

## **Leicester City Council's proposals for supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and engaging with key communities to support a cohesive Leicester**

### **1. Introduction**

Leicester City Council values its good working relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). The VCS makes significant contributions to many important areas: policy development; service design, delivery and monitoring; community engagement and cohesion. The VCS understands the communities it serves and gives a lot to the economic and social life of the city. The current challenges, demands and expectations facing both the VCS and the public sector make it even more important that Leicester City Council helps the VCS develop and grow in a sustainable way. We want the Voluntary and Community Sector to be well placed to help us achieve positive results together for the people of Leicester.

This document sets out OUR proposals for 2014/15 onwards for supporting the VCS and engaging with key communities to support a cohesive Leicester.

The consultation questions we are asking are outlined at the end of the main sections of this document. To respond to these questions please complete the on-line survey. Alternatively you can request a hard copy of the survey by contacting us [vcs@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:vcs@leicester.gov.uk)

### **2. Case for change**

The national and local policy context has dramatically changed, not least the challenging national and local economic climate and some of the most significant welfare system changes for decades. These changes are putting significant pressure on individuals and families across the city and consequently increasing demand for VCS and Council services from individuals and communities.

Having reduced the Council's annual spending by £75million, following the most recent government spending review, we now need to make additional cuts of over £70million by 2016. As such we have to consider all savings options.

Currently we spend £582,000 per annum on contracts for support to the VCS and for engagement with certain communities. In the current economic and social context, the City Council must review virtually all the services which we currently provide, even those to which we are genuinely committed, such as support and engagement with the city's VCS.

Our future approach needs to deliver a model of support and engagement which meets the challenges that have arisen locally, and which enables the VCS to carry on its role as a significant partner to the City Council.

### 3. Council priorities for working with the VCS

We want to create an environment where Leicester City Council does all it can to support and enable the VCS to respond to local needs and aspirations, achieve local priorities and make an effective contribution as the Council's strategic and service delivery partner. In relation to the priority themes set out in the City Mayor's Delivery Plan 2013/14, the VCS play a key role as follows:

- **A Place to do business:**
  - Value of VCS itself to the local economy
  - As a service provider delivering public sector objectives in relation to education, skills and employment
  - Role of volunteering in supporting people into employment
  - In supporting and delivering a range of cultural and community activities which supports the city's cultural ambitions
  
- **The built and natural environment:**
  - Supporting the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment through community groups and conservation organisations.
  - Ensuring accessibility of public buildings and spaces, and of managed natural environments (e.g. parks, waterfronts).
  
- **A healthy and active city:**
  - As a service provider supporting delivery of objectives relating to preventative care and encouraging healthy and active lifestyles.
  
- **Providing care and support:**
  - As a service provider delivering objectives relating to independent living, care and safeguarding of vulnerable adults, and support for carers. In doing so, being able to respond to the changing models for provision of care and support
  - As a service provider supporting delivery of objectives relating to the prevention of homelessness and supporting people who are vulnerably housed and/or at risk of harm and/or abuse
  
- **Our children and young people**
  - As a service provider for disabled children and their families or carers
  - As a service provider supporting delivery of objectives relating to raising educational and personal achievements
  - Supporting skills development and access to work for young people through volunteering
  - Supporting work to reduce and mitigate the effects of family poverty on children's chances in Leicester

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- **Our neighbours and communities**

- In supporting communities to help manage the impact of welfare reforms
- Community engagement to support the involvement of communities in decision making
- Community engagement to support, mitigate and manage community tensions, and in relation to those communities who are more likely to be socially excluded and/or subject to possible discrimination
- Community resilience within the context of reducing resources and delivery of services for local communities
- Reducing inequalities and ensuring fair treatment including working with communities where there are distinct inequalities in terms of outcomes.

#### **4. Aims and objectives for this review**

The review aims to put in place arrangements to:

- Support a strong, vibrant, responsive and forward-looking VCS in Leicester which is able to make an effective contribution to the priorities outlined above; and
- Work closely with the VCS to ensure a cohesive city where there are good relations between communities and which actively and creatively celebrates its diversity.

The review's objectives are:

- To explore new, alternative ways of working with the VCS
- To maximise the opportunities for Leicester City Council to support local VCS providers and to help them, in turn, support and work with others within their sector
- To provide a model for supporting VCS groups which reflects the nature of the needs and challenges facing the sector and is also aligned to the Council's own priorities
- To ensure the City Council has appropriate arrangements in place to help support and enhance understanding between communities, and ensure a cohesive city through effective representation of and engagement with key communities
- To ensure the City Council appropriately supports volunteering in the city to help ensure a thriving VCS and to support wider priorities such as the development of the local economy
- To ensure value for money is achieved and to contribute to the additional financial savings that the City Council is required to make.

