

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 7 February 2019

**Subject:** Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Service – Co-design Recommendations

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive

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**Summary**

This report provides information on the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure service, specifically on the co-design process and recommendations for a new VCS infrastructure service contract.

**Recommendations**

Members are asked to consider and comment on the report for the VCS Infrastructure service contract co-design recommendations.

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**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 – VCSE Infrastructure Contract Strategic Vision & Priorities (Draft)

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Having a diverse, thriving, resilient, effective and sustainable Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) in Manchester is recognised as a key priority within the Our Manchester Strategy and as something that will enable the VCS to continue to provide an important contribution to delivering the vision and desired outcomes for the city. The Council is supporting the VCS in a number of ways, notably through the Our Manchester VCS (OMVCS) Grant Programme and its investment in VCS infrastructure support citywide. This service includes capacity building – development and support around governance, organisational structures, policy and funding; as well as engagement and influence in partnership work, co-design processes and volunteering opportunities for residents. The role of local infrastructure for the sector is seen as an important enabler to achieving the ambitions described above, as it provides services, support and advice to, and promotes, local charities, community groups and social enterprises that deliver social action.
- 1.2. In December 2018, Members of this committee received a report on the progress of the VCS infrastructure service review and co-design process. Since then a co-design group has finalised its recommendations, which as of Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019, have been shared more widely with VCS organisations, all 96 Members, officers in the Council and Manchester Health & Care Commissioning (MHCC) and key partners across Manchester. This report to the committee provides further information on the process and the draft recommendations that are being consulted on.

## **2. The Co-design Process (Recap)**

- 2.1. The co-design group was established as part of the process to develop the new VCS infrastructure service model and contract. Delivered across 3 sessions, facilitated by the Councils Programme Team (Our Manchester Funds), the purpose of the co-design group was to make a set of recommendations to the OMVCS Programme Board on the key principles, objectives and outcomes for the new contract. The co-design group and its recommendations were limited to the model and outcomes for the new VCS infrastructure service contract.
- 2.2. It is important in any co-design process to bring key stakeholders together (particularly those involved in delivering and receiving the service) to have open and honest conversations that seek to improve the current situation. Equally as important is the need to have a clear point in which this involvement ends and any potential bidders for the contract will cease to be involved. This separation is being made and OMVCS Programme Board has mandated that the co-design group will not be involved in the implementation of the accepted final recommendations and detailed specification used for procurement.
- 2.3. The Co-design members were chosen on the basis of the individuals' expertise, representation, passion and commitment, and their availability for the sessions. The current provider and potential bidders were allowed to take part in this process (as described above), specifically Session 1 and 2 of the co-design group but were not permitted to attend Session 3 which focused on

recommendations. They have also not had any involvement in the final recommendations made by the co-design group to the OMVCS Programme Board. The Sessions covered the following:

- Session 1 – The Outcomes
- Session 2 – The Conditions and Objectives
- Session 3 – Summary and Recommendations

### **3. The Co-design Recommendations**

3.1. At the start of the process, the co-design group and Programme Team agreed the following set of 'Givens' for the new contract:

- Manchester needs to and should continue to have a VCS infrastructure contract.
- The VCS sector is already making a massive contribution in the city, and more specifically in meeting the outcomes of the Our Manchester Strategy and the aims and objective of MHCC. The infrastructure contract will be to support this contribution and enable even more.
- Whilst there is a desire within the Council/MHCC to have a single infrastructure contract rather than two or more separate contracts, it is not definitive. The contract can be awarded to either a single infrastructure provider or multiple.
- Provider/s must demonstrate knowledge/understanding and connectivity to Manchester and VCS landscape.
- Information gathered from the co-design process for the Our
- OMVCS Grants Programme on the topic of infrastructure will be used as part of this co-design process. This is because the work is still relevant and sits within the same Our Manchester strategic context. However, we will not be going any further back than this work.
- Whilst organisations might potentially work together to deliver different elements of the future infrastructure contract, there is still a need for a single point of access (for information, advice and guidance).
- Social value needs to be demonstrated as part of the tendering processes and ongoing contract delivery and management.

3.2. The co-design group agreed the following recommendations:

#### **3.2.1. Development and Support**

- The infrastructure provider/s to take a 'building and growing' approach to development support, and that it is clear that support is provided to organisations that are willing to develop or improve. This also includes encouraging and supporting people and communities to come together, as well as supporting groups that are already in existence.
- The infrastructure support is not there to 'rescue' organisations.
- The offer to groups has to include a baseline conversation(s) to assess need and explain what support is and is not available.

- Support to be focused on facilitating and enabling and may be directly provided by the infrastructure provider/s or other partners better placed to offer this support.
- The infrastructure contract to have a focus on 'place' (local neighbourhoods) and 'communities of identity' using a variety of methods to deliver.
- The infrastructure contract to include definitions for 'Voluntary' organisations and 'Community' organisations.
- Provider/s to prioritise support for 'Voluntary' and 'Community' organisations, not social enterprises and to demonstrate the different offers/approach it will take to supporting these types of organisations.
- Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy and delivery, working alongside the MCC, to be included in the offer of development support available in the contract.
- The infrastructure provider/s need to demonstrate how they will prioritise support including the designation of resources to directly deliver or work with partners to deliver this on a paid basis.

