

Three Year Strategy for a Thriving Voluntary and Community Sector in the City of York

February 2013

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

2. The Voluntary and Community Sector in York

3. Key outcomes of this strategy

4. Monitoring and accountability

Appendices

DRAFT

1. Introduction

The intention of this strategy is to:

- Provide a set of principles for working together between the voluntary, statutory and private sectors, to maximise the impact of the voluntary sector including social enterprises in York. This is essential during what are challenging economic times and yet times of new opportunity for some.
- Support statutory partners such as
 - City of York Council
 - York Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
 - Leeds and York Partnerships NHS Foundation Trust
 - Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group
 - Higher York
 - North Yorkshire Police
 - North Yorkshire & York Probation Service
 - The private sector

to build on their existing relationships with the voluntary and community sector and social enterprises (VCSE) for mutual benefit.

The strategy will have its own annual action plan, containing a small number of achievable actions for each year, which will include a mechanism for monitoring success.

The strategy and action plan are informed by the following guiding principles:

Transparency: There will be fair processes with clear decision-making criteria, in line with Public Law and York Compact.

Effectiveness: Work will be undertaken with the voluntary and community sector and social enterprises (VCSE) in a fair and consistent way, which ensures maximum value for money.

Localism: The Localism Act 2011 sets out 5 key measures:

1. Community Rights
2. Neighbourhood planning

3. Housing
4. Empowering cities and other local areas
5. General power of competence

The Government has created a website <http://communityrights.communities.gov.uk/> for more information.

Partnership: Respecting the independence of the VCSE and its right within the law to campaign, comment on and challenge policy, we will ensure that partners communicate well with each other, are involved in making decisions and adhere to the Compact. Together we will ensure that through effective voice and representation mechanisms, the voluntary sector is involved as an equal partner in decision-making.

An example of a partnership initiative between City of York Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector in York:

Oliver House

York CVS, on behalf of the wider VCSE, is in negotiation with City of York Council to transfer Oliver House to the VCSE for use as a health and social care hub. Those involved have created the following vision:

To create a vibrant and sustainable, high quality, health and social care community hub, where organisations collaborate to provide a holistic approach to people's health and well-being.

2. The voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in York

The voluntary and sector in York is a diverse mix of organisations. It ranges from small informal, volunteer-led organisations operating in a very local area to national charities with multi-million pound turnover that choose to deliver services in York.

York has approximately 1000 organisations (charities, voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises, faith groups) and approximately 25% of York's population volunteer regularly, at least once a month. The VCSE makes a significant contribution to the local economy, both as an employer and service provider.

These groups can have a range of labels, including constituted groups, associations, registered charities, community interest companies, not-for-profit companies, mutuals, cooperatives, and social enterprises.

What they have in common is a desire to feel involved and ability to improve the lives of those who live, work, visit or volunteer in York.

VCSE groups have many roles, aspirations and purposes, including;

- A strategic partner, contributing to shaping local priorities and the development of plans to meet those priorities; understanding customer behaviour in order to identify gaps in service delivery and looking at ways in which services can be delivered more flexibly in future.
- A service deliverer, improving the outcomes of services through responding to local and diverse needs
- An enabler of voice and community representation, by encouraging and supporting local service users and citizens- especially those that are vulnerable and marginalized – to set the agenda and get involved in decision-making.
- A key contributor to cohesion and equalities, by building social capital and strong community networks.
- A facilitator, coordinator and enabler of social action.

Key strategic documents

The Voluntary Sector Strategy in York needs to influence and work alongside the following key strategic documents:

- The Health & Wellbeing Board strategy 2012
- The City of York Council Economic Strategy 2011-2015
- The York Compact 2012
- The Without Walls Partnership City Action Plan 2011-2015
- The York Fairness Commission Report 2012
- The City of York Council Plan 2011-2015
- City of York Asset Management Plan 2011-2016
- City of York Council Procurement and Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015

3. Key Outcomes of this Strategy

In 2010 the York Place Survey identified that volunteering in York overall was in line with the national average of 25%. Nationally this represented a slight decrease, whereas in York it represented an upward trend in volunteering. However these percentages varied significantly between wards

There are 5 key outcomes which will enable the sector to play a bigger role in community life in York.

