

## APPENDIX C: PUBLIC CONSULTATION ANALYSIS

The public consultation was conducted over 12 weeks (March to June 2015) with four main ways in which people could take part.

- Citizen Space online questionnaire
- public meetings
- themed public meetings
- discussions with currently contracted service providers.

A description of how each of these three forms of participation worked in practice is given below, along with some commentary specific to each one. More general points, applicable to the consultation as a whole, are given following these.<sup>1</sup>

Concern was expressed that Ramadan fell in the middle of this review period. [PM1] This issue arose during the previous VCS support review (2103-14) and was clarified then in consultation with FMO and by reference to guidance produced by the Muslim Council of Britain). Concern was also expressed that school summer holidays fall during the review period (specifically during the anticipated time of a hypothetical procurement exercise). [PM1] It is unavoidable that any public consultation could be conducted over any meaningful length of time without it overlapping with some such period.

### 1. Citizen Space

An online survey and questionnaire ran on Citizen Space, 10 March to 29 May 2015. These dates bookend the 12-week formal public consultation. Printed copies of material published on Citizen Space were provided on request (e.g. to LASS, LGBT Centre; SDS; TREC), brought to the public meetings and made available to LCC Community Engagement Officers based in City Council Neighbourhood and Community Centres. These included large-print versions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations following quotations or comments identify the original sources:

- [CS 3] = Citizen Space 3 (third response received to online questionnaire);
- [PM4] = public meeting 4 (recorded at fourth in the series of eight public meetings);
- [TM 2] = thematic meeting 2 (recorded at second in series of four thematic meetings).

Introductory and explanatory copy preceded the questionnaire on the website, so that respondents would be able to read the rationale for the review before proceeding to the questions.

The online questionnaire solicited 51 responses (averaging four per week or twelve per month). The questionnaire focused on the City Council's approach to the review, representing a first stage in obtaining the general public's response. An equalities monitoring form was appended to the online questionnaire. This was completed, in full or in part, by all 51 respondents.

Respondents were asked to declare their interests at the beginning of the survey, from the following four options:

- "Someone who identifies with one of these communities, identities or protected characteristics" (10)
- "Director, trustee, employee or volunteer with an organisation concerned with one of these communities, identities or protected characteristics" (18)
- "Service user of an organisation with one of these communities, identities or protected characteristics" (5)
- "Interested citizen of Leicester" (18)

Those identifying with options 1-3 above were asked to declare the group or organisation with which for which they work or volunteer, or whose services they use. The following groups or organisations were named:

- African Caribbean Citizens Forum
- Age UK
- Leicester City of Sanctuary
- Leicester Civil Rights Movement
- Leicester LGBT Centre
- Leicester Secular Society
- Leicestershire Aids Support Service (LASS)
- Mainstream Partnership
- Polish Mums and Children's Centre
- Reaching People partnership
- Recovery

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<sup>2</sup> Only SDS returned questionnaires completed in longhand. They provided 14 of these, filled in by a mixture of employees, volunteers and service users,

- Somali Community & Parents Association (SOCOPA)
- Somali Development Service (SDS)
- St Philip’s Centre for Study & Engagement in a Multi-Faith Society

Only two of the organisations named above are among the six currently contracted service providers. Only ACCF and SDS appear to have taken part in the online survey or completed the questionnaire. That does not necessarily mean that the other four (FMO; GHA; LCoF; TREC) did not respond (perhaps anonymously). None of them were obliged to take part in the survey, so no special significance should be attached to the fact that some of them appear not to have done so.

The survey included ten questions, each with a “Yes”, “No” “Don’t know” option and a text box in which respondents were invited to expand upon their answers. Six respondents left only “Yes, “No” or “Don’t know” answers. A total of 45 amplified their choices to some extent.

#### **a. Headline findings from Citizen Space**

- 65% of respondents agreed in general with the City Council’s approach to this review.
- 47% thought that the City Council should give preference to supporting “umbrella” organisations, which work with a number of communities and groups sharing an identity or protected characteristics.
- 78% agreed with the City Council’s approach in preferring to work with organisations that can demonstrate experience, knowledge and understanding of the diverse communities of Leicester.
- 86% agreed with the City Council’s approach in preferring to work with organisations that include people from the community (or communities) they represent among their board, staff and volunteers.
- 45% thought that the City Council is not doing enough to engage the city’s newer communities in the review process.
- 55% said they could identify something that might hinder VCS organisations from becoming involved with the City Council’s approach to this review (and most expanded upon their answers in the text box provided).
- 51% said they could think of ways that the City Council might make it easier for VCS organisations to engage with this approach (and most expanded upon their answers in the text box provided).

- 47% said they had no specific concerns that this approach might mean changing the City Council's current arrangements with certain communities and their organisations.
- 69% said they had ideas about how the City Council could maximise effective representation and engagement with the funding available (bearing in mind that it is not necessary, practical or realistic to expect City Council to enter into contracted arrangements for representation and engagement with everyone fitting within these identities or characteristics of LGBT, Race, Religion or Belief).

