

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Subject: Greater Manchester Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise Accord

Report of: Cllr Allen Brett, Portfolio Lead Leader for Community, Co-operatives, Voluntary Sector and Inclusion; and Pam Smith and Andrew Lightfoot, Joint Portfolio Leads for Community, Co-operatives, Voluntary Sector and Inclusion

PURPOSE OF REPORT

In November 2017, GMCA Members endorsed the GM Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Accord and arrangements for its implementation. This report presents an update on the work which has taken place over the last 12 months to deliver that Accord.

The report includes for endorsement the Policy Position Paper, *'Voluntary organisations, Community Groups and Social Enterprises (VCSE) in Greater Manchester – the next 10 years'* which has been developed to support the Accord by the GM VCSE Devolution Leadership Group. It will also provide an update on the VCSE response to the Covid-19 emergency across GM, which has been incredible in its strength, its depth and the speed at which it was mobilised.

Furthermore, the report will provide an update on the review of its investment in the VCSE sector, including the grant funding which goes into VCSE Leadership and infrastructure organisations at a GM level.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the update provided on progress made to deliver the GM VCSE Accord and the work of the VCSE sector to date as part of the emergency response during the Covid crisis
2. Endorse the direction of travel set out for the VCSE sector in the VCSE Leadership Group's Policy Paper
3. Note progress with the review of GMCA investment with VCSE organisations in the light of the evolving GM policy context and that a final proposal will be presented for approval in September 2020
4. Delegate approval to the GMCA Treasurer, in consultation with the Community, Co-operatives and Inclusion Portfolio Leader and Chief Executive to extend existing grant agreements currently in place with four VCSE organisations supported through a

budget ring-fenced from the former Culture and Social Impact Fund, as described in Section 6.5-6.6 of the full report.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Andrew Lightfoot - Deputy Chief Executive, GMCA

Andrew.Lightfoot@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Anne Lythgoe - VCSE Accord Principal, GMCA

Anne.Lythgoe@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Report authors must identify which paragraph relating to the following issues

Equalities Implications:

The VCSE Accord includes a commitment from the VCSE sector to support a city region where all residents are valued and included. The Policy Paper to which this report refers provides greater detail on the role of the sector in engaging with, representing, supporting and providing services for all communities of identity. As such the work referred to in this report and the grant funding which is proposed, will serve to actively deliver GMCA's duties under the Equalities Act.

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures –

VCSE organizations take an active role in environmental protection and are an active partner in the GMCA Green Strategy work. The Policy Paper to which this report refers provides greater detail on the role of the sector in environmental activities. Grant recipients will be expected to fulfil GMCA requirements for climate change mitigation and carbon neutrality.

Risk Management – None

Legal Considerations – Section 5 (relating to contractual arrangements with VCSE organisations funded by GMCA)

Financial Consequences – Revenue – Section 5 (relating to a review of GMCA investment in the VCSE sector)

Financial Consequences – Capital – None

Number of attachments included in the report: 1:

Appendix 1 – VCSE Policy Position Paper, *'Voluntary organisations, Community groups and Social Enterprises (VCSE) in Greater Manchester – the next 10 years'*

Comments and/or recommendation from the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee – this paper will be discussed by Corporate Issues and Reform Scrutiny on Tuesday 17th March 2020

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Information about GM VCSE Leadership Group and VCSE Policy Paper – <https://vcseleadershipgm.org.uk/our-work/>

- Information about GM Social Enterprise Advisory Group - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/advisory-group-launched-to-champion-social-enterprise-in-greater-manchester/>

TRACKING/PROCESS		[All sections to be completed]
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		No
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		No
TfGMC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	N/A	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) sets out the ambition to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world. It is a strategy for everyone in Greater Manchester – residents, the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, businesses, and civic leaders. But the vision it sets out will only be achieved if GM can build on new approaches which are shaped and driven by our communities themselves.
- 1.2 As part of the delivery of the GMS, in November 2017 and on behalf of the GMCA, an Accord was signed by the Mayor of Greater Manchester with the VCSE sector, which set out new, improved standards of working with VCSE organisations.
- 1.3 The Accord acts as a framework for the delivery of the vision set out in the GMS and as a result, the VCSE sector is engaged in the development, governance and delivery of the GMS including relevant consultation and co-design.
- 1.4 VCSE leaders have come together to form the GM VCSE Devolution Leadership Group¹, which seeks to promote the role and involvement of the VCSE sector and communities in devolution, and has given a broader group of VCSE leaders with which to work.