1. More people getting involved and volunteering in their communities.

Volunteering is a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and for the wider community. Together we can support the development of valuable social networks that will help people feel involved, strengthen community involvement and the VCSE in the life of the city.

Actions could include;

- To further resource and develop 2 neighbourhood networks, such as time banks over a 12 month period.
- To promote and embed York's Volunteering Charter across volunteer involving organisations. The target is that 80% of organisations will sign up to the Charter by 2015.
- To ensure that volunteering is available to all sectors of our community and that organizations benefit from a diverse volunteer base. This would be measured by comparing the volunteer profile with the demographic profile of York residents.
- To find other ways to measure the extent and impact of volunteering in the City for example through the CYC residents Surveys, Talkabout Panel.
- Encourage community participation amongst statutory sector workforce through employee volunteering.
- Encourage payroll giving to local VCSE organisations.

- Develop projects to extend local and informal volunteering that have the potential to empower people in their communities and reduce social inclusion for example through street based volunteering and time banking.

2: A constructive dialogue between sectors on policy development is established and valued

The voluntary sector has a wealth of experience that can be of great benefit to policy-makers in the statutory sector, by contributing to effective policy development.

The skills, knowledge and experience of the VCSE in working with excluded and marginalized communities are essential to the design and delivery of services to vulnerable people. This applies particularly to some excluded groups who may be reluctant to engage with statutory partners. The VCSE in York is extremely diverse in scale and range. Proper representation of their interests and concerns is a key element in partnership decision-making.

York CVS offers direct paths to engagement with the VCSE who provide services, tackle discrimination and encourage volunteering. Encouraging and building people's involvement and building consensus is not always a quick or easy process, but there are Principles of Representation, produced by NAVCA, the national body for infrastructure organisations, which offer benefits. They provide a framework and a checklist that ensure that all parts of the community are able to participate in decision-making and the design of local services.

The principles are:

1. **Accountability** – clearly defined responsibilities for all decisions and actions
2. **Equality** – place equality, diversity and inclusiveness at the core of what is done
3. **Leadership** – York's VCSEs representatives think and act strategically
4. **Openness** – be as open as possible in all dealings and relationships
5. **Purpose** – Clarity about York's VCSE's objectives and support with strong evidence base
6. **Sustainability** – ensuring the continuation of the collective voice
7. **Values** – clearly identifying and building on the values of York's VCSE

Priority action to achieve this outcome could include:

- A commitment to maximise and resource voluntary sector representation e.g:
 - A commitment by the VCSE and statutory sector to understand the principles of partnership working, the potential contribution of the VCSE and the role of VCSE representatives.
 - This may include training for staff, board members and committee chairs of the role of the VCSE and their representatives
 - The representative role is clearly defined as being to represent the views of, and be accountable to, an interest group. Once elected, representatives should regularly attend and take an active part in the multi-agency group on which they sit, notifying colleagues as soon as possible if they are unable to attend. They should read papers and attend pre-meeting when requested. They should be reasonably available to colleagues between meetings to be contacted about issues. They should give a brief report to colleagues from the partnership meeting they attend and raising any key issues.
 - Representatives must represent the broad views of their interest group NOT their personal or own group view.
 - When reporting back about meetings, representatives will report the same views, information and input they gave when representing their interest group.
- Some examples of current voluntary sector representation include:
 - The election by the Voluntary Sector Strategic Forum of the Chief Executive of York CVS onto the Shadow Health & Wellbeing Board
 - The election by the V0-19CE Forum of a voluntary sector representative onto the Yor-OK Board
 - Election by the Community Buildings Network of a voluntary sector representative onto the City of York Council Asset Management Board

Outcome 3: Strong voluntary sector infrastructure that can support high quality services and volunteering

Build capacity of the VCSE in order for it to play an increased role in public service delivery. Consult the VCSE in delivery of public services.

