Parent Champions coordinator Paula publicises childcare opportunities

The London conference was a real confidence boost, firstly because I was asked to attend and secondly it was amazing to speak to other parent champions from across the country and share our experiences. It felt as though I was acting as a role model so others could take on board my ideas.

Parent Champion

Providing a voice on healthcare

March 2017 marked the culmination of four years of Healthwatch Gloucestershire's work to provide an independent consumer voice for health and social care on behalf of the county's residents, with GRCC as the accountable body.

As well as investigating local issues raised by members and producing reports to inform and influence decision making by statutory bodies, during 2016-17 Healthwatch Gloucestershire also engaged at a national level, contributing to a



Healthwatch England briefing paper and NHS England work on the new Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

In April 2017, Healthwatch Gloucestershire transitioned to a new provider – Evolving Communities CIC – and we wish them well as they build on the foundations of the first four years.

Healthwatch investigative reports

- Hospital Discharge review
- Access to Health Care by the Trans Community
- Access to Services by the Homeless and Vulnerable in Gloucester
- Access to Dentistry by Residents in Care Homes
- Access to Non-Urgent GP appointments by Adults and Young People
- Support Planning for People with a Learning Disability
- Good Mental Health for Children and Young People.

Strengthening communities and organisations

Voluntary organisations, social businesses and parish and town councils are a local lifeblood – vital for provision of activities, services and responding to residents' needs. GRCC plays an important part in strengthening these communities and organisations, enabling them to build their capacity and draw in the resources required - be they people, funds or skills and knowledge.

Dragons fire up GRCC'S funding event

During 2016-17 GRCC's team of funding advisers continued to support communities to access essential funds to maintain and enhance services in their locality.

GRCC's funding event in February 2017 attracted over 150 attendees from across the county, plus local and national funders.

It featured a 'Dragon's Den' session to enable community projects to receive constructive advice from a panel of experts.



Attendees pick up valuable advice on fund raising at the GRCC event

Finance is an on-going challenge. They (GRCC) are an absolute asset to community groups with regard to their knowledge of funding for projects. This event will help us better target our applications and help us to articulate our case.

Event attendee

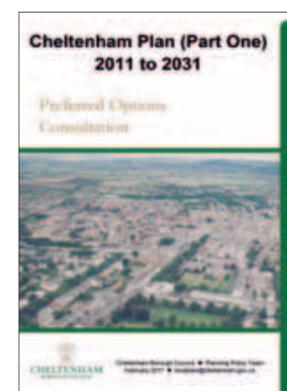
Expansion into Cheltenham

Local communities benefit from planning support

GRCC's community-led planning work extended into Cheltenham during 2016 as we supported 16 communities – parish councils and neighbourhood co-ordination groups – to research and articulate their community's aspirations in order to inform the Cheltenham Local Plan and future planning decisions.

This built on work previously done by GRCC to support those groups to identify Local Green Spaces in their neighbourhood.

We were impressed by the work produced by these groups in a relatively short amount of time and how it was able to clearly discern the unique character of each area from their findings and conclusions.



Bespoke advice for groups

Following the closure of Gloucestershire Association of Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA) during 2016, GRCC has widened its geographic coverage to provide capacity building support for the voluntary and community sector in Cheltenham. During the year GRCC provided detailed, bespoke advice to more than 60 groups on topics ranging from help to find funding to guidance on governance issues and managing volunteers.

Celebration and championing community achievements are important when enabling active communities. We were therefore delighted that over 40 Trustees gathered with the Mayor of Cheltenham to celebrate Trustees' Week in November 2016, showcasing the valuable contribution of this army of volunteers.

Shops are served up sound advice

In early 2017, specialist retail advice was offered to Gloucestershire's 13 community shops through GRCC's links with Business in the Community (BITC).

When GRCC realised that one of the BITC Business Connectors had considerable retail experience from a leading supermarket chain, we organised a Community Shops Network event where he gave sound advice on shop management. This was followed by a GRCC and BITC 'road trip' to six of the shops, providing bespoke, frank analysis about areas of good practice seen and aspects to improve.



The community shop at Uley

Boosting affordable homes in rural areas



Patience pays off as building gets underway

Construction of seven affordable homes got under way in Churcham Parish in March 2017.

GRCC's Rural Housing Enabler had been working with the parish council for several years – identifying the local affordable housing need, working with them to identify potential 'exception' sites and partnering them with a Registered Provider to build the homes.

The great thing about Churcham's affordable homes is that the parish council has been fully engaged and has been supportive throughout the process, from the early days back in 2012.

Martin Hutchings – GRCC Rural Housing Enabler

This was the third site considered over a number of years and shows how much perseverance and patience needs to be demonstrated by all involved. GRCC enables this provision by providing practical input, advice and guidance as well as moral support to parishes. GRCC could only achieve these results through partnering with communities, local authorities and housing

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GRCC is a charitable company limited by guarantee. It is a membership organisation with an elected Board of Trustees which oversees the organisation's work.

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