Some of the responses on Citizen Space could be described as

- "considered" or "reflective" [CS 3, 39] without also being angry, embittered and negative [CS 4, 8, 29, 38].
- Crossing dividing lines:
  - Race / LGBT [CS 7, 36, 38].
- Offering decent input, but focusing solely on the topic area of interest to the respondent, making them of limited usefulness to the review in general:
  - LGBT / gender reassignment [CS 16];
  - LGBT [CS 17].
- Defending record of one particular current service provider (ACCF) to the exclusion of almost any other useful content [CS 50].

## 2. Public meetings

Eight two-hour meetings were arranged on a weekly basis in various Neighbourhood and Community Centres around the city. This was part of a deliberate effort to get out and about and take the consultation to the public, consistent with our determination to make the process as accessible as possible and remove practical barriers to participation.

- **New Parks Community Centre**, Saint Oswalds Rd, Thu 16 Apr, 1000.
- **Eyres Monsell Community Centre**, Hillsborough Rd, Fri 24 Apr, 1400.
- **Manor House Neighbourhood Centre**, Haddenham Rd, Mon 27 Apr, 1400.
- **Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre**, Armadale Rd, Tue 5 May, 1400.
- **Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre**, Rothley St, Wed 13 May, 1400.
- **Beaumont Centre**, Astill Lodge Rd, Mon 18 May, 1400.

- **BRITE Centre**, Braunstone Ave, Thu 21 May, 1000.
- **African Caribbean Centre**, Maidstone Rd, Fri 29 May, 1000.

Notes of each of these meetings are available on request.

These meetings were publicised via:

- Citizen Space;
- City Council Community Engagement Officers;
- VAL's weekly email newsletter;
- Emails to the six currently contracted service providers (asking them to cascade information via their own mailing lists);
- Various channels of communication to anyone who expressed interest in the review.

Each of these meetings was attended by George Ballentyne (City Council VCS Engagement Manager), Bunmi Obesisan (Graduate Intern Project Officer), the Community Engagement Officer attached to the respective venue and a member of the City Council's Research and Intelligence Team (except for the meeting in Eyres Monsell, which was not attended by a member of the Research and Intelligence team).

#### **a. Community Engagement Officers & City Wardens**

A positive by-product of the review (particularly the holding of public meetings in the Community and Neighbourhood Centres) has been the involvement of the City Council's nine Community Engagement Officers. Each Community Engagement Officer is based in a particular Community or Neighbourhood Centre, but with responsibility for two or three others. Rather than being of interest merely inside the Authority, their involvement has the potential to benefit the community at large. Community Engagement Officers know which VCS groups and organisations make use of the centres and their facilities. They see the groups and organisations (and individuals) working for and with local communities on a daily basis at the grass roots, rather than in terms of community leaders and representatives, who may have more to do in terms of meeting decision-makers and influencing policy. Keeping Community Engagement Officers engaged in the day-to-day dealings with VCS groups, organisations and their service users would help make the result of this review more practical and meaningful. This beneficial outcome can be extended by involving City Wardens, who know community life in the parts of the city to which they are assigned on a street-by-street – even building-by-building basis. The Community Engagement Officers and City Wardens form a kind of

“connective tissue” across the city. The City Council’s future engagement with VCS groups and organisations should recognise this and make the most of the opportunities that it presents.

### 3. Themed public meetings

Four of these meetings were held at the end of the public consultation period, each one co-hosted by three organisations, either current providers (meetings 2, 3 and 4) or organisations which have expressed interest as potential bidders in future arrangements (meeting 1, as the City Council does not have a contracted arrangement with any service provider on representation and engagement regarding LGBT communities and issues).

- **LGBT**, hosted by LGBT Centre, Leicestershire Aids Support Service (LASS), Trade Sexual Health; at LGBT Centre, Wellington St, Tue 19 May, 1830. Approximately 16 attendees.
- **Religion or belief**, hosted by FMO; GHA; LCoF; at Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre, Rothley St, Fri 22 May, 1830. Approximately 50 attendees.
- **Race**, hosted by ACCF; SDS; TREC; at Highfields Centre, Melbourne Rd, Tue 9 June, 1030. Approximately 75 attendees.
- **Race**, hosted by ACCF; SDS; TREC; at The Race Equality Centre, Phoenix Yard, Upper Browne St, Wed 10 June, 1830. Approximately 95 attendees.

Planning meetings were held with ACCF, SDS and TREC (Fri 15 May) and FMO, GHA, LCoF (Mon 11 May) to discuss publicity, agenda, roles and follow-up in relation to their respective themed meetings. Briefer, less formal discussions took place with representatives of LASS, LGBT Centre and Trade Sexual Health in other settings regarding the LGBT-themed meeting.

These meetings were publicised via:

- VAL’s weekly email newsletter;
- A special PDF mail-out by VAL (a single flier for the first two meetings – the race-themed meetings had not been fixed by that time);
- Emails to the six currently contracted service providers about all three meetings (asking them to cascade information via their own mailing lists);
- Mail-outs by each of the nine co-hosting organisations to their own contacts;
- Various channels of communication to anyone who expressed interest in the review.

Each of these meetings was attended by GMB, BO, Irene Kszyk (Leicester City Council Corporate Equalities Lead) and a member of the City Council's Research and Intelligence team (except for the meeting at TREC, which was not attended by a Research and Intelligence team member).

