

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 19 July 2022

**Subject:** Our Manchester Voluntary & Community Sector (OMVCS)  
Refreshed Funding Programme

**Report of:** Director of Policy, Performance and Reform

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**Summary**

This report outlines the engagement and co-design processes that have informed the refresh of the funding programme, and provides an initial overview of proposed adaptations. The report also outlines work to review the City's VCSE support offer, that is running concurrently, which will be an important point of support for the groups supported by this fund from 2023 onwards.

**Recommendations**

The committee is invited to note and comment on the contents of this paper.

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**Wards Affected:** All

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
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The refresh of the OMVCS funding programme aims to support VCSE organisations to advance the City's zero-carbon in the operation of their functions. The refresh recognises that some VCSE organisations will need support and guidance on how this can be proportionately achieved and seeks to build this into the fabric of the refreshed programme.
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Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Manchester's VCSE sector generated a total income of around £500 million in 2019-20 and in addition to its paid workforce, created over 160,000 volunteering opportunities, with volunteers giving about 481,000 hours each week valued at about £242 million p/a ( <i>Manchester State of the VCSE Sector report, 2021</i> ). The OMVCS fund plays a critical role in supporting the health and sustainability of the sector and contributes to these outcomes.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The VCSE organisations supported through this fund are run and supported by a diverse range of skilled workers, both those in paid roles and those giving voluntary hours. In addition to providing work opportunities, many of the funded organisations provide employability support, often working with those communities and individuals requiring specific types of support to benefit from Manchester's economic success.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The OMVCS Fund supports organisations whose primary funded activity is to work in a strengths-based way with individuals and communities to maximise their potential and have an active contribution in Manchester. This includes organisations providing activities targeted on a geographical, community or characteristic basis, delivered through a diverse range of supportive approaches.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	OMVCS funded organisations frequently work with residents to celebrate their achievements, contributions and identities. Organisations promote Manchester as a place of choice by celebrating the value and diversity of the City and its people.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Funded organisations have progressed the digital inclusion agenda significantly in the last two years, adapting service delivery to online and / or blended options, and working with key stakeholder groups to address and remove digital barriers. As a result, some resident groups (i.e. older people, people whose first language is not English, sensory impaired people) are more able to connect with VCSE services than ever before.

**Contact Officers:**

Name: James Binks  
Position: Assistant Chief Executive  
Telephone: 0161 234 1146  
E-mail: james.binks@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Keiran Barnes  
Position: Policy and Programmes Manager (Communities and VCSE)  
Telephone: 0161 234 3036  
E-mail: keiran.barnes@manchester.gov.uk

**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- *Update on Work with the VCSE Sector During Covid-19 report*, Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee, 8 October 2020

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The Our Manchester Voluntary and Community Sector (OMVCS) Fund is Manchester City Council's largest grant funding programme to the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. Originally established in 2018, the programme provides £2.4 million of investment per annum in the sector, on a three-yearly basis. The programme is being refreshed going into the 2023-24 financial year, to ensure that it retains a strategic fit with the Our Manchester Strategy and reflects some of the key changes that have affected the City, its people and the VCSE sector during the funding period to date.
- 1.2 This report outlines the engagement and co-design processes that have informed the refresh of the funding programme, and provides an initial overview of proposed adaptations. The report also outlines work to review the City's VCSE support offer, that is running concurrently, which will be an important point of support for the groups supported by this fund from 2023 onwards.

## **2. Summary of Recommendations**

- 2.1 For the committee's information, the key outcomes to be taken forward from the engagement and co-design processes are:
  - Devise a refined set of funding aims which address key priority areas of health and wellbeing, equality and inclusion and tackling poverty
  - Review the programme's supporting information to ensure that sufficient guidance is available for applicant organisations
  - Refresh the list of principles for the fund to take account of key matters arising from engagement and co-design (detailed below)
  - Retain a tiered funding structure but adjust the funding amounts and how these are described
  - Review the requirements of applicant / funded organisations in line with the tiered funding structure

## **3. Background to the VCSE Sector in Manchester**

- 3.1 Manchester's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector has a crucial role to play in the realisation of the City's ambitions, in particular, in helping to deliver the aims of the Our Manchester Strategy: Forward to 2025. The breadth and diversity of Manchester's VCSE sector is its great strength, with wide-ranging types of support, activities and services being provided for an equally diverse range of communities, of both geography and identity. The 2021 Manchester State of the VCSE Sector report outlines the changing dynamics of the sector over the last five years, showing that in Manchester:
  - There are over 3,800 VCSE organisations in the City (up from around 3,390 in 2017) although the total income of the sector in 2019-20 was around £500 million, down from £540 million in 2017.