### **3.2.2. Participation and Voice**

- There needs to be one single point of access for information, advice and guidance that is clearly branded. However, this does not mean that there could only be one infrastructure provider.
- Infrastructure provider/s to demonstrate how they will develop/improve feedback mechanisms to, from and between the sector.
- The infrastructure provider/s to demonstrate in their tender document how they will enable and facilitate participation within the budget.
- The infrastructure provider/s to demonstrate how they will explore different ways of connecting and working with the VCS and local public bodies. This includes creating/facilitating spaces where mutually beneficial conversations can take place between the VCS and stakeholders, as well as forums where the sector can meet with and invite partners to the conversation.
- The infrastructure provider/s to be an enabler of the work around community of identity, with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) engagement and participation being considered a high priority.
- There a forums in which the infrastructure provider/s should attend and there are places wherein the infrastructure provider/s will need to aid in facilitation of more relevant participants. For example, if the forum is focused on a Community of Identity issue such as disability, a disability focused organisation is more suitable to attend than the infrastructure provider/s. Where possible and relevant the infrastructure provider/s should facilitate that engagement, within the contract funds available.

### **3.2.3. Volunteering/Volunteer Centre Manchester**

- Volunteering and the Volunteer Centre is still important to the city and to continue to be within the infrastructure contract, with clarity around the Volunteer Centre's purpose - primarily for resident volunteering and supporting volunteering policy and development across the VCS.

- The Volunteering offer within the contract to consider the added value and connectivity between individual resident volunteering, organisational volunteer development and the relationship to other volunteering programmes in the city.
- Employee supported volunteering and business brokerage to be tested further outside of the current contract as these are large areas of work. However, the infrastructure provider/s to actively engage with these developments and the relationship to other volunteering programmes in the city as part of an annual contract work plan.
- As well as the above, the infrastructure provider/s will still have to provide an information support mechanism for volunteers and organisations.

#### **3.2.4. General**

- The updated strategic vision and priorities document is recommended as the overarching context (See Appendix 1 for further details).
- The infrastructure provider/s to be a facilitator and enabler as well as a provider - the infrastructure provider/s do not necessarily have to be or is always best placed to be the provider of the support to groups.
- The infrastructure provider/s need to demonstrate how they will manage priorities and flexibility i.e. core delivery functions.
- The infrastructure provider/s to detail how they will prioritise development support and capacity management of that in particular
- Commissioners to focus specification and monitoring on delivering outcomes and impact and not necessarily on specific activities and outputs
- There needs to be proportionality in the ask from MHCC as part of this contract, in recognition of the current investment.
- Monitoring of the infrastructure contract needs to be proportional and should not be viewed exceptionally in comparison to other commissions across the Council and MHCC.
- The infrastructure provider/s to work closely with the Councils Programme Team, with clarity around each other's roles and responsibilities as provider and commissioner and any joint working arrangements regularly communicated.
- Expectations of what the infrastructure contract/provider/s need to be managed by infrastructure provider/s and commissioner, including the centralised management of the contract by the Council's Programme Team.
- MHCC expectations and working relationship with Council's Programme Team to be clearly outlined and agreed.
- The co-design group recommends that the OMVCS Programme Board includes VCS representation in its decision making process for the infrastructure contract including the assessment panel process (for procurement) and the final Board approval process.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1. The consideration and feedback on the co-design groups' recommendations from the OMVCS Programme Board, Members, officers and importantly the

wider VCS in the city, is key to moving to the next stage of delivery of this piece of work; where the specification will be finalised for procurement.

- 4.2. The Communities & Equalities Scrutiny Committee – Members Task & Finish Group (OMVCS Programme), have discussed communications at its meeting in January 2019, to help to inform the future engagement with Members on this piece of work and more generally with regards to communication with Members and co-design processes. This report should be read in conjunction with the Members Task & Finish Group recommendations that are due to be presented to this Committee in March 2019. The Members Task & Finish Group recommendations have been considered as part of the process for this contract.
- 4.3. A month long consultation period with the VCS and other stakeholders is now live, running from the 28th January to the 25th February 2019. All of the background information on the co-design process and group including presentations and session notes is available via the following link <https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/infrastructure-co-design-session-information>
- 4.4. The specific recommendations from the co-design group are available via the link to this survey <https://surveys.manchester.gov.uk/s/VCSInfrastructure/> For further information and/or to discuss this in more detail please contact Jess Waugh or Michael Salmon on 0161 234 3316 or email: [omfunds@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:omfunds@manchester.gov.uk)
- 4.5. The Programme Team will consider all of the feedback and then work independently to finalise the specification and enter into the procurement process. The aim is for all of the procurement process and negotiations to be completed, ready for the new contract to commence at the start of October 2019. The draft timeline for the remainder of the work on the new VCS infrastructure service contract is as follows:
  - January 2019 - February 2019: Consultation period for VCS, Members and other stakeholders and to feedback on recommendations.
  - January 2019: Communities & Equalities Scrutiny Committee – Members Task & Finish Group (OMVCS Programme) session on communications.
  - February 2019: Final recommendations to be sent to OMVCS Programme Board and Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee.
  - February 2019: Procurement process to begin
  - March 2019: Communities & Equalities Scrutiny Committee – Members Task & Finish Group (OMVCS Programme) recommendations presented
  - May - June 2019: Contract awarded
  - June – August 2019: Contract discussions and final negotiations
  - October 2019: New contract begins

## **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1. Members of the committee are asked to consider and comment the report, with a view to the Programme Team taking this forward into the finalisation of the specification and procurement process.