Each of these meetings followed a similar format, agreed with the three co-hosting organisations in advance:

- Overview of this VCS support review, from the perspective of the particular theme of each meeting (LGBT; Religion or Belief; or Race, respectively) presented by GMB;
- The three organisations co-hosting the meetings each presented an overview of their work (in at least one of these meetings, it was remarked that it was the first opportunity certain organisations had been able to present to members of the audience, who could not otherwise be exposed to their work);
- Brief Q&A (directed at any of the four presenters);
- Round-table workshop on proposed outcomes for VCS groups and organisations that would hypothetically be commissioned with new contracts.

Some of the currently contracted service providers were concerned that these meetings could turn into "beauty contests" or Dragons' Den-style event, at which the organisations would be competing for the approval and favour of the audience. Steps were taken to allay such concerns in the way the meetings were conducted (although the expression of such anxiety seemed to betray misunderstanding of the process).

Notes of each of these meetings are available on request.

#### **4. Meetings with currently contracted service providers**

Shortly after the formal close of the public consultation, meetings were arranged with each of the currently contracted service providers. These meetings were attended (from City Council side) by GMB, BO – apart from the final one (with GHA) which was attended by GMB alone. Notes of each of these meetings are available on request.

The purpose of these meetings was to inform each of the currently contracted service providers of progress of the review; to clarify issues raised in the process to date; to respond to their questions regarding a forthcoming hypothetical procurement exercise; and to outline the intended timetable

up to the institution of new arrangement for funding and support. Meetings were held (in chronological order) with

- **The Race Equality Centre**; TREC, Phoenix Yard, Upper Browne St, Fri 19 June, 0900.
- **Federation of Muslim Organisations**; FMO, 99 Melbourne Rd, Tue 23 June, 1900.
- **Leicester Council of Faiths**; Welcome Centre, Pilgrim House, 10 Bishop St, Wed 24 June, 1000.
- **African Caribbean Citizens Forum**; City Hall, 115 Charles St, Wed 24 June, 1730.
- **Somali Development Service**; SDS, 39 Abingdon Rd, Thu 25 June, 1300.
- **Gujarat Hindu Association**; GHA, 51 Loughborough Rd, Mon 10 Aug, 1930.

Arguably the most important thing to emerge from this particular set of meetings was that three of the six organisations face difficulties regarding accommodation. ACCF (in common with all tenants of the property) has been given three months' notice by the owners of Apex House and must relocate before the end of September;<sup>3</sup> FMO pays the City Council £7,400 per annum in rent for its premises on Melbourne Rd and stated at this meeting that they and are not in a position to continue doing so after autumn 2015;<sup>4</sup> LCoF has decided to leave its premises in Town Hall Square (not owned by the City Council) at the start of 2016; SDS pays the City Council £18,750 per annum in rent for its premises on Abingdon Rd (although neither SDS nor the City Council has expressed concern about this).

#### **a. Further notes & comments regarding currently contracted service providers**

While the public consultation elicited positive testimonials about several of these currently contracted organisations, these should be weighed against substantial concern expressed during this current review, the one that preceded it (2013-14) and at other times about the capacity, legitimacy and performance of each of these organisations. While remaining detached from what can sometimes appear to be backbiting, envy or squabbling about personalities, the City Council is aware of a level of dissatisfaction about these organisations in the community at large. This has been accompanied by criticism that the City Council itself has not been rigorous enough in helping these organisations stay on track through its regime of quarterly monitoring and annual reports. The City Council is conscious of the need to strengthen its own processes in providing VCS groups and organisations with appropriate advice, guidance and support in order to meet agreed outcomes. This will be borne in mind when new arrangements are put in place at the end of the current review.

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<sup>3</sup> ACCF has found new office accommodation at 60 Charles Street.

<sup>4</sup> This has come about largely as a consequence of FMO failing to obtain the licence for broadcasting the Radio Ramadhan output this year on EAVA FM.



It is important to stress that this is not a review of the performance of these six organisations. Their current contracts were agreed for a 15-month period from January 2013 to March 2014. By the time their extensions expire (at the end of October 2015) these organisations will have been supported through these arrangements for a further 19 months – 12 of them because of the need to do the review again because of the challenge to the lawfulness of the process. It should therefore be acknowledged that these contracts would have ended considerably earlier if it were not for the fact that the City Council is genuinely concerned with identifying and meeting the needs of the city's diverse communities, especially in terms of equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. In the debit column, however, this continual extension of contracts has given cause to delay revision of the monitoring regime by which the City Council should hold these organisations to account in relation to their delivery. There has been little purpose seen in cracking down on issues with delivery of services if the contracts are continually subject to short-term extensions. Similar negative connotations have impacted the service providers themselves, as they have to deal with uncertain futures, hobbling to different degrees their own abilities to make necessary changes.

It should be clear in this report that the review is not simply a question of the City Council choosing to end its relationship with certain organisations, while continuing or renewing it with others. That has been unclear to some of those who have participated in and responded to the public consultation. Some have also failed to grasp that this review is not amenable to appeals to spare this community, preserve that group or save the other organisation as it is not concerned with decommissioning services, stopping funding or withdrawing support. Even if it were so minded, the City Council would be lax in its duties if it were to afford special dispensation to any of these six organisations without extending it to all.