- The VCSE workforce includes over 162,000 volunteers (an increase from about 111,00 in 2017) giving over 480,000 hours each week (278,000 in 2017). This is valued at £242 million per annum, which is down from the £252 million valuation in 2017.
  - 85% of organisations are bringing at least one source of non-public funds into the City (89% in 2017).
  - 66% of organisations are 'micro' (annual income of under £10k - same as in 2017), often providing support to specific communities of identity and / or geography.
- 3.2 The dynamics of change in the sector are not linear; organisations experience different challenges that are influenced by factors such as their size, their organisational purpose and the availability of funding aligned to this, the capability of their workforce to bid effectively for funds etc. In addition, the sector has faced numerous additional pressures in the last few years. Whilst numerous funding programmes were launched in immediate response to the Covid-19 pandemic, these have been short-term funds and the longer-term impact on public funds (and the availability of these to support VCSE sector activities) has been a detrimental one.
- 3.3 During that same time, there has been a significant increase in levels of demand for VCSE services, which is now not receding at the same rate as the availability of short-term Covid-response funding. The increase in demand alongside the unavailability of funding has led many VCSE organisations to adapt and adjust their business delivery models, revise their use of finances and draw on reserves; this is a challenging legacy of the events of recent years.

#### **4. Background to VCSE Sector Funding**

- 4.1 Alongside its public sector partners, Manchester City Council has long recognised the importance of the VCSE sector's role in achieving the City's priorities, and has sought to reflect this in its grant funding approach. The Our Manchester Voluntary & Community Sector (OMVCS) Fund is Manchester City Council's largest grant funding programme to support the City's VCSE sector. The programme comprises £2.4 million annually, normally across a three-year funding period (£7.2 million in total), supporting VCSE organisations whose purpose and activities are aligned to the Our Manchester aims.
- 4.2 The first round of the OMVCS Fund was originally launched in 2018-2021, and was aligned to the original Our Manchester Strategy. It has been extended in subsequent years (2021-23), owing to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic preventing the opportunity to refresh the programme. During that time, the fund has supported 63 organisations to deliver high quality (and increasingly, during the pandemic, adaptive and responsive) approaches which have improved outcomes for Manchester residents and helped to make progress on the City's strategic aims. A total of over 127,000 residents have been supported through the funded organisations by almost 7,000 volunteers providing around 156,000 volunteer hours. This has generated around £8

million additional income for the City. A handful of case studies are included at *Appendix 1* of this report to demonstrate the kind of difference being made to individuals' lives through the funded activity.

- 4.3 The OMVCS fund has sought to address some of the City's most prevailing challenges, which have shifted during the lifetime of the current arrangement. During the period that the current fund has been operating:
- The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and complex impact on the relative health of the sector: on one hand, there has been an influx of organisations established in response to the pandemic, but there has not been a similar uplift in funding opportunities, challenging an already competitive funding landscape
  - The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated a range of existing health and social inequalities, increasing the burden on the VCSE sector to provide support, frequently meaning adaptations to the type and format of the support offered with relatively little additional funding to achieve this (some Covid-specific funding has been made available but has been short-term and has not provided the stability that the sector needs)
  - A growing awareness of race equality issues, linked to Covid impact but also through the prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement, provided opportunities and challenges in equal measure for Manchester's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic VCSE organisations; an increased focus on race issues has raised the profile of some organisations, but challenges around Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leadership in the sector continue
  - It is expected that the 2021 Census will show a continuing diversity in Manchester's population, and this is reflected in the City's VCSE sector, both in terms of the sector's workforce and the target client-groups
  - The Our Manchester Strategy, against which the OMVCS Fund is aligned, was refreshed in 2020 and Our Manchester: Forward to 2025 sharpens the City's focus and priorities going into the next funding period
- 4.4 These events and others set a new context in which to review and refresh the OMVCS Funding Programme. With the effects of the pandemic now easing, there has been the opportunity to do this, engaging a range of VCSE stakeholders to do so. This has helped to ensure that, keeping with the ethos of the original programme, a refreshed fund is being developed with and for the City's VCSE sector.