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It is intended that new arrangements will be in place from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.

### **5. Change proposal**

To consult the VCS (both in terms of those providing services and those receiving them) on proposals for support and engagement, in order to inform what approach the City Council takes in future. The proposals cover:

- Support for the city's VCS
- Engagement to support a cohesive Leicester
- Support for volunteering in the city

Details of our proposals are set out below.

The maximum budget available in total for the proposals outlined below will be £450,000 per annum. The minimum total budget that will be allocated to any one of the individual areas set out below is £50,000. Within these parameters, the actual amounts will be determined following consultation

#### **A. Support for the city's VCS**

The City Council proposes a new approach to the provision of support for VCS organisations in the city. This proposed approach would enable individual organisations to access good quality support in line with their specific needs, and provide a degree of choice about who provides that support. The aim of this is to provide the flexibility to support individual organisations to contribute effectively to the City Mayor's priorities.

To be eligible for this support, organisations would need to meet eligibility criteria (e.g demonstrate that they deliver services which benefit local communities and that they practise equality of opportunity).

The City Council would then work with each organisation to help determine their support needs through a simple diagnostic process. From a menu of support packages, the appropriate package(s) would then be agreed. VCS organisations would then be able to choose a provider for each of the support packages they need, from a range of providers approved by the City Council. It is anticipated that providers would include local VCS organisations as well as individuals and/or organisations from the private and public sectors.

A good model to illustrate how this might operate is Worcestershire County Council's ['Changing Futures Funds'](#).

The proposed framework of support packages could include for example;

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- **Professional Support;** financial, human resources and ICT support
- **Financial Sustainability;** to help VCS organisations to produce business plans, to price their services, to forecast their cash flow and to match income against expenditure in order to ensure full cost recovery.
- **Organisational Set-Up;** help to decide what sort of organisation they want to be and the steps they need to take to become established
- **Marketing Support;** support to reach the relevant target markets and customers
- **Fund Raising;** support to identify sources of funding and to successfully bid for them. This includes bidding for the various funding streams associated with the European Union
- **Procurement;** this package provides Fund Users with the support they need to successfully bid to win contracts to provide public services
- **Outcomes and Values;** this package will help them to identify and measure added value they are generating and commissioners and funders in recognising the quality of their work.
- **New Ways of Working;** this package can provide them with the expert support they need in regards to making decisions on how to make their services appropriate and reflective of their service user group
- **Volunteering;** this package would support organisations in developing volunteering opportunities, and in recruiting and managing volunteers.

We believe providing support and training in this way will be more effective in meeting the needs of individual VCS organisations and in turn help them to meet community needs and the City Mayor's priorities.

There would be a limit on the number of support packages any individual organisation can access in a single year and over a 3 year period, for example a maximum of 2 in any single year, and no more than 4 in any 3 year period.

### **B. Engagement to support a cohesive Leicester**

The City Council recognises the importance of ensuring it has appropriate ways of engaging effectively with key communities in Leicester. The primary purpose of this engagement is achieving a cohesive city which continues to celebrate our cultural diversity by supporting and enhancing trust, understanding and co-operation among communities.

The City Council wants to support community groups and voluntary organisations to work together to influence local policies and plans for the benefit of the city's communities. We recognise they are best placed to do this because of the following strengths:

- Closeness to local communities
- Ability to identify where policies and service provision best support community needs

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- Ability to engage with communities that are harder to reach or are less frequently heard
- A successful track record in encouraging the active participation of communities and individuals in local decision making.
- Ability and experience in working collaboratively and in partnership with others.
- All of the above ensure an effective and ongoing communication link back to the council as and when we need community knowledge and awareness.

In determining which communities of interest are in this review we have considered this in relation to what are called the “protected characteristics” in the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

From the above we propose that the following protected characteristics are most relevant to community social interactions and therefore exert the greatest influence on community cohesion:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation

Where the City Council already has established mechanisms for engaging with the above specific communities of interest these have been excluded from the scope of this review. In particular the Council has a number of mechanisms for engaging in relation to age and disability such as the Young People's Council , Youth Advisers, Children in Care Council, Big Mouth Forum (Disabled Young People), Older People's Forum, Carers Forum and Carers Survey, Learning Disability Partnership, 50+ network, as well as engagement with VCS providers contractually and otherwise for adult social care provision.