It should also be noted that these six organisations are not the only ones through which the City Council engages with Leicester's many and varied communities. It should not be thought that the City Council has no other means but these organisations by which it can engage with communities, groups and organisations reflecting the diversity of our city.

It has been asserted by more than one of the currently contracted organisations that that this level of expenditure represents value for money and is a mere drop in the ocean, less than one per cent of the City Council's annual expenditure on services provided by VCS groups and organisations. While this may be true, it cannot be justification for leaving things as they are or renewing current arrangements. It does not offer a loophole or escape clause by which any VCS group, organisation or service can be exempted from the City Council's obligation to reconsider all its contracted, funded or

supported relationships. In fact, while this may be true, it is irrelevant inasmuch as these contracts are reaching their end as part of the normal cycle of working relations between the City Council (as purchaser of certain services) and these six organisations (as providers of those services). At this juncture, the City Council is taking the opportunity to consider how the population of the city has changed since these relationships were established, to think about whether current working arrangements (or some variation on them) are fit for purpose, to reflect on how to relate to community groups and organisations and to make informed and intelligent decisions about the best use of resources in achieving genuinely impactful outcomes.

Furthermore, such a position sees the review only in fiscal terms. It is true that the economic situation is a major stimulus for a review of this kind and that the level of funding available for such support as a whole will be reduced by the end of it. This is a necessity in the current climate, no matter how small the relative savings may appear as part of the bigger picture. Yet it is still the intention that the amount of money available after this review be distributed more equitably than under previous arrangements, as a consequence of the City Council's desire to refresh and renew its working relationships with various communities in the city.

Of course the City Council does not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Decades of experience, connectedness, trust and wisdom have been built up in these specialised groups and organisations. Ways must be found of carrying forward these things and applying them sustainably to the city as it is today – and as we believe it may be in the future. To do so may require the City Council entering into new sorts of arrangements with groups and organisations different in kind from those with which it has worked before.

## **6. Elected Members' Induction**

A short PowerPoint presentation (by GMB) was included in an Elected Members' Induction meeting, Thursday 28 May, at City Hall. This was part of an equalities briefing (led by IK) illustrating how the City Council's position on equality and diversity is expressed in an actual piece of work involving the sort of groups and organisations that elected members may encounter in the course of their duties. The induction session was attended by 22 elected members. There had been a request (on behalf of TREC) that VCS organisations themselves be allowed to address elected members at their induction. This was (politely) rejected. [PM 3] Some comments were made and questions asked by elected

members attending this session in relation to the City Council’s support for the VCS, none of which were relevant to the purposes of this report, so they have not been included here.

## **7. Themes & topics across the public consultation**

Some of the suggestions which arose from the public consultation are included here (without judgment or comment regarding their practicability) in order to illustrate the kind of input received.

- “offer fixed term open contracts to provide representative community services – if there is [sic] issues of delivery, at least [sic] the management/organisations can be changed.” [CS 2]
- “... there should be a list of communities that should be targeted proportionally, depending on proportion in city and ‘newness’ of the community (I know it’s not an exact science).”
- “Some built in ‘steps’ to full funding could be introduced. For example 6 months funding then we would expect to have so many of these people involved in decision making activities etc.” [CS 3]
- “Offer support and mediation for smaller organisations that have overlapping goals and represent members with overlapping interest to amalgamate.” {5}
- “An independent equality advisory group? A Scrutiny commission for Equality?” [CS 16]
- “Find key individuals who are motivated and charge them with certain responsibilities. Rather than funding projects only that volunteers carry out, build capacity in individuals and offer them a modest salary to, in turn, engage with their particular community and manage volunteers.” [CS 32]
- “There should be community involvement in the assessment of the bids.” [CS 41]
- “A more integrated approach focused on people with most needs – so linking a financial inclusion strategy with the equality and human rights agenda.” [CS 41]
- Community and Neighbourhood Centres to have individual Facebook pages, run by appropriate Community Engagement Officers. [PM2]

### **a. City Council’s vision for the city**

It was expressed several times during the public consultation that, while there is a clear vision in terms of capital projects (e.g. Connecting Leicester; Community Asset Transfer; Transforming

Neighbourhood Services; regeneration of the Waterside area) there is a lack of vision from the city's leadership in terms of diversity, equality, cohesion and integration. What does the City Council think these look like in practice? What does the City Council think they are for? What effect does the City Council think they – or their absence – have on the city? How will we know when we have achieved what the City Council wants in terms of equality, diversity, cohesion and integration? How will we know how far we still have to go?

Participants in the survey agreed that such vision has to come from the top: from the City Mayor and his Executive, especially those members with special interest in and responsibility for community-based issues of equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. This can be done in consultation with those groups, organisations and appropriate individuals who have these matters at heart – but the vision cannot come from them alone, and depends on civic support to implement it.