## **5. Refreshing the OMVCS Fund**

- 5.1 Work began in April 2022 to review and refresh the OMVCS Fund, taking on board the views of a wide range of stakeholders, primarily VCSE sector groups, to inform the work. These views were captured in a two-stage approach: stage one was a wide-ranging engagement exercise inviting face to face, online and survey responses; stage two was a co-design process which worked through the engagement outcomes with a small, focused group of VCSE and public sector partners and assessed what this would mean for a

refreshed fund. The Council is very grateful for the views, insights and ideas shared throughout these processes.

- 5.2 The focus throughout all of this work was to refresh the existing programme, rather than to completely redesign it. The Our Manchester Funds Team has heard overwhelmingly positive opinions about the fund during the administration of it and its core purpose, to retain an alignment with the Our Manchester strategy and support a healthy and sustainable local VCSE sector, remained unchanged. It is essential though, that the fund continues to respond to City and community priorities such as those outlined above, and the refresh seeks to ensure this.
- 5.3 The contributors to the engagement and co-design processes are outlined below, for the committee's information.

## **6. OMVCS Fund Engagement and Co-design Contributors**

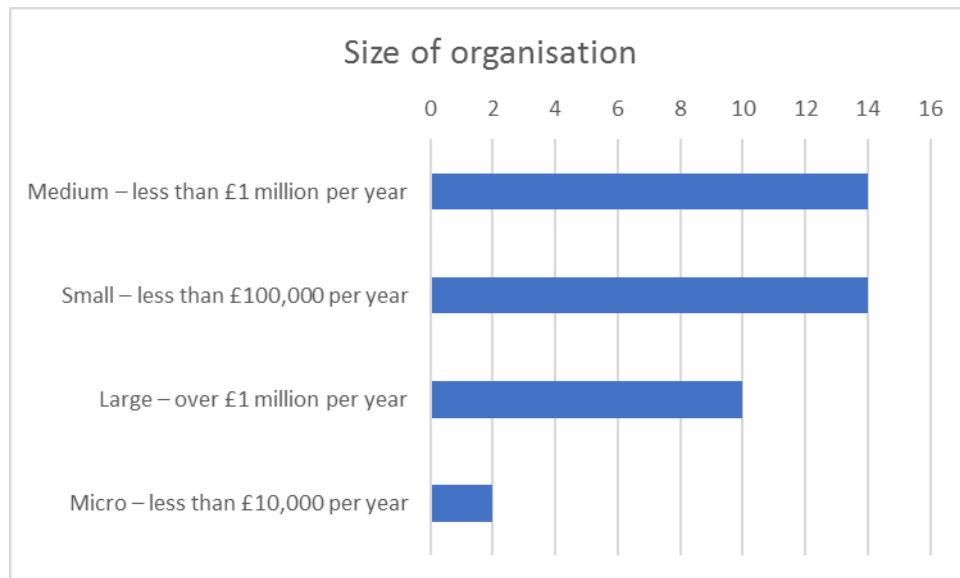
### **Methodology and Profile of Responses**

- 6.1 Between mid-April and early May 2022, eight engagement sessions took place including:
- 5 in-person events across Manchester using a mix of community venues across North, Central and South Manchester.
  - 3 online events over Zoom
- 6.2 A survey link was provided for those not able to attend, or who had further information to add. The survey was open from 4 April to 4 May inclusive.
- 6.3 Across the various engagement opportunities:
- 40 organisations completed the survey.
  - 71 people attended the engagement sessions (sometimes more than one person from the same organisation). 36% of organisations signing up did not go on to attend an event.
  - In total, 94 individual organisations contributed to the engagement, either by attending an event or by completing the survey with some organisations doing both.
- 6.4 The table below includes an indicative breakdown of the 94 organisations across equalities groups and themes:

<b>Organisation type</b>	<b>Number engaged</b>	<b>% of whole</b>
North Manchester	18	19.15%
Disability	6	6.38%
LGBT+	6	6.38%
Faith	6	6.38%
Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic	21	22.34%
OMVCS currently funded	45	47.87%

Carers	5	5.32%
Outside of Manchester	4	4.26%
Homelessness	3	3.19%
Culture	5	5.32%
Age-friendly / older people	13	13.83%

- 6.5 The chart below shows the size of the organisations that responded to the survey (43% of the whole), defined by income. This data was not collected for the face to face or online sessions, but the sizes represented through survey responses are taken to be broadly representative of the process overall.



