Neighbourhoods & Culture Scrutiny Commission

Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Engagement Strategy Update

Date of Commission meeting**:** 8 July 2024

Assistant City Mayor for Communities, Adult Learning, Jobs & Skills: Cllr Mustafa Malik

Lead Director: Andrew Shilliam, Director of Corporate Services

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1. Summary

This report provides an overview of the advancements and future direction of the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Engagement Strategy. It covers the Delivery Plan aligned with the strategy and how we intend to measure the successful delivery of the actions. In particular it outlines any sub-actions, progress so far, suggested measurement criteria, and sets out expected stakeholder engagement.

2. Recommended actions

The scrutiny commission are recommended to:

2.1 Note the summary report, and

2.2 Make any recommendations for consideration

3. VCSE Strategy and Delivery

3.1 Following the successful launch of the VCSE Engagement Strategy at Hansom Hall on November 28, where members of the sector, internal colleagues, and other sector partners provided valuable insights, we are moving forward to ensure active involvement from the VCSE community to achieve the aims set out in the strategy.

3.2 Our VCSE Engagement Strategy (see Appendix 1) is a comprehensive roadmap outlining our goals and direction for engaging with the VCSE sector until 2027. We will focus on the six pledges and adapt to changing national and local trends as required and target areas where support is most needed.

Delivery Plan Overview

3.3 We have developed an internal delivery plan detailing the steps, timelines, and responsibilities for each action to ensure effective strategy implementation. This plan guides the VCSE Engagement Team, clarifying activities and resources required. A coordinated approach will streamline processes, mitigate risks, and allow regular reviews to optimise resource use and achieve our objectives.

3.4 Our strategy demonstrates our commitment to the VCSE sector, serving as a blueprint for organisational engagement. By aligning our pledges with actionable steps and a robust delivery plan, we aim to meet our strategic goals and create value for stakeholders. We are committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement, recognising that success depends on collective efforts within and beyond our organisation.

3.5 We will organise engagement meetings to gather input from VCSE members. These sessions will help us to periodically refine the Delivery Plan and foster a sense of ownership within the sector. In response to feedback, we will be organising engagement meetings with sector leaders to help shape the delivery of our strategy.

3.6 In **Appendix 2** there is an outline of our Delivery Plan with our intended outcomes. For each outcome you will see the actions we have taken to date, how we are measuring against the outcome and what future work is required to achieve the outcome.

Stakeholder Engagement

3.7 To successfully deliver our strategy, we have identified key internal and external stakeholders who can play vital roles in implementing our actions.

3.8 **Internal Stakeholders**:

- **Council Departments**: Various departments within the council, such as Neighbourhood Services, Public Health, and Estates and Building Services, to collaborate to provide resources, expertise, and support.
- **Elected Members**: Councillors to champion the strategy, advocate for necessary policies, and ensure alignment with broader council objectives. Because of their own understanding and knowledge of their individual wards, forming a bridge from the VCSE Team to the VCSE sector.
- **VCSE Engagement Team**: This team coordinate efforts, manage communication, and oversee the implementation of the delivery plan.

3.9 **External Stakeholders**:

- **VCSE Organisations**: These include charities, community groups, social enterprises, and voluntary organisations that will be directly involved in executing specific actions and providing feedback.
- **Suppliers:** Contracted to support our work and deliver where the council doesn't have resource. E.g MyCake and SpaceHive (CrowdFund Leicester)
- **Funding Bodies**: Influencing the direction of external financial opportunities to fund groups in the city in line with our strategy.
- **Local Businesses**: Businesses will be engaged for potential partnerships, sponsorships, and collaborative community projects.
- **Other Public Sector Bodies**: Collaboration with health services, educational institutions, and other public sector entities will be essential for integrated service delivery.

3.10 **Methods of Stakeholder Engagement**:

- **Regular Meetings and Workshops**: Facilitating ongoing dialogue and collaboration through scheduled meetings and workshops.
- **Surveys and Feedback Forms**: Collecting input and feedback from stakeholders to inform strategy refinement and implementation.
- **Partnership Agreements**: Formalising roles and responsibilities through communications of understanding or partnership agreements.

- **Communication Channels**: Utilising newsletters, social media, and dedicated web portals to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.

Measuring Our Delivery Actions

3.11 To ensure the effective implementation of our VCSE Engagement Strategy, we will employ comprehensive monitoring and evaluation using our Delivery Plan measurements. This framework will leverage both qualitative and quantitative data to measure our delivery actions, inform strategic decisions, and provide regular reports over the duration of our strategy. This approach will also ensure accountability and help identify areas where adaptations may be necessary.