- “lack of clarity in council about what the council is trying to achieve [sic] through investment in developing and supporting the vcs” [CS 12] This one shades over into the contracts with VAL. Bring in some of THAT vision here, in terms of professionalism and sustainability.
- “What is the role of the council in supporting the VCS? What is the business case for doing it? What are the ‘deliverables’? What can’t or shouldn’t the council do?” [CS 12]
- “A clear sense of direction and strategic scrutiny is required to rebuild relationships and secure a more positive outcome for the future.” [CS 14]

Whenever this topic arose during the public consultation it was addressed as directly as possible. Such a vision could include the following elements – that no matter their race, religion or belief or sexual orientation, people living and working in Leicester should feel safe, valued, welcome, able to make a contribution, that they do not need feel the need to become a square peg in a round hole just to fit in. It was more difficult – even contentious – to try and pin this down in terms of communities, groups and organisation.

Of course, the City Council has its Equality and Diversity Strategy (and Charter) but at least one of the currently contracted service providers described it as inadequate and unacceptable – and that they would not feel comfortable signing up to it or encouraging anyone else to do so.

The newly-developed summary document, “Our Vision and Values”, while intended primarily for internal communications – to help the City Council understand itself – could be adapted to express the kind of vision that was felt to be missing. Certainly the five underpinning principles could play a part in this: Being confident; Being clear; Being respectful; Being fair; Being accountable.

There was a degree of scepticism (often more like cynicism) regarding the City Council's motives for this review.

- "Possible lack of trust and confidence in the process and its overall agenda" [CS 10]
- "Misunderstanding Leicester City council's motives." [CS 15]
- "lack of information about the council's real intentions." [CS 25]

Occasionally, this crossed the line into *ad hominem* attacks, which were countered, politely but firmly.

Some saw the review as nothing more than a cover for cuts in services

- "This is a cut, services will be reduced yes [sic] diversity and the population has grown." [CS 5]
- "There is no need to cut funding of organisations that are delivering vital services" [CS 6]
- "To save money but to lose trust would be a catastrophe" [CS 8]
- "Unclear as to what is actually being consulted on beyond slashing 80K off the budget." [CS 17]
- "LCC just looking to make cuts" [CS 30]
- "They are cutting too many front line services that actually engage with new communities." [CS 30]
- "LCC cutting core funding that supports VCS organisation deliver services" [CS 30]
- "... in a climate of funding cuts it can sometimes be difficult to see the positives in reviews and just see them as another tool to fuel cuts." [CS 35]

A clear lesson to be learned from this is that the City Council can always be clearer and more sensitive to our listeners on the issue of cuts to funding and services. There is still widespread belief that the City Council (and City Mayor in particular) is ultimately responsible for of the cuts and that the money spent on capital projects (for example) is being syphoned off from funding that could be spent on community purposes. While it is undoubtedly the case that, "there are none so deaf as those that will not hear", the City Council should still be able to do better in responding to this kind of criticism.

#### **b. Changing demographic & "representation"**

Some respondents recognised the changing demographic of the city in recent years, highlighting how the City Council engages (or fails to engage) with communities of new arrivals. This raised the

question of whether the City Council should reduce or even stop our support for long-established communities (which should, by now, be able to look after themselves) and switch support to newer arrivals.

- “I think the city has changed hugely, for example there are many new communities that could now use the support other communities received when they first began to settle in the city. Most of the communities have now had a lot of time to settle and understand our systems and processes.” [CS 3]
- “The downside of this approach is that organisations who have ‘got their feet under the table’ are perpetuated. Things can get very ‘cliquey’ and innovation and fresh approaches stifled.” [CS 9]
- “Leicester City Council works hard to include the newer communities and organisations but still needs to think outside the box, be less commercial and more creative.” [CS 15]
- “Models of community activity and engagement are more diverse now. Whilst there are gaps, there are however, examples of the city council engaging well with the newer communities.” [CS 39]
- “We would appreciate if we [Polish, East European communities] can be treated equally, fairly and get needed support as a new comers in this country.” [CS 48]
- Influx of new arrivals from Eastern Europe into predominantly white areas (e.g. Eyres Monsell) can disguise emerging race issues. [PM2]

Recognition of the city’s changing demographics requires a different response on the part of the City Council. The prevailing model is one that could be said to have been established in response to the arrival in Leicester of the Ugandan Asians in the 1970s. That simply does not apply to more recent arrivals (e.g. Eastern Europeans). Some organisations (including some of the currently contracted service providers) still see representation as the only game in town. But many contributors to the public consultation questioned the authenticity and validity of “representation”.

- “... I think funding communities of interest i.e. based on religion, heritage, ethnicity is divisive [sic] for the city rather than cohesive” [CS 3]
- “The challenge is how to get to hear the voices of people in communities who don’t organise themselves into community organisations with vocal representatives.” [CS 9]
- “Don’t keep giving money to the same old organisations populate with the same old politicised hacks. Aim to use the money to develop innovation and growth rather than keep ‘community representatives’ sometimes with their own personal agendas going.” [CS 9]

