

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Our Manchester VCS Fund Task and Finish Group – 31 January 2019

Subject: Final Report and Recommendations

Report of: Our Manchester VCS Fund Task and Finish Group

Summary

This report presents the findings and conclusions of the Our Manchester VCS Fund Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group carried out an investigation into the implementation of the new Our Manchester VCS Fund programme and the first funding round. Once agreed by the Task and Finish Group, the final report will be submitted to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

The Our Manchester VCS Fund Task and Finish Group are asked to:

Note the findings of the Task and Finish Group and agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

Wards Affected: All

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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 the officer above.

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference of the Task and Finish Group

Appendix 2 – Work Programme of the Task and Finish Group

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) sector is commonly regarded as a 'vital part of the fabric of the city, embodying many of the principles of Our Manchester,' (Cllr Sue Murphy, VCS Grant Prospectus 2018-2021); providing connections between local residents, their communities and a range of services and opportunities within local neighbourhoods.
- 1.2. The Our Manchester VCS (OMVCS) fund, was developed in recognition of the role of the VCS has in city, investing £2,466,033 a year for 3 years (£7.4m in total) into 62 organisations. The programme went live in April 2018 after an almost 2 year co-design process that involved representatives of the VCS, Members and Council and Manchester Health & Care Commissioning (MHCC) officers.
- 1.3. At the meeting of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee on 4 January 2018, following the first round of funding through the OMVCS Fund, Members raised some concerns about the process which had been carried out.
- 1.4. At its request, the Committee received additional information on this and discussed it further at its meetings on 1 February 2018, 1 March 2018 and 24 May 2018. At its 1 February 2018 meeting, the Committee decided that a group of Members should work with officers to review the process before the next round of funding applications. It was subsequently agreed at the Committee's 24 May 2018 meeting that this should take the form of a Task and Finish Group.
- 1.5. The Resources and Governance Scrutiny (RAGS) Committee also discussed this issue at its 1 February 2018 meeting and it was agreed that Members of the RAGS Committee be included in the membership of the Task and Finish Group.
- 1.6. The objectives of the Task and Finish Group were:
 - To identify and explore Members' issues with the process used for the first round of funding applications.
 - To identify and explore the issues VCS groups experienced.
 - To recommend improvements to address these issues in future funding rounds. To include consideration of:
 - a) How local intelligence, including Ward Councillors' knowledge, could be incorporated into the process.
 - b) how information and decisions can be communicated to Members in a timely and appropriate way
 - c) any other mechanisms which could be built into the process to improve it.

1.7. The Task & Finish Group has met on three occasions (as outlined within the Terms of Reference and Work Programme) focused on the following key areas:

- Overview of the first funding round;
- Evidence from stakeholders, specifically VCS organisations that applied successfully and unsuccessfully for the grant; and
- Communication with Members.

2. The Members Task & Finish Group Recommendations

2.1. The discussions from the Members Task & Finish Group have been consolidated into the following recommendations:

2.2. Communication

- The Programme Team (OMVCS) is the central management and communication point for all OMVCS grant funding rounds. This includes information on all aspects of the process, assessment, decision making, monitoring and evaluation.
- General communication about the OMVCS programme and grant funding rounds to be sent to all 96 Members, including (but not limited to) –
 - Information on consultations, co-design processes and opportunities
 - Funding round information e.g. workshops, launch events, prospectus, links to application packs
 - Successful and unsuccessful applicants
 - Activity updates, newsletters, Twitter feeds
- The Programme Team to produce and send a ‘Fact Sheet’ for all Members prior to the launch of new grant funding rounds, with simple bullet point reminders, key messages, information and dates.
- Communication relating to funding decisions/decision making process to be updated to include simultaneous communications to organisations and all Members (in addition to scrutiny committees).

2.3. Co-design

- VCS co-design policy to be developed by Programme Team, working with stakeholders to include the involvement of designated Members and the Executive Lead Member (for VCS). This policy is to be recommended by the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee and any other Scrutiny committee deemed appropriate before being signed off by the Executive, to allow Members to clearly identify their role in the process.

- The Programme Team to ensure that a number of assessment options such as video evidence supporting applications, are considered as part of the co-design process for future grant funding rounds.
- Subject to funder's agreement, co-design processes to consider holding funds back for allocation for (geographic) areas and communities underfunded/underrepresented on funding rounds.
- All OMVCS grant funding documents to be reviewed regularly with a view to simplifying and minimising the number of documents used in each funding round such as the prospectus, guidance material and application forms.

2.4. **Decision Making and Programme Management**

- Briefings for assessment panels to include information from commissioners/funders, thematic specialists and Members where possible and appropriate and relevant to the funding round.
- The Programme Team and VCS infrastructure service to work together to organise and deliver information and advice workshops for organisations as part of future funding round application periods, including evenings and weekends, different venues and areas of the city.
- OMVCS grant tools to be produced for future funding rounds (using the information from the first round) on what makes a 'good' and 'bad' application.
- The Programme Team to continue to build in sufficient notice periods as per best practice (90 days current guideline) into decision making processes and funding in line with communications to organisations. This is to be delivered in an appropriate manner, mindful of the relationship the organisation may already have with the Council.
- Consequences/scenario planning for organisations that are funded by the Council but unsuccessful in their applications, to be developed as part of the process to help inform communications with the organisations and Members.
- The VCS infrastructure service provider to assist where appropriate in the scenario planning directly with organisations falling out of funding processes and/or deemed at risk.
- Members to have the opportunity to be involved in future grant development and co-design processes but not in the assessment and decision making process.

2.5. **Strategic Development**

- The Programme Team and VCS infrastructure service to work together and with other partners to continue to support and develop VCS provision in (geographic) areas and communities underfunded/underrepresented across the funding programme.
- VCS strategy for the city to be developed in partnership with the VCS and other key stakeholders by 2021 - action to sit with Executive Lead Member (VCS).

3. **The Next Steps**

- 3.1. The Chair of the Task & Finish Group, to present the recommendations in this paper to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee on the 7 March 2019, with a view to any further actions being progressed and reported on by the Executive Lead Member (VCS) and Programme Lead (for OMVCS).
- 3.2. The Members of the Task & Finish Group are asked to consider this report and agree to the recommendations described in point 2 (2.2. To 2.5) and the next steps in point 3.