

Report for: Cabinet - 10 February 2026

Item number: 15

Title: Approval of the Voluntary and Community Sector Action Plan

Report authorised by : Jess Crowe, Corporate Director of Culture, Strategy and Communities

Lead Officer: Christina Andrew, Head of Resettlement, Migration and Inequalities, christina.andrew@haringey.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Key

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1. This report seeks endorsement of Haringey Community Collaborative's (HCC's) priorities for 2025 – 2026, following a series of engagement sessions and surveying the voluntary and community sector to agree their focus. We have set out actions the council will take to support HCC and the sector as a whole to deliver against the priorities and to continue to improve our collaboration – the report also seeks approval for this approach.

1.2. This approach aims to further align the council's work with the needs of the voluntary and community sector, using the priorities they have identified to inform the work we will do to support a thriving voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the borough, rather than developing a separate action plan or strategy from a council perspective, in line with the Council's Haringey Deal principles.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is an indispensable part of Haringey. From public health and welfare to environmental work and community cohesion, voluntary and community organisations provide vital support to residents, often with limited resources.

Recognising the vital role the VCS plays in supporting Haringey's communities, our VCS Strategic Partner, the Haringey Community Collaborative (HCC), developed its priorities through extensive engagement with a wide range of VCS organisations. These priorities reflect the insight and experience of organisations working closely with residents.

In line with our commitment under the Haringey Deal to work in partnership with our communities, this Action Plan sets out how the Council will align its approach to

support the VCS as a sector, responding to these priorities and focusing on areas such as funding, coordination and partnership working.

I look forward to seeing how this more coordinated and collaborative approach will strengthen the sector and have a positive impact for Haringey's communities.

3. Recommendations

For Cabinet to:

- 3.1. Endorse Haringey Community Collaborative's priorities for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) for 2025 – 2026 (Appendix 1)
- 3.2. Approve the Council's approach to supporting the sector's delivery of these priorities through the implementation of the VCS Action Plan while beginning work during 2026/27 to explore co-creation of a Community Strategy for Haringey (Appendix 2).

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1. HCC's priorities (Appendix 1) have been developed through a series of engagement sessions with the VCS, and build on their experience of supporting the sector over the last 18 months approximately. Two VCS Priorities Workshops were run (in person and online), engaging 42 VCS participants and 23 statutory partners, and the borough wide survey run by HCC had 52 organisational responses. This engagement achieved more depth and breadth than the council would have been capable of with our current resources, and utilised the trusting relationship formed between HCC and the wider sector since it took on the role as capacity building partner.
- 4.2. In identifying its priorities for the VCS, HCC has considered alignment with the six Calls to Action in "Haringey 2035: Our Vision", the borough-wide vision for the next ten years, and has been explicit in highlighting connections between the two.
- 4.3. The VCS Action Plan at Appendix 2 sets out the work we suggest is necessary to support the VCS to deliver against the priorities identified by HCC.
- 4.4. The VCS Action Plan responds directly to the six priorities using a theory of change approach and notes existing work and frameworks already in place to ensure we utilise current knowledge, resources and relationships, and avoid duplication. The actions aim to dovetail our efforts to improve our relationships and governance arrangements with the VCS, for example, the Social Value Leases Policy, with the needs outlined in the priorities, for example, better access to community spaces to improve health and wellbeing.
- 4.5. The report also highlights the emerging new national framework governing the relationship between the VCS and public authorities and

the need for Haringey to develop a more holistic picture of all the different relationships and interactions it holds organisationally with different elements of the local VCS. It sets out a strategic intention over the next couple of years, building on the community engagement and other opportunities likely to be offered by, for example, the London Borough of Culture year in 2027/28, to explore the development of a broader Community Strategy for Haringey in partnership with the VCS.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1. Progressing with a VCS Strategy designed and developed by the council was considered but not recommended due to the shift in relationship we are seeking between the council and the VCS, following the principles of the Haringey Deal. A council-designed strategy would have seen our perspective shaping the work, whereas the approach we are suggesting – using HCC's VCS priorities to frame our actions – allows us to be led by the VCS's needs, described by them. A strategy development process would also have required significant officer resource to run adequate engagement across the council and the VCS, which is currently significantly stretched.

6. Background information

- 6.1. The Haringey Deal seeks a different relationship between the Council and Haringey's communities, one based more on improving relationships, listening, sharing power and creating space for good things to happen. Developing and further strengthening our strategic relationship with the VCS and wider community sector needs to be grounded in these principles and based on in-depth engagement and co-production. The action plan being recommended to Cabinet is based largely on the priorities that our Strategic Partner, Haringey Community Collaborative, have been co-creating with our voluntary and community sector over the last year.
- 6.2. There is already significant strategic alignment between what we are seeking to achieve through "Haringey 2035: Our Vision" and what the VCS wants to see as outcomes from our collective work together - we plan to use these shared goals as a foundation for longer-term engagement.
- 6.3. A further rationale for developing our strategic relationship in a considered and intentional way through a process of deep engagement derives from the fact that the council has many different relationships between different departments and different parts of the voluntary and community sector. These include, for example:
 - VCS groups are commissioned to support specific target groups to provide Public Health and Social Care services where community

knowledge and trust is critical, e.g. VAWG, culturally appropriate care provision;

- VCS groups are funded to provide services requiring specialist knowledge and in areas where independence and advocacy is important, e.g. welfare information and advice;
- Community groups occupy many council-owned community assets under a variety of historic arrangements and work is underway to regularise these under the new social value leases policy;
- Community groups can bid for small community grants from specific funds and for specific events e.g. under the Carbon Community Fund and for civic and cultural programmes;
- The Social Value Portal seeks to secure contributions from contractors towards community projects and social value outcomes through procurement activity;
- Community networks & local relationships are a source of strength for resilience and cohesion.