- “Appropriate [sic] knowledge and skills is the key, not which community you come from. Being from a particular community doesn’t always guarantee insight and is a dangerous ‘proxy’ measure for it.” [CS 12]
- “... these groups really do struggle to represent the people they claim to represent, and are easily dominated by particular interest groups.” [CS 22]
- “I think some group [CS ...] have developed a sense that they represent communities as of right, but they should be open and transparent.. I think it is essential that all people in the city are democratically represented by their councillors, and it is via this process, not religious groups, that people are represented and receive help from the council.” [CS 22]
- “Not all the listed organisations are actually benefitting the communities it is supposed to be representing.” [CS 30]
- “Any contracts should include on-going evidence of popular support within identified communities.” [CS 33]
- “Community representation is important to ensure that engagement is relevant to the communities being served, however this may lead to traditionally ‘difficult’ issues being ignored or avoided. One such example may be tackling LGB&T issues within minority communities and ensuring fair, equal and non-discriminatory service provision to all members of a community. Having guidance from outside a particular community may help alleviate these tensions.” [CS 37]
- Agree that a review is needed. However, the result must be more ‘theme’ or ‘outcome’ focused instead of issue of representation which needlessly leads to criticism of the city council.” [CS 39]
- “The city is too diverse now to adopt an outdated model of representation.” [CS 39]
- “There are different ways in which representation and engagement might be achieved. For example for religion or belief this could be via the City Mayor’s Faith & Community Forum or Bishop’s Faith Leaders Forum. These are existing bodies which do not require funding and can be utilised. In addition, funded groups should be expected to host periodic focus groups, events/ seminars.” [CS 39]
- “it feels as if you are putting people and vcs organisations in boxes and we don’t fit into the boxes” [CS 44]
- “The representativeness of a group should be based on transparent systems of membership and election. This is not at present the case.” [CS 45]
- “We are in favour of good community relations, and in favour of working towards achieving this. What we question is whether defining particular groups within our community by their religion and then spending public money supporting groups with dubious claims to truly represent their whole community is wise.” [CS 45]

This arose also in some of the discussions with currently contracted service providers. On the one hand, some of these organisations reject the description of them being “representative” and would rather not be seen as such by the City Council or the general public. On the other, some of these organisations which would like to be seen as “representative” can find themselves expending excessive time and energy on justifying that claim, particularly to members of the very community or communities that they purport to represent.

There was also concern that, even when service users did want to make use of these groups, they looked on them more as pressure groups or lobbying organisations, through which they could petition the City Council and other public bodies and obtain special treatment for community members. The currently contracted service providers are generally unhappy with this role, which they feel is open to abuse, misrepresentation and misunderstanding on all sides, leaving them, as groups and organisations, “damned if they do, damned if they don’t” as far as representation goes.

The question of representation emerged as one of the major topics in the public consultation. It demands a rethink of this issue in order to address widespread concerns about the authenticity, meaning and usefulness of any organisation purporting to represent any community or communities in the city.

The reality of this matter is that “identity politics” may have had its day, and with it the idea of public bodies paying for “representation” from within the communities. This is a ship that has sailed. Some respondents commented that it is as outmoded now as the idea of “community leaders” and, in some cases, just as toxic. Representative organisations replaced community leaders because that approach stopped working and became self-serving for many of those who enjoyed elevated status (often meaning that those individuals lost touch with the very communities they were supposed to be “leading”). Now, the same crisis of confidence appears to be affecting representative bodies. These organisations are perceived, more often than not, as having a closed agenda, more interested in ensuring their own survival than in serving the communities from which they have arisen and on whose behalf they claim to be speaking or working. Even the good effective ones are tainted by the reputation of those which do not come up to the mark. It may be a hard truth to hear, but the City Council is under no obligation to sustain VCS groups or organisations of this kind that have lost the confidence of their communities.

In light of this review (and from information gained through other sources)<sup>5</sup> it may be wise for the City Council to move away from seeking “representation” – and particularly to distance itself from



the practice of paying for it. It may be better advised to move toward working with groups and organisations that could be said, as a whole, to reflect the diversity of the city. While this might close the door on some groups and organisations claiming to be representative as a way to prove their legitimacy, it should open it for others who have not been able to get a look in up till now. Some groups and organisations may take the opportunity to reorient themselves, adapt new positions and take on different roles, while others may well find themselves unable to adapt to the changing environment.

This is certainly in keeping with an overall desire for something new and fresh which featured strongly in the public consultation. There were strong, unequivocal voices in favour of change, particularly as it would affect the City Council's relationship with currently contracted service providers:

- “The council must assess the current state of play with those organisations who have been funded for a number of years. Those who have become complacent and just expect the continuation of funding without clear evidence of both output and outcome must be held to account. Those organisations who have consistently delivered and produced evidence of their effort and work should be rewarded with funding and the opportunity to have in place secure SLA.” [CS 14]
- “...care must be taken to ensure that there is room for new organisations to come to the table, bringing fresh perspectives.” [CS 16]
- “... we are in dynamic era where service providers and service users' needs changes rapidly due to the demographic changes occurred to our city for the past 10 years. Therefore, it is wise for the city to engage dialogue and identify the needs of current population and organisations.” [CS 21]
- ““The current arrangements have been in place for many years and things move on – I embrace change as long as the contracts are properly monitored for impact and effectiveness into the future. They can always be challenged and changed again if they do not perform.” [CS 26]
- “The city council deserves credit for its commitment to cohesion and integration over the years. However, the city council simply cannot continue under the old model and therefore a different approach is needed now.” [CS 39]

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, the results of a lengthy review of governance and membership undertaken by the Inter Faith Network of the UK which said many helpful things about the interplay between “representation” and “reflection”.