- 6.6 Engagement events and the survey were promoted across the City's VCSE infrastructure support provider, Macc, including their email bulletins, MCC's website, Council Twitter channels and the Our Manchester Funds Team's mailing lists and networks. Targeted communications were made to reach Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, North Manchester groups and Faith groups through these channels. The engagement also sought to include a mix of responses from both currently funded groups and non-funded groups.
- 6.7 Following the engagement exercise, the Our Manchester Funds team brought together a co-design group of stakeholders reflecting different sizes and types of organisations, different identities and geographies, and different experiences of grant-making processes, namely:
- Back on Track Manchester
  - Macc
  - Making Education a Priority (MEaP)
  - Manchester BME Network
  - Manchester Mind
  - MHCC
  - Tree of Life Centre
  - Manchester City Council – Neighbourhoods



## 7. Outcomes of the Engagement and Co-design Processes

7.1 Below is a summary of the main points of feedback gained across the various engagement sessions, how this information was considered by the co-design group and where possible, what is being proposed for the refreshed fund going forward. This section of the report is split into the main areas of the fund's structure:

- **Purpose, Aims and Objectives** – what the fund aims to achieve
- **Principles and Eligibility** – what types of organisations the fund aims to support
- **Funding Amounts** – how much organisations can bid for
- **Ways of Working** – the relationship that the funder and applicant needs to have pre, during and post application

7.2 This is not a definitive account of all comments received or co-design discussions, but captures the main considerations to aid the committee's overview of the process.

## 8. Purpose, Aims and Objectives

8.1 It is important that there is clarity and a shared understanding of the fund's core purpose, to set the context for the programme. The co-design group proposed a description of the fund's purpose which recognises that the fund sits within a wider context (e.g. Our Manchester Strategy, Marmot Review, Local Plan etc.) to support residents and address inequality, and that the OMVCS fund alone cannot be too heavily relied on to contribute to all the city's VCSE funding goals. This has resulted in a re-articulation of the OMVCS Fund's original purpose with clarity about the important role that the VCSE sector plays in Manchester:

*The purpose of the OMVCS Funding Programme is to sustain and support a healthy and thriving local voluntary sector in Manchester, so that it can continue to support the city's residents and focus on what the sector excels at.*

8.2 The Our Manchester Funds Team presented the engagement groups with an overview of the OMVCS 2018-21 aims and objectives (including draft new aims on equalities, poverty and climate change), which were as follows:

1. To have a strong sense of citizenship and pride in the city
2. Collectively improve our health and wellbeing
3. Support the positive contribution older people make to city life and their communities and continue to be recognised as a pioneering Age-Friendly city
4. Increase volunteering across the city
5. Support carers to carry out the invaluable work they do
6. Work to improve the resilience of individuals and communities.
7. Address the inequalities experienced by a diverse range of Manchester residents, ensuring all communities are included in the life of the city

8. Work to reduce carbon emissions, with a view to achieving year-on-year reductions across the programme
9. Create routes out of poverty through support to work for fair pay, skills development and support to manage complex challenges

8.3 The Our Manchester Funds Team asked VCSE organisations:

1. Which of these objectives feel the most or least important to you and your organisation and why?
2. Is there anything not represented that should be?

8.4 The most common points raised by engagement groups were:

Health and Wellbeing was seen as most relevant and highest priority during engagement
The flexibility of the fund and its objectives has been a great strength
The current objectives do not 'work' in their current format: some are very specific objectives while others are broader aims, and some could be argued to be by-products of other activity (e.g. a sense of pride, individual resilience)
For some of the more specialised aims (i.e. climate change / low carbon), groups may need support to achieve them
Groups wanted to know whether objectives would be weighted and assessed, and questioned whether some were overarching that all must meet
North Manchester and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities / communities of identity more broadly should be clearly reflected in the fund's objectives
Some groups felt Covid should be addressed in the narrative, but many agreed the fund shouldn't now be entirely Covid focused
Priorities around digital inclusion and community voice / lived experience were also suggested to be included in the programme