3.12 Quantitative Data Collection

We will use the following quantitative metrics to track progress and impact:
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Metrics such as the number of VCSE organisations engaged, funding distributed, events held, and training sessions conducted.
- **Surveys and Questionnaires:** Regularly administered to stakeholders to quantify satisfaction levels, participation rates, and the reach of our initiatives.
- **Service Utilisation Statistics**: Where possible with other service areas, track the usage of services and resources provided to VCSE organisations.

3.13 Qualitative Data Collection

To complement quantitative data, we will gather qualitative insights through:
- **Feedback:** Collecting feedback from VCSE leaders and other stakeholders to gain insight into what we are doing well and areas for development.
- **Case Studies:** Documenting detailed case studies that highlight successes, challenges, and best practices.
- **Feedback Forms:** Collecting open-ended responses from stakeholders during and after events and initiatives.
- **Reporting:** Compiling qualitative data into narrative reports that provide a deeper analysis of progress and impact.

3.14 Data Analysis and Strategic Decision-Making

We will integrate both qualitative and quantitative data to:
- **Identify Trends and Patterns:** Analysing actions to uncover emerging trends, areas of success, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Make Informed Decisions:** Using Delivery Plan insights to guide strategic adjustments, resource allocation, and the development of new initiatives.
- **Evaluate Impact:** Assessing the overall impact of our actions on the VCSE sector and the community, ensuring alignment with our strategic objectives.
- **Ensure Accountability:** Keeping ourselves accountable by regularly reviewing and transparently reporting our progress and outcomes.
- **Identify Gaps:** Highlighting areas where we may need to adapt our approach to better meet the needs of stakeholders.

3.15 Reporting and Communication

Regular reporting will be an essential part of our evaluation framework:

- **Quarterly Reviews:** Providing detailed updates on progress, challenges, and next steps, using a mix of quantitative metrics and qualitative insights.
- **Annual Reviews:** Conducting comprehensive annual reviews to evaluate the strategy's impact and make necessary adjustments.
- **Stakeholder Meetings**: Sharing findings with stakeholders through regular meetings, ensuring transparency and fostering collaborative decision-making.

3.16 Having these measurements in place within our Delivery Plan will allow us to monitor progress effectively and keep the VCSE Engagement Team's limited resources focused on implementing our actions and the associated micro-actions necessary to deliver our strategy.

4. Corporate Services Division – dedicated support resources

4.1 Support for the delivery of the Council's VCSE Engagement Strategy exists in the form of the VCSE Engagement Team and some partnership delivery funding available for certain engagement activities.

4.2 The Council's VCSE Engagement Team consists of our full-time (1 FTE) VCSE Engagement Manager and our full-time (1 FTE) Executive Support Officer with a very specific focus on VCSE and Faith engagement matters. This team is currently headed up by the Council's Equalities Manager.

4.3 Divisions and services outside of Corporate Services have their own teams and staff that work directly with VCSE groups and organisations and as part of the delivery of specific activities and services. Many of these will relate to directly commissioned arrangements.

4.4 Within the wider Corporate Services budget, £135k is set aside in 24/25 for strategy related delivery actions and currently covers our commitment to provide the Crowdfund Leicester platform, the Assemble volunteering platform, and the Community Engagement Fund. Where needs arise, some funding can be made available for the provision of needs-based infrastructure support related activities.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Rohit Rughani, Principal Accountant, Ext 37. 4003

5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising from this information report.

Legal advice to be sought as required.

Mannah Begum, Principal Commercial and Contracts Solicitor, Ext 1423

5.3 Equalities implications

When making decisions, the Council must comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard, when carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

Protected characteristics under the public sector equality duty are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The report updates on progress to the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Engagement Strategy. Inevitably the programme of work in the action plan will impact on people from a range of protected characteristics and to ensure we meet the needs of people effectively, we recommend the programme of work in the action plan considers appropriate projects/policies which will need Equality Impact Assessments and conduct them in a timely manner to identify and, where possible, mitigate against any negative equality outcomes. It may also be prudent to undertake equality monitoring for people partaking in interventions to understand who is using the service and how it may be tailored in the future.

The Strategy and accompanying delivery plan aims to have a positive impact on people from across all protected characteristics in terms of the aim of the PSED to advance equality of opportunity for people from across all protected characteristics.

Kalvaran Sandhu, Equalities Manager, ext. 37 6344

5.4 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are limited climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. As service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon emissions, any impacts can be managed through measures such as encouraging sustainable staff travel behaviours, using buildings efficiently and following sustainable procurement guidance, as applicable to the service and any changes implemented.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

Appendices:

Appendix 1- VCSE Engagement Strategy PDF VCSE Strategy 2023-27 (leicester.gov.uk)
Appendix 2- Delivery Plan Overview Document