6.4. We do not have a single picture of all these funding arrangements and different relationships, potentially leading to duplication or acting at cross-purposes, as well as confusion for the sector. Over the longer term we want to build up this single holistic picture and identify how best to take it forward more coherently. Our existing work and the relationships underpinning it are included as initial reference points for continuation and / or development in the action plan, and we recognise that following further engagement and review, some of our existing approaches will require varying degrees of change in the short, medium and long term.

6.5. There are a number of systemic challenges we face as a borough, impacting both the council and the VCS. The difficult financial context in which we are operating means limited resources for public services. This directly affects our residents and applies knock on pressure to the VCS as it supports them. Also, as this is a London wide and national issue, we know funding is becoming increasingly difficult to secure for VCS groups, often leading to situations where multiple organisations in Haringey are applying to the same funders. This backdrop will require open communication and continued collaboration to ensure we avoid duplication and can identify opportunities to maximise funding and resources wherever possible.

6.6. This is a one year action plan for 2026 – 2027 that will take us to the delivery of London Borough of Culture. Beyond this the council commits to exploring the development of a future Community Strategy based on Haringey Deal principles and more in-depth engagement to bring together deliverables involving different teams across the Council:

- VCS
- Resettlement, Migration & Inequalities
- Resident Experience, Information and Advice
- Environment

- Placemaking
- Community Development & Engagement
- Public Health
- Community Assets
- Children & Young People
- Procurement
- Welfare and Financial Support Teams

6.7. During 2026-27 the intention is that officers will create a council-wide working group bringing together the above teams to start to build up the holistic picture of all our relationships and develop a plan to explore the co-creation of a Community Strategy in partnership with the VCS over the following 1-2 years.

6.8. Taking this longer-term, strategic approach to co-creating a Haringey Community Strategy in partnership with the local VCS would enable us to build on the Haringey Deal and would also enable Haringey to further align its approach with emerging national thinking and new frameworks around the relationship between the VCS and public authorities. For example, there was a Local Government Association (LGA) and Locality study in 2022 which identified 4 principles of effective strategic relationships:

- Shared foundations – clear shared understanding of purpose, value and roles
- Relational culture – behaviours and ways of working
- Effective structures – systems, processes that support long-term commitment
- Capacity and resources to support action

6.9. The forthcoming Crisis and Resilience Fund policy work will be undertaken in close collaboration with the new working group, with a view to strengthening strategic alignment and coordination through structured engagement with the VCS. This programme of work aims to establish clearer pathways for crisis support and resilience activity, identify gaps, minimise duplication across the system, and ensure that limited resources are directed effectively towards residents most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

6.10. At national government level, historically, the National Compact governed relationships between VCS and government. This lasted for 12 years but was wound up under the Coalition government although some local areas have maintained local Compacts to support a positive way of working between the council and local VCS. Consultation during 2024 resulted in a 'reset' of the national relationship and launch of a new Civil Society Covenant in July 2025. Components of this include:

- A Joint Council to monitor the Covenant's implementation will be established;

- Sub-groups will include a Local Implementation Task & Finish (T&F) Group and a Commissioning T&F Group;
- Commitment to a Local Covenant Partnerships Programme including potential grant funding.

6.11. Looking at the four principles from the LGA-Locality study, it feels like Haringey has begun to develop the first two through the Haringey Deal but needs to do further work on the second two which are potentially more challenging. It will be helpful for Haringey to keep an eye on national policy and governmental developments and ensure we are in a strong place to benefit from any future funding and good practice learning.

6.12. The LGA response to the 2024 consultation also emphasised that councils have long-standing local relationships with VCS groups and have to balance the roles of being commissioners of services from, grant-awarders to and strategic partners of VCS organisations. As a council, Haringey recognises these points and would want to further develop its existing long-standing local relationships in close collaboration and partnership with the local VCS. This will enable us to collectively better understand the totality of those relationships and whether and how they may need to evolve in the future.

7. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High level Strategic outcomes?

7.1. The Voluntary and Community Sector contributes to outcomes across the entirety of the Corporate Delivery Plan, with VCS groups operating across all eight themes:

- Resident experience and enabling success
- Responding to the climate emergency
- Children and young people
- Adults, health and welfare
- Homes for the future
- Safer Haringey
- Culturally rich borough
- Place and economy

8. Carbon and Climate Change

8.1. The recommendations have scope to positively impact carbon emissions and the impacts of climate change through the promotion of specific funding opportunities for the VCS (e.g. the Community Carbon Fund).

9. Statutory Officers comments

Finance

The Council's one-year VCS action plan which sets out how the council will work to support the VCS as a sector and the delivery of Haringey Community Collaborative's 2025 – 2026 priorities in particular, will be managed through existing budgeted internal staffing resources and externally commissioned arrangements.

The mapping of VCS services commissioned across the council should