2. DELIVERY OF THE ACCORD

- 2.1 The initial Action Plan to deliver the VCSE Accord commenced with immediate opportunities such as ensuring VCSE representation in GM governance; refreshing the GM Social Value Policy, developing a new GM Social Enterprise Strategy and exploring a GM Volunteering Strategy.
- 2.2 An update was provided to the GMCA in July 2019, and the following sections provide an update on progress since that date.
- 2.3 GM Social Value Framework

Following extensive engagement across the VCSE, public and business sectors, it is proposed that a GM-wide approach social value is published which aligns with the Covid-19 Recovery Plan, and forms a specific action in the one year 'Living with Covid Plan'.

A separate paper on this agenda will describe a framework of specific and action orientated priorities which can be used by any business, public sector or voluntary organisation, community group, co-operative or social enterprise to guide their activities and operate their business to maximise the widest possible benefit for Greater Manchester, its people and the environment. The Framework will enable the development of a revised and updated Social Value Procurement Policy and arrangements for GMCA and collaborative procurement.

¹ <https://vcseleadershipgm.org.uk/>

2.4 Social Enterprise in Greater Manchester

A Vision for Social Enterprise in Greater Manchester was launched by the Mayor of Greater Manchester at the Social Enterprise Summit held in November 2018. Since that time, social enterprise as a form of business now features strongly in the GM Local Industrial Strategy, and a commitment has been made to *'create the optimum conditions for social enterprises and cooperatives to thrive'*. The Local Industrial Strategy describes opportunities to explore the productivity of social and cooperative forms of enterprise, and to revitalise town centres and high streets by supporting creatives, digital entrepreneurs, and innovators.

A GM Social Enterprise Advisory Group has formally been convened to *'help create a social enterprise sector which contributes towards greater productivity, flexibility and agility that will see Greater Manchester become more competitive locally, nationally and internationally'*. The Advisory Group is working to identify some practical steps that can be taken towards strengthening to role of social enterprise across GM.

The Advisory Group is accountable to the GM Growth Board and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and will lead on work as part of the Implementation Plan of the Local Industrial Strategy, as well as engaging directly across a diverse range of social enterprise organisations in GM.

2.5 Volunteering in Greater Manchester

A cross-sector steering group led by Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO) and the University of Manchester has drafted a GM Volunteering Strategy, which will be implemented by the various organisations which support volunteering across GM. Interest in volunteering has spiked during the Covid-19 crisis, both in GM and nationally. There are three main 'types' of volunteering happening:

- **Formal, district-level arrangements** have been set up in each of the 10 local authority areas. The [VolunteerGM](#) website has been established to direct users into the VCSE / local authority arrangements by district.
- **Formal, national volunteering arrangements.** A range of nationally-led volunteering agencies, structures and tools exist, including the new NHS Volunteers scheme and the Red Cross Volunteers scheme.
- **Good neighbour/mutual aid arrangements.** Informal, local mutual aid groups are springing up all over GM and the rest of the UK showing an incredible citizen and community response to the crisis.

As we move into recovery and in particular the living with Covid period, it will be important that GM supports the strengthening of volunteer management and coordination capacity, in order to sustain the impact that volunteering has made over the last few months.

The GM Strategic Co-ordination Group has recognized the need to identify and allocate resources to sustain support and brokerage for volunteers, working through the leadership of local volunteer centres, CVSs and local infrastructure organisations. Furthermore, it will

be important to explore the development of GM level volunteering promotion building from the Volunteer GM website.

- 2.6 A separate paper is provided on this agenda about progress with the GM Co-operative Commission, whose report was launched on 27th January 2020.

3. GM VCSE LEADERSHIP GROUP POLICY PAPER

- 3.1 As part of the delivery of the VCSE Accord, in January 2019, the then GM VCSE Devolution Reference Group agreed that there was a need for them to set out the detailed 'offer' which the VCSE sector could make towards the future of GM, and also describe the transformation which will be required for the sector to maximise its potential as a functioning 'ecosystem' of voluntary, community and social enterprise activity.

- 3.2 **Appendix 1** provides a copy of this Policy Paper, which is entitled '*Voluntary organisations, Community groups and Social Enterprises (VCSE) in Greater Manchester – the next 10 years*'. The paper describes the role of VCSE anchor organisations and local VCSE infrastructure organisations which support and facilitate the operation of the wider sector, as well as that of the specialist groups and organisations which support, represent and champion particular communities of identity or experience. It builds from both the VCSE Accord and the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the sector with the GM Health and Social Care Partnership, bringing these together under one approach.

- 3.3 The VCSE Paper sets out policy and direction, and is not intended to be a strategy for action. That will need to follow, with the co-production of an implementation and transformation plan in each of the 10 districts of Greater Manchester. The working arrangements that will allow this transformation to happen will vary by community, neighbourhood and locality; so will need to be asset-driven and co-designed with relevant partners in each district within the broad functional framework set out in this Paper.