Some of the most straightforward responses were regarding potential changes to current arrangements with certain communities and their organisations:

- “I think this needs to change, at the moment due to hard decision having to be made it seems exclusive rather than inclusive” [CS 3]
- “It is long over due” [CS 7]
- “It’s perhaps time to shake things up a bit.” [CS 9]
- “Change is important for progress.” [CS 15]
- “Reasonable to keep arrangements under review, nervous that less visible minorities may be disadvantaged.” [CS 17]
- “I think change in this area is essential” [CS 22]
- “I agree with the approach, however it may cause communities to feel as if they are being treated unfairly or competing against one another.” [CS 32]
- “The current practice needs changing – it is based in part on historic need and excludes some protected characteristics.” [CS 41]
- “Not only do we have no concerns about this, we think it highly desirable.” [CS 45]
- “This may cause tension between existing and new providers.” [CS 49]

While a number of participants took the opportunity to strike a blow at currently contracted service providers (e.g. FMO [CS 22, 45, 46], GHA [CS 46], LCoF [CS 5, 22]), there was also evident support for some of them (e.g. FMO [TM2]; LCoF [TM2]; SDS [14 printed copies of the online questionnaire, completed by hand]; TREC [CS30, 46; PM4, 5])

As it is normal and expected for respondents to a review such as this to conflate services delivered across the City Council, it was only to be expected that some respondents passed comments related to other provision:

- Transforming Neighbourhood Services [CS 3]
- Multi-Agency Forum [CS 8]
- General concern regarding knock-on effect of strained relationships with other divisions and services in LCC [CS 14]

Some contributors expressed concern at the City Council’s record on monitoring and performance management, including disappointment that we have not held currently contracted service providers more strictly to account while expressing hope that this process will be observed more rigorously in future.

- “Any organisation receiving funding must be robustly monitored for activity.” [CS 39]
- Necessity for clear outputs and outcomes and for contracted organisations – and those monitoring them) to know the difference [PM1]

There was general acknowledgment that Leicester’s VCS is not developed well enough in terms of skills and experience to deliver services effectively. This leads to the conclusion that the City Council has to press VAL into delivering the kind of support for which they are being funded, ranging from day-to-day volunteering through to governance [CS 7, 41]. There was also anxiety about VAL’s potential involvement [CS 3].

There were several contributions on the topic of the City Council’s support for umbrella organisations. There were comments both pro- and anti- (though clearly the former was in the ascendant):

- “This would seem a more efficient approach and lead to a better cost/benefit ratio.” [CS 9]
- “Leicester City Council should work with any Grassroot Organisation that creates a Community and helps Service Users to have a voice that is listened to and acted upon. This should not just be the big Umbrella organisations but the little ones that specialise and work closely with individuals.” [CS 15]
- “Without wishing to decry the work which some umbrella organisations perform, they cannot speak for everyone. Affording preference to umbrella organisations will lead to the drowning out of some voices.” [CS 16]
- “it is good to encourage existing organisations that represent same protected characteristics to come together to share the support that they can get the city council and responsibility. I will suggest the city council should make clear and encourage for the organisations to come together and share allocated resources for the benefit of their community.” [CS 21]
- “Contracts should be awarded based purely on the quality of the tender submitted rather than a ‘preference’ being given to certain types of organisation, ‘umbrella’ or otherwise.” [CS 26]
- “I have mixed feelings about this.... There are a number of organisations who have a wealth of knowledge in their area of expertise, which I fear would be diluted by umbrella organisations, and partnerships should be encouraged and supported more greatly. If support was only give [sic] to umbrella organisations, there would be a loss of dialogue between VCS organisations, with many not feeling valued under this proposal. However, umbrella organisations would hopefully work in partnership with other individuals [CS and] VCS organisations with their work, especially in regards to signposting. Also, the previous success of umbrella organisations needs

to be reviewed too, to show how they are meeting the needs of individuals with shared identities.” [CS 36]

- “No preference should be given because contracts should be awarded based on competence, knowledge and inclusion. By default umbrella organisations are selective and assume status.” [CS 39]
- “Some umbrella organisations are more inclusive than others.” [CS 46]
- “In present scenario this is very relevant.” [CS 47]
- “If the role of the protected characteristics and organisations that are under city council “umbrella” is to work with others and sharing an identity, unfortunately we have never experienced this.” [CS 48]

We could compare this to the response on umbrella organisations in the 2013-14 public consultation, in which they were supported by some as being the best means to overcome boundaries between different kinds of groups, for encouraging and enabling such groups to work together and for getting support down to grass roots, smaller communities who haven’t the strength in numbers or influence to obtain support otherwise.