8.5 Considering these points, the co-design group's key discussion points on purpose, aims and objectives were:

The key priorities identified through engagement of wellbeing and in/equality were agreed with and poverty was seen as interconnected with this: a refined set of broader aims around these areas would describe the priorities of the fund in a clearer way and allow some of the more specific activity (i.e. for older people and carers) to have a natural fit within a broader funding framework
Areas requiring additional support need to be factored into the fund and the Our Manchester Funds Team should look across the structure of the fund for the logical place for these to sit (i.e. guidance for applicants, ongoing support for funded groups throughout the funded period etc). This may include developing three-year plans with successful applicants to grow capability throughout the funded period
Refined aims are not expected to be weighted because they are interconnected and equally important; weighting consideration may be given to other criteria (for example, the Council's priorities around race equality, investing in VCSE activity in the north and east of the City)

Covid's impact on the VCSE sector should also be considered in how the fund is managed more generally (i.e. recognising that the increase in new / small VCSE organisations in the response phase will likely be reflected in the application phase)

Lived experience and assessing how well applicant organisations know and respond to their communities should be built into the application and assessment processes

8.6 As a result, the co-design process indicated that a refined set of aims for the fund should be devised focusing on:

1. health and wellbeing;
2. equality and inclusion, and;
3. tackling poverty

8.7 Other aspects of the engagement feedback were deemed as important but potentially need to be addressed elsewhere in the programme's overall structure.

## 9. Principles and Eligibility

9.1 The Our Manchester Funds Team presented the engagement groups with an overview of the 2018 principles of the OMVCS Fund. These principles describe the requirements of organisations that would be eligible for the funding, and were set as follows:

- A track record of working with Manchester residents for at least three years
- That they are "well run"
- A strengths-based approach (inc. service user involvement)
- Collaborative ways of working with other organisations
- Diverse income sources, with weighting to organisations that are less reliant on MCC funding
- Value for money

9.2 The Our Manchester Funds Team asked VCSE organisations:

1. Are there principles you would expect to see that are currently missing?
2. Do you think it would be right to continue to expect all principles of all future OMVCS funded organisations?

9.3 The most common points raised by engagement groups were:

The existing principles are a good foundation for the fund with some caveats, i.e:

- All principles should be clearly defined
- All principles should be expected of all groups, however some principles are more important than others and the expectations under each principle should depend on the amount being applied for / the organisation's context

Groups suggested the three-year track record should be reviewed, recognising the emergence of many newer groups in response to Covid-19
The importance of being well run, demonstrating impact and experience of working with the community were deemed the most important principles
Many groups advised that 'value for money' is difficult to measure and report, and how 'value' is measured runs a risk of undervaluing the sector's work
Having diverse income sources was recognised as good practice, but a greater emphasis was placed on the impact of the income
Additional principles suggested included: groups being experience-led / user-led; having a local community focus; being adaptable and; being able to show effective use of data

- 9.4 In response to these key engagement points on principles and eligibility, the co-design group discussion found that:

The group agreed that all the fund's principles remain correct but would benefit from clarification. The view that bids for higher amounts should lead to higher expectations (i.e. in evidencing impact) was supported
The three-year track record should be re-looked at in light of recent trends in the sector: an adjustment to 18 months would be appropriate
Whilst value for money was a contentious principle in the engagement process, the group agreed that for a funder, understanding the expected value for money of an investment is sound and reasonable to expect, and should stay within the principles of the fund. This would need clear guidance for applicants and the funding assessment panel, to ensure it is correctly recorded and assessed
'Diverse income sources' was agreed should remain a principle as it is still important for the health of the sector to be able to draw of a range of funding, but the funding assessment panel process should be mindful of the funding challenges that organisations are likely to be experiencing
Well-run organisations should be expected to demonstrate effective governance, not adequate governance, again in line with the purpose of the fund being about investing public funds responsibly in a healthy and well-run sector. Guidance on the types of evidence that organisations might use to demonstrate this should, it was agreed, be outlined in guidance materials for the fund
The term 'strengths based' was accepted as working from strengths and building on potential, but the principles (and guidance) could underline the importance of involvement and residents' voices, as experts in their own experience
The collaboration principle is important for all organisations that want to apply, to be able to demonstrate that they have links with other VCSE organisations; that applicants are not working in isolation. Group members noted the distinctions between collaboration as an informal way of connecting the sector more effectively (which they felt should be an expectation of the fund), versus formal partnerships. It was felt that formal partnerships should not be an expectation for funding (as is the case for other funds) but may be an option for applicants provided the partnership can be demonstrated to comply with the

principles of the fund, and be the most effective way of achieving the stated aim
The group considered whether the larger organisations on the 2023-26 programme could be expected to support smaller ones. The point was made that larger organisations are not automatically capacity-building organisations simply because of their size, and do not necessarily have the skills, resources to capacity build others. Ongoing capacity-building / infrastructure support to other organisations should not therefore be built into the principles