- 3.4 Key messages from the paper include:

- VCSE organisations play a vital role, both now and in the future, towards addressing inequalities in wellbeing, wealth and living standards.
- The VCSE sector wants to work with each other, and with others, as part of a joined-up effort to support and grow the reach, scale and spread of the sector in GM.
- VCSE Leaders are looking for equality of status and to increase their role in areas with which they have unique strengths; supporting the people and communities of Greater Manchester, creating and precipitating social movements, leading programmes of support, building community leadership, and enabling engagement.
- VCSE services and activities are often co-dependent with 'public services' and can be planned and resourced in places alongside other support. VCSE organisations can bring additional resources into that planning.
- The VCSE sector is on a journey of change, develop and transform – strengthening its governance and leadership, supporting workforce, maximising resources and seizing opportunities. Without this, VCSEs cannot achieve their full potential and will struggle to maintain the support and coverage that currently exists.

- The VCSE sector in GM is 'organising' as an 'ecosystem' with a complex web of relationships and interdependencies built around a network of 'anchor organisations', and having shared leadership. This creates a structure to allow interaction, dialogue and mobilisation at scale.
- Within the ecosystem, VCSE organisations may come together based on:
 - Geography - the focus on what happens in a place
 - Experience - shared needs, assets and ambitions, thematic interest
 - Identity - how people identify in different situations
- The strength of the ecosystem is created by a 'scaffolding' of VCSE anchor organisations. Each anchor is a multi-purpose, independent, community-led organisation. They will have a recognised purpose to lead on either a geographic focus for service design and delivery; have a specialist area of expertise; or represent a particular community of identity. These anchors will have a recognised function within the VCSE sector, will have a leadership role in place-based working, with and on behalf of communities.
- The Policy Paper talks directly to the various GM level public sector strategies, including the Public Service Reform White Paper, Health and Social Care Prospectus and Local Industrial Strategy.

3.5 It should be noted that the VCSE Accord, and the Memorandum of Understanding with the GM Health and Social Care Partnership have been recognised as being nationally significant in terms of the progressive collaboration between VCSE organisations and their partners, but this Policy Paper is ground-breaking for the sector in its creation. GM is leading the way in terms of the strength of its VCSE leadership.

3.6 A number of aligned pieces of work have already been completed. These include the development of a Greater Manchester VCSE Commissioning Framework and Delivery Plan, which has been co-produced in partnership with the GM Commissioning Hub.

4. VCSE ACTIVITIES DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

4.1 The VCSE response to the Covid-19 emergency across GM has been incredible in its strength, its depth and the speed at which it was been mobilised. VCSE organisations of all sizes, as well as community volunteers, are offering their support and are integrating with emergency support structures at this time. The sector has been quick to adapt at pace and with a huge degree of accuracy and efficacy to meet the needs of GM communities. Early feedback shows that around two thirds of VCSE organisations have had to change the way that they work in the current crisis.

4.2 Through the Covid-19 pandemic, VCSE organisations have been:

- Providing frontline services - Many VCSE organisations have increased capacity in their services, working with the most vulnerable and isolated in our society and across the full breadth of our diverse communities in GM. These include providing emergency food, advice and advocacy, physical tasks on behalf of people who cannot do something at the current time and support with anxiety and mental health

- Supporting people and communities in the most vulnerable situations. VCSE organisations have been especially key in providing this frontline support to people and groups in the most vulnerable situations, including: Communities of identity, communities of experience, people on low incomes, and people not already in contact with public services.
- Supporting sector-wide collaboration, coordination and leadership. VCSE infrastructure organisations (10GM, GMCVO and others) have expanded and reorganised the scope of their work to support this frontline response by: organising emergency food supplies, communications to/with the VCSE sector, providing data and insight, providing practical support to smaller VCSE organisations, leading on redeployment systems for VCSE sector employees and direct support for the ‘shielded’ cohort and people in vulnerable situations e.g. social prescribing link worker outreach
- Providing leadership and strategic input to GM’s CV-19 response structure, in particular through strengthened VCSE leadership structures at district and GM levels (inc. weekly meetings of the GM VCSE Leadership Group, GMCVO, 10GM and other local infrastructure organisations)

4.3 It is clear that as a result of the Covid pandemic, a number of the transformation activities described in the VCSE Policy Paper have had to be fast tracked.