This leaves the following protected characteristics:

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- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation

It is proposed that these will be the focus for this approach.

To become a successfully commissioned representative organisation working with the council on behalf of a particular community, it is essential that:

- Those being represented have a choice over who represents them
- Representatives are able to clearly set out and evidence how they intend to make representation on behalf of the community,
- Representatives are able to demonstrate how their organisational make-up (staff and board composition) is proportionate and representative of their whole community of interest.
- Representatives demonstrate how they will go about gathering knowledge and information so they can understand the issues that are important to those they are representing
- Representatives are clear on the scope of their representation activities and have the capacity and commitment to undertake their role.
- Representatives clearly set out the communication channels they will use to feedback to those whom they represent.
- That there is a structured process in place for appeal if representees feel misrepresented.

Meeting the above requirements will provide representative organisations with their mandate, with an appropriate degree of transparency. It will also make sure those whom they represent can hold their representatives to account. We will need to see evidence that an organisation can meet these requirements.

We propose that the City Council should deal with organisations that represent a specific community of interest within the overarching protected characteristic. This would mean, for example, organisations represent a specific faith community rather than an umbrella organisation representing a variety of faiths. We believe that this is the level of representation at which communities of interest are best served.

We propose to procure the appropriate representative organisations via a competitive grant process. Organisations would apply to be the lead for a specific community of interest within those in scope, and would be assessed against clear criteria which will help ensure they are best placed to be representative of that particular community.

We propose that organisations who apply to act as the representative organisation for a particular community of interest would need to meet the following criteria:

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- Must be based in the city of Leicester
- Activities should be conducted mainly (preferably exclusively) in the city of Leicester
- Can demonstrate that its organisational purpose and objectives relate directly to supporting community cohesion and good relations among the communities that make up the city of Leicester
- Is an established organisation which has sound governance and operational structures (especially in relation to its financial affairs)
- Is signed up to the Leicester Compact and supports and promotes its principles.
- Is able to define the community of interest which it represents and that community makes up more than 1% of the total population of Leicester based on the 2011 census (i.e. more than 3,298 people).
- Can demonstrate the need for this community of interest to be represented. This need should be based on both the significance of the community in demographic terms and in relation to the issues in which that community is involved, as shown by relevant social and economic indicators.
- Can clearly articulate and evidence that it has the support of the majority of the community that it represents,
- Can demonstrate how the organisational make-up is proportionate and representative of the community of interest to be served. This should include evidence of financial support from any constituent / affiliated organisations that they currently represent (or hoping to represent).
- Can prove that the organisation provides equality of access and equality of opportunities to the people it serves.
- Can prove that it has the capacity and proven ability to facilitate a dialogue across the community they represent and to feedback to the community they represent.

Organisations would be assessed against these criteria. Where more than one organisation has applied to represent a particular community of interest; the organisation which best meets the criteria will be selected, although applications from consortia will be considered (though still operating within a specific community of interest within an overarching protected characteristic).

Alongside this, the City Council will be looking to facilitate appropriate ways of working with organisations who are awarded the grant funding to look at collective issues which cut across different communities of interest (e.g. related to race, religion or belief, sexual orientation).

### **C. Support for volunteering in the city**

The City Council wants to support the voluntary and community sector to have an effective approach to volunteering. It proposes to do so by facilitating a support



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model which enables groups to be effective and confident in their ability to recruit, retain and manage volunteers. We would like to see the support we provide enable organisations to manage and develop new volunteering opportunities, particularly to tackle priority themes and city objectives. And we want to ensure that volunteer managers have access to training and support, including networking opportunities.

As such we will be asking the sector how this support can best be provided in terms of the following options:

- Option 1 - A one-stop shop. One provider undertakes the full range of support activities – brokerage (matching of volunteers to opportunities), supporting organisations with advice and guidance in relation to developing volunteering opportunities, recruiting and managing volunteers, and providing advice and guidance to those who want to volunteer.
- Option 2 - We split volunteering support into two component parts.
  - a) Brokerage – an organisation focuses on this specific activity
  - b) Support for organisations to develop volunteering opportunities and to recruit and manage volunteers effectively is offered as one of the support packages
- Option 3 - Alternative option suggested by the sector consistent with the Council's priorities