- 9.5 As a result, the co-design group recommended that the existing list of principles remain in place with some adaptations which take account of the points raised above.

## 10. Funding Amounts

- 10.1 The Our Manchester Funds Team presented the engagement groups with an overview of the 2018 funding amounts, as follows:

Grant amount	Over 3 years	Per annum
Medium	£15,000 - £60,000	£5,000 - £20,000
Large	£60,003 - £300,000	£20,001 - £100,000
Very Large	£300,000+	£100,000+
<i>Only organisations with an existing grant income from Manchester City Council above £100,000 a year could apply for over £100,000</i>		

- 10.2 The Our Manchester Funds Team asked VCSE organisations:

1. Does the tiered approach to funding work and if not, what are the alternatives?
2. Given your experience as a grantee and knowledge of OMVCS, what level of annual funding per organisation would you expect from OMVCS22?

- 10.3 The most common points raised by engagement groups were:

Groups agreed that the tiered, multi-year grants model should be kept, with possible refinement around grant amounts. Some suggested limiting the number of very large grant awards to make more room for additional medium grants
Groups requested the opportunity to apply for more than they might have done previously to reflect rising costs and organisational growth; the fund, they indicated, should not include restrictions that prevent this
Engagement linked this discussion back to the principles, suggesting different expectations of funded organisations depending on what amount is being applied for, i.e. higher expectations relating to eligibility requirements, application detail and monitoring requirements for larger grant holders
Groups mainly want support for core costs, costs that are not known at the application stage and unrestricted funding. The main strength of the OMVCS fund is that it can provide this type of support over a number of years, which relatively few (short term) grant funds do: groups wanted this to continue

10.4 On considering this feedback, the co-design group identified that:

<p>A tiered system of funding is helpful and should be maintained. However, the lower and upper sums should be reassessed to ensure that they are in line with the purpose of the fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group felt that £10k minimum a year feels more appropriate in the current climate, given the challenges faced by the sector and the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the funding horizon</li> <li>• The upper limit of '£100k+' per annum was queried, with some suggesting it should be capped at £100k</li> </ul>
<p>The 'medium / large / very large' descriptions were queried, noting the lowest amount would normally be considered a small grant. Reviewing this language was recommended</p>
<p>Support for being able to apply for whatever funding amount is required to support your proposal, but that organisations should be asked to illustrate the amount being applied for as a percentage of their turnover. This would tie into some of the principles of the fund (i.e. well-run, diverse income sources) and help the funding assessment panel to make sound funding decisions based on all relevant factors</p>
<p>Agreement that requirements of organisations at the higher tier of funding should be greater than others</p>

10.5 Based on these discussions, the proposed outcome of the co-design process is to adapt the upper and lower funding amounts and change the way these are described. The fund's main strength, of being a longer-term enabler for healthy VCSE sector activity, is not proposed for change but increasingly stringent measures should be in place at the various funding tiers to ensure that awards are made in line with applicants' ability to meet the fund's principles and deliver against one or more of the aims.

## 11. Ways of Working

11.1 The Our Manchester Funds Team asked engagement groups about the ways in which the Council as a funder should work with its applicants and funded groups throughout the lifespan of the refreshed programme, focusing on three stages: pre-application, during the application process and post-application. The main responses indicated that:

<b>Pre-application responses</b>	
Good, honest communication from the funder was the highest priority	This includes clarity of the funding focus, expectations and eligibility criteria and clear timescales
<b>During application</b>	
Groups identified the importance of support (i.e. from infrastructure providers, peer support) throughout the application process	The need for FAQs or other tools to assist with the application process was highlighted
<b>Post application</b>	

Groups clearly wanted feedback on their application, regardless of the funding outcome	For funded groups, a good monitoring process was deemed essential with a good, collaborative relationship between the funder and funded organisations at its core
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- 11.2 These features of good ways of working have been taken on by the Our Manchester Funds Team and will inform the way that the 2023-26 is managed. This was not taken to co-design as the feedback is clear and has formed the team's business as usual.