5. EMERGING ISSUES AND SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR VCSE ACTIVITY GOING FORWARD

5.1 Emerging issues

VCSE leaders have identified a number of risks and issues which are inhibiting their capacity to work effectively as part of the emergency effort:

- Capacity for managing and co-ordinating volunteering.
- Mixed involvement in emergency planning across GM.
- Weak data sharing and intelligence about VCSE activities.
- Capacity to adapt. The sector has been quick to react, and prompt to get involved in front line support in communities alongside public sector partners, but this has put great pressure on VCSE organisations to adapt and develop at pace.
- A financial ‘cliff edge’ for the sector. VCSEs are motivated by their social purpose and so are ‘jumping in with both feet’ rather than being cautious about, or protective of, their own financial position.
- Increased demand.
- Inequalities within the sector. The VCSE sector itself contains inequalities which often mirror wider societal inequalities – for example, a lack of resources has been identified for BAME community and voluntary groups

5.2 Recommended support actions

In May 2020, the GM SCG discussed a number of supportive actions which might improve the resilience of the VCSE sector and its ability to provide sustained and integrated services.

These actions include:

- Involve local VCSE leaders in a relevant and proportionate way in all emergency planning and governance structures.
- Ensure VCSE services and support offers are embedded in the CV-19 response as it settles into a 'new normal' of services in neighbourhoods and communities and involve the sector in designing GMs approach to recovery.
- Support the strengthening of volunteer management and coordination capacity across GM
- Use the voice and reach of the public sector to give a platform for the VCSE sector's successes and concerns.
- Support the financial and business security of the sector. The VCSE sector recognises that local public bodies are facing severe financial and business continuity challenges themselves, but there are actions which don't necessarily involve funding, they could take to support the VCSE sector at this time.
- Work with VCSE leaders across GM to create a sustainable VCSE 'ecosystem' which outlasts the current emergency.

Many of these actions are already starting to happen, with greater VCSE involvement in support for communities across GM. However, the need and benefits are clear that the public sector must work closely with VCSE colleagues over the coming months.

6. GMCA INVESTMENT IN THE VCSE SECTOR

- 6.1 In July 2019 GMCA members agreed that a review be undertaken of all investments and grants made by GMCA into VCSE organisations, that this review consider alignment with both the objectives and principles set out in the VCSE Accord, and the GM VCSE Leadership Group's Policy Paper in order to support successful delivery of the sector transformation described in that Paper, and that a clear funding strategy is developed which maximizes the benefits realised in terms of delivery of the GMS.
- 6.2 Publication of the VCSE Policy Paper means that the development of this investment approach can now be progressed. It is proposed that GMCA works with the GM VCSE Leadership Group over the next six months to identify ways to maximize the value gained through any funding spent by GMCA. An investment framework will be brought to GMCA for approval in September 2020. This investment framework will support leadership and infrastructure within the sector and enable it to sustain and grow the functioning ecosystem needed in our communities.
- 6.3 In January 2018, the GMCA agreed a process to identify organisations to be funded via the new GMCA Cultural and Social Impact Fund, which was to replace the AGMA Section 48 Cultural Grants. This process saw GMCVO being funded at previous Section 48 levels from the GMCA Cultural and Social Impact Fund, under the new VCSE Sector and Cooperatives

Portfolio. The new contract was subsequently awarded to GMCVO for 2 years until March 2020.

- 6.4 In October 2019, upon agreement of the new GM Culture Strategy, GMCA agreed that non-cultural activity should not be part of this Fund going forward, with the same percentage of financial support (13.1%, equalling £460,024 p/a) being ring-fenced from the total budget to support the delivery of GM's VCSE Accord, and for delivery of strategic VCSE support for sport and LGBTQ+ activity across Greater Manchester. This ring-fenced amount includes the grant paid to GMCVO, plus that three other organisations currently delivering activity of value across Greater Manchester.
- 6.5 During the Covid lockdown, as the CA was not able to meet, a decision was made by the Chief Financial Officer using his delegated powers to extend the grant agreement held with GMCVO by 6 months until 30th September 2020, with all current terms and conditions rolled forward. It is now requested that this agreement be further extended until 31st March 2021. The required £228,400 will come from the ring-fenced amount described at section 6.4 above. After that time, this budget will form part of the new Investment Plan to be brought to the CA at its meeting in September.
- 6.6 The other three organisations (Greater Sport, the Water Adventure Centre and Proud Trust) have all submitted applications under the new criteria for the Culture Fund. These applications have been assessed using slightly amended Culture Fund criteria (eg service delivery as opposed to artform), to ensure that the quality and suitability of the programme is sufficient and finance and management arrangements credible, before any funds are committed. The outcome of this assessment has shown that these organisations continue to meet the criteria set out for the Culture Strategy. It is proposed therefore, that all 3 are awarded grants of 24 months duration, with the funding coming from the ring-fenced amount described at section 4.4 above.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Recommendations appear at the front of this report.