



## Cabinet

17 June 2015

**Subject Heading:**

### **VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

**Cabinet Member:**

**Councillor Melvin Wallace** – Cabinet Member for Culture and Community Engagement

**CMT Lead:**

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**Policy context:**

The Corporate Plan 2015/16 provides that the Council will:

- Recruit volunteers in libraries and for community clean ups
- Support local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and encourage residents to play an active part in their communities through volunteering
- Work with VCS partners to implement the young people's assets framework
- Seek to maximise funding for Havering
- Encourage community responsibility by organising and assisting with community clean up campaigns.

**Financial summary:**

The proposed strategy and action plan will be delivered within existing resources.

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**When should this matter be reviewed?**

June 2016

**Reviewing OSC:**

Overview and Scrutiny Board

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Havering will be clean and its environment will be cared for	[X]
People will be safe, in their homes and in the community	[X]
Residents will be proud to live in Havering	[X]

**SUMMARY**

This report seeks Cabinet's approval of the attached Voluntary Sector Strategy and Action Plan.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet approves the attached Voluntary Sector Strategy and Action Plan.

**REPORT DETAIL**

1. As part of the Council's on-going work on demand management, and also as a result of key legislative changes such as the implementation of the Care Act, much consideration has been given over the past several months to the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector (VCS); what outcomes the Council would wish to see delivered within the VCS, and how the Council can support the sector to build its capacity to deliver against our shared priorities.
2. On 9 October 2014, the Council published a draft Voluntary Sector Strategy for consultation. An independent consultant was appointed to lead the consultation process which comprised of workshops, focus groups, one to one meetings and an opportunity to submit comments directly either to the Council's consultant or to the Council itself. Over 116 people attended the workshops from a wide range of groups and the feedback was quite diverse in nature, reflecting the different levels of experience, needs and views in the sector. Despite this diversity, however, there were a number of ideas for action that were supported by a wide range of groups. Organisations saw the potential for real improvements in relationships between the Council and the sector and, to that end, wished to see a small number of realistic, clear and achievable actions on the part of the Council to achieve this. In particular the following key challenges were identified:
  - Information and communication,

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- Enabling innovation and forward planning, and
  - Joint working / partnerships
3. Ideas for action which were put forward included:
- Maintaining effective communication through designated points of contact in the Council to support the sharing of relevant information (which is needed to enable better joining up of services, understanding of need and development of ideas). This will be addressed through the Policy and Performance restructure and through having nominated service contacts.
  - Jointly developing a solution to meet the need for various stakeholders (service users and other community organisations as well as public services) to know about the services and activities available within the sector. This will be achieved through a single high quality website / directory as set out in the action plan.
  - Commissioning cycles that build in time to engage organisations in service shaping and allow the opportunity to explore and develop new ideas about service delivery. An overall procurement / commissioning framework is to be developed to address this, as well as formalising commissioning plans across the Council.
  - Publishing the 'outcomes' required by the Council so that voluntary sector organisations are able to take these into account in their business and strategic planning. This has been addressed through approval and publication of the new corporate plan and through service plans.
  - Maximising use of premises / access to space. An audit is being carried out to support this.
  - Ensuring funding processes and criteria work so they add value in building resilience in local communities e.g. by supporting those projects and initiatives that invest in the skills and capacity of local people.
  - Reviewing and re-launching the Havering Compact to ensure it is fit for purpose and can help with the need for dispute resolution processes (identified by some groups) as well as providing a forum for dialogue outside of grant / contract discussions. A meeting has already taken place with VCS representatives and other public sector agencies to take this review forward.
  - Commissioning future infrastructure support to deliver on needs identified throughout the consultation, particularly in relation to information sharing, policy engagement and capacity building, in order to increase the sector's sustainability, resilience and capacity for innovation etc. This is addressed in the action plan.
4. A feedback workshop was held with the sector on 15 January 2015 when the results of the consultation were shared with the VCS, along with the Council's proposed response.
5. All these points were considered by the Voluntary Sector Steering Group, comprising of representatives from relevant services, and have been incorporated in the draft action plan which is being presented to this

meeting. The action plan also focuses on a number of wider issues including:

- Increasing volunteering;
  - Promoting and encouraging the use of crowd-funding;
  - Promoting the voluntary and community sector through Council communication channels;
  - Exploring an employee giving scheme;
  - Developing a business giving initiative, and
  - Opening up learning and development opportunities to the voluntary and community sector.
6. Within the consultation responses, there was general support for the long term vision of the strategy to ensure that communities are resilient and supported by an effective and sustainable voluntary and community sector. There was also support for the overarching aims and outcomes which are as follows:

**Aims:**

7. To strengthen communities and to increase the effectiveness and impact of the voluntary sector so that it can support communities to be more resilient, by enabling neighbours, communities and families to support one another, and local people to take the lead on improving their local areas through voluntary action, and
8. To improve local voluntary sector capacity to deliver quality local services that people need, and that new types of services, which best meet people's needs are developed with and by the sector (possibly through new models of delivery).
9. The four outcomes to be achieved through delivery of the strategy are that:
1. Communities will be resilient and self-supporting, reducing demand on public services and improving the quality of life of local people;
  2. Capacity and skills in both the voluntary sector and the Council will be built up, to encourage enterprise and innovation within the voluntary sector and co-production of services that meet community needs;
  3. There will be infrastructure support for the sector that is fit for purpose, and
  4. The Council's financial support to the sector will be targeted, transparent and deliver quality, tangible outcomes
10. A copy of the Voluntary Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2015-18 appears at Appendix 1 of this report.
11. Whilst this is a Council Strategy, it has been informed by the results of the consultation with the sector. Further engagement will take place with the VCS regarding the review of the Havering Compact which will give a further opportunity for engagement and involvement of the sector in producing a shared agreement between the VCS and a range of public sector bodies.

**REASONS AND OPTIONS**

The Voluntary Sector Strategy and action plan sets out how the Council will work with the sector going forward.

**Other options considered:**

As part of the delivery of the action plan, further options will be considered in the future as to how services will be commissioned from the sector going forward.

**IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

**Financial implications and risks:**

The delivery of the action plan can be met within existing resources.

**Legal implications and risks:**

None envisaged at this stage.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

Some elements of the action plan will be delivered through the restructure of the Policy and Performance team. At the time of writing this report, consultation on the restructure is due to launch in June 2015.

**Equalities implications and risks:**

An EIA is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Change for good - Report of the Independent Commission on the future of local infrastructure - January 2015