## 12. Next Steps

- 12.1 As a result of these discussions, the Our Manchester Funds Team is now in the process of developing the feedback and proposals into a refreshed funding programme for 2023-26. At the time of writing this report, that work has not concluded.
- 12.2 This work is being progressed with the aim of launching a refreshed OMVCS Fund for applications in September 2022. An indicative timeline of key activities and decisions leading up to the launch of the refreshed programme is below, for the committee's information:

Action	Timescale
Proposed programme refresh (full prospectus document and cover report) drafted	By 20 July
Senior Responsible Officer and Executive Member approval	By 22 July
Amendment if required	25-27 July
Communication materials, FAQs and engagement events finalised	w/c 25 July
Refreshed programme approved by OMVCS Board	By 29 July
Launch communications and engagement campaign to promote fund	1-31 August
Programme Team and infrastructure provider support to applicant organisations	August
Launch OMVCS Funding Programme	w/c 5 September (open until 16 Oct)

- 12.3 The funding assessment panel is scheduled to run in late October / early November. It is proposed that the outcomes of that process be shared with this committee prior to the agreement of the OMVCS funding 2023-26.

### **13. VCSE Support review**

- 13.1 In addition to the refresh of the OMVCS Fund outlined above, the Our Manchester Funds Team has committed to review the Council's infrastructure support contract arrangements during the course of 2022-23. The infrastructure contract, currently delivered by Macc, has been jointly funded by Manchester City Council and Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC) and managed by the Our Manchester Funds Team. This review is set in a similar context to that which is shaping the OMVCS Fund refresh: the City's VCSE sector has been shaped by the events of recent years and the ongoing implications of these for several years to come. In addition, the adjustment from MHCC to the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership has been considered. It is important that the infrastructure contract arrangement responds to these issues, and principally, that this is based on the voices and needs of the City's VCSE sector.
- 13.2 The Our Manchester Funds Team and health colleagues have worked to review the current infrastructure arrangements, working with an independent research partner to do this. The review process has offered an insight into the experiences and priorities of the City's VCSE sector, although options for what this might mean for a refreshed VCSE support offer are still being considered at a very high level.
- 13.3 The challenging workload and timescales for the OMVCS Fund refresh, presented above, have unsurprisingly taken priority and work on the VCSE support review is being managed to take account of this. In addition, it will be vital that the infrastructure support currently delivered by Macc remains available throughout the OMVCS refresh, application and decision-making period, both for the Council and for Manchester's VCSE organisations, and this is reflected in the sequencing of the work.
- 13.4 The current infrastructure support contract was scheduled to expire in September 2022, with the option to extend by two years. Agreement has been reached to extend the current arrangement until 31 March 2023, during which time the review outcomes and resulting options will be assessed and progressed.
- 13.5 This work is in its infancy and more details are not available at this time. However, it is proposed that this committee receives a further report on this work towards the end of the calendar year to provide a more thorough account of the considerations and work to that date.

### **14. Conclusions**

- 14.1 The period since the initial launch of the Our Manchester VCS Fund in 2018 has been one of such substantial and significant change, that a refresh to the fabric of the funding programme was likely to be needed. However, it is encouraging to note that many facets of the original programme have remained fit for purpose, relevant and above all, valued. This enables the Our Manchester Funds Team to revitalise the funding programme to fit in a



modern context without requiring fundamental change. Importantly, this also offers a high degree of continuity and sustainability to the VCSE sector at a time when this is of vital importance.

- 14.2 Similarly, the challenges of recent years have caused the Council and NHS partners to look again at the support offered to the VCSE sector through the infrastructure arrangements. Whilst this work is at a much earlier stage of development and it is not possible to point to its likely direction, what is clear is that the need for and value of this type of support is high within the sector. Progress on this work will be reported to the committee as it becomes available.
- 14.3 These two areas of work, taken together, represent an enormous amount of work and potential change. However, with the vital role that Manchester's VCSE sector plays in advancing the aims of the City's strategy and ambitions, creating the conditions for the sector's sustainability and support in this way is a high priority for the coming months.
- 14.4 The committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of this report.