Undertaking further scoping work to identify what services can be delivered by or with the VCSE sector, and the practicalities of how to move forward – through the role out of Innovation Days, ensuring that both statutory and VCSE organisations are aware of the new powers, flexibilities created by the Localism Act – Right to bid, challenge, build.

In order for voluntary sector organisations to contribute successfully to the delivery of high quality services, they need support which meets the wide range of needs of disparate groups in different stages of their development.

Priority actions to achieve this outcome could include :

- Increasing the opportunities for communication between the VCSE and its partners, including the private sector.
- Support the vol-com sector to prioritise more early intervention and preventative activities to focus delivery that will reach and help disadvantaged people.
- Leadership representatives from the VCSE to engage with statutory sector leadership – continue with team-to-team meetings and commit to holding them quarterly.
- Develop and resource training programmes for VCSE and statutory sector staff on how to implement the recently refreshed Compact
- Supporting VCSEs to streamline their services and collaborate, sharing back office and other functions wherever practical. Good examples include:
 - The Transforming Local Infrastructure Project: Making Infrastructure Everyone's Business – a partnership between York CVS, York Cares and Your Consortium.
 - City of York Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy is to be reviewed in 2013. Joint work on Community asset transfer, participation in city wide asset management forum

4: Commissioning frameworks that are led by proven need and offer value for money. Grant-funding frameworks, responsive to the demonstrable needs of the beneficiaries of the applying VCSEs.

Last year 58% of social enterprises grew compared with 28% of mainstream small and medium enterprises. Social Enterprises need to be recognised as a key contributor to the local economy.

Statutory partners need to recognise their role in building the capacity of the sector through funding contracts and secondments, and the value of local knowledge and provision.

In the current economic climate it is vital that we work together to establish a robust financial relationship by developing innovative ways of funding services and procuring goods.

It needs to be recognised that the needs and pressures of VCSE organisations are different from those for statutory partners. Core costs of running an organisation need to be taken into account. Funding needs to be awarded on a Full Cost Recovery basis and consideration given to how voluntary organisations survive any gaps between contracts. A joint commissioning and funding framework will help partners take a considered and consistent approach to funding and contracting with VCSEs and the private sector.

Priority actions could include

- A review of how to improve joint commissioning, given that we have new commissioners emerging such as the Clinical Commissioning Group, leading to improved joint commissioning of the VCSE and private sector organisations. Recognition by commissioners and funders of the value of social impact to deliverers of local services, and for this recognition to be recognised in tender specifications and criteria for funding. Ensure that environmental concerns are recognised by funders and commissioners and included in tender specifications and criteria for funding.
- Recognition of the social value within commissioning/funding processes— making this explicit in funding criteria/tender specifications.

- Recognition of the need for funding VCSEs on a Full Cost Recovery basis. Introduce a City wide integrated commissioning framework Ensuring the viability and vitality of front-line VCSE organisations by releasing sufficient grant funding on a longer-term funding cycle to ensure sustainable planning.
- Using grant funding to promote innovation.

5: A city wide asset strategy that recognises the social value in communities taking ownership of their facilities and empowers people to take an active role in creating what they know is needed in their community.

Priority actions could include:

- City of York Council facilitate mapping of VCSE assets leading to a joint directory of VCSE and statutory capital resources, which in turn will lead to more effective use of the city's assets overall. The directory needs to include facilities and professionalisms.
- All partners undertake joint work around Community Asset Transfer, particularly through participation in the City wide Asset Management Forum.
- Identify and map community assets in York to ascertain current and potential use of assets. Undertake a comprehensive programme of research to bring together a full understanding of the organisations that are currently using community buildings in the City and the services which are being delivered from them.
- Learn from and build upon successful initiatives around the city, for example community asset transfers such as Clement's Hall.
- Consider innovative funding mechanisms to enable community organisations to buy, and manage, a range of assets for example community share issues.

4. Monitoring and Accountability

It is still to be determined where accountability for this strategy and monitoring of the actions will sit.

Appendices

Without Walls Partnership - City Action Plan 2011 -2015

City of York Council - Council Plan 2011-2015

The York Fairness Commission Report - 2012

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The York Compact Agreement

CYC Economic Strategy