Inclusion of references to the Equality Act 2010 and its protected characteristics drew a number of responses:

- “look for inclusive providers with a good understanding of equality across the characteristics.” [CS 7]
- “‘Shared identity’ and protected characteristics’ are very simplistic descriptions of the population. It also leads to a competitive approach and undermines cohesion.” [CS 12]
- “Engagement across all protected characteristics allows for openness, transparency and inclusiveness. This approach to equality and diversity places the organisation in a position of readiness when responding to and dealing with these new and emerging community groups.” [CS 14]
- “... it should be made clear that people cross many communities, i.e. a gay, south Asian muslim and that some targeted organisations need to be open to that greater diversity.” [CS 35]
- “I suspect some organisations will not want to work across the different equality strands which would not be acceptable.” [CS 39]

## **8. PROPOSED OUTCOMES**

The public consultation presented a set of proposed outputs and outcomes, which qualifying organisations would be asked to deliver under hypothetical new contracts. In a similarly hypothetical procurement process, these – or something developed from them – would be the focus for applicant organisations’ method statements to assess their ability to deliver effectively. Attendees at the public meetings and thematic meetings had the opportunity to comment on these seven proposed outcomes in a short workshop:

1. Support Leicester City Council in honouring its Public Sector Equality Duty

eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation;

advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2. Help Leicester City Council engage with their community (or communities) on important issues and areas of need affecting people in Leicester, where City Council has made public commitments (e.g. mental health; domestic violence; child poverty; peaceful settlement of new arrivals; ameliorating impact of welfare reforms)
3. Provide main point of contact for Leicester City Council on issues that could affect cohesion and integration within their community (or communities).
4. Share and help make sense of data and information, especially related to Leicester City Council’s policy & service development affecting their community (or communities).
5. Disseminate news and information from Leicester City Council, especially related to policy & service development affecting their community (or communities).
6. Ensure that issues related to their community (or communities) and/or protected characteristic(s) in which it works receive appropriate consideration within policies and operations of City Council (its partners and stakeholders) leading to improved design, delivery, monitoring and review of services.
7. Cooperate with relevant partners and stakeholders to support engagement across protected characteristics (i.e. age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage & civil partnership; pregnancy & childbirth; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation).

## **9. HYPOTHETICAL PROCUREMENT EXERCISE**

A degree of concern was expressed over a hypothetical procurement exercise, which some respondents feared could be exclusive [CS 3]. It should be said, however, that such comments were made by people with little apparent knowledge or experience of the procurement exercise held in the earlier iteration of the VCS support review (2013-14). Steps were taken at that time to improve accessibility and simplify the process, bearing in mind that many potential applicants would have had limited experience of such an exercise.

Some effort went into allaying such concerns at the public and thematic meetings, with a justification and explanation of the process, along with assurances that if a procurement exercise were to be held, reasonable measures would be taken to ensure accessibility and openness of participation (e.g. workshops for potential bidders).

In relation to the options outlined in section 6 above, that kind of rigorous procurement exercise would only be required if either option 1 or option 2 above were adopted. Option 3 would not require that kind of procurement exercise, but could be administered with a lighter touch.

## **10. TRANSPARENCY**

The City Council is eager to distance itself from any accusations that it operates in a culture of cronyism. Accusations and assumptions that this is the case emerged at various points in the public consultation. It was said that deals were done behind closed doors, that everything has already been fixed (to the benefit or detriment of the currently contracted service providers, depending on who was doing the talking). It was expressed on more than one occasion that the consultation was nothing more than a smokescreen, either for business as usual or for a scorched earth policy.

It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some of those responsible for delivering services currently in this field are relying on the patronage of influential individuals to ensure that their funding and support continues – even if little or no effort is put in on their part to ensure this. Entreaties have been made (and no doubt, will be made later in this process) on behalf of particular communities, groups and organisations for special treatment or to be made exceptions to this process. Some interpretations – and misinterpretations – of these conversations are now abroad in the communities, for good or ill.

Throughout this process, it has been borne in mind the fact that, among the reasons given for taking over the direct running of Tower Hamlets Council given by then-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, was that:

*the mayoral administration's grants programme handed out taxpayers' money with no apparent rationale for the grant awards. There were no objectives, and there was no fair or transparent approach to grants, which the council's so-called corporate grants programme board was supposed to ensure. There was no proper monitoring. Grants were systematically made without transparency. Officer evaluation was overruled—across mainstream grants, 81% of all officer recommendations were rejected. More than £400,000 was given to bodies that failed the minimum criteria to be awarded anything at all.<sup>6</sup>*

## 11. HATE CRIME

The City Council has taken into account outputs and outcomes from the University of Leicester Hate Crime Project (published 2014) during this public consultation. This is because of its relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration and to the protected characteristics at the centre of this review. The claims attached to this report are that it will:

- Extend knowledge across protected characteristics, general public, local authority and partners;
- Reduce incidences of Hate Crime;
- Improve experience of victims of hate Crime and those reporting it;
- Consolidate relations with partners in Private Sector, Public Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector around this issue;
- Relate our proposed outcomes to genuine lived experience of people identifying with these protected characteristics (both positive and negative);
- People being victimised because of their being “different” is negative side of diversity – not all experience of life in our multicultural city is positive and we must recognise and react to this;

This demonstrates a practical way in which it can be seen how protected characteristics and identities relate and interact within and between Leicester's diverse communities.

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<sup>6</sup> Hansard, 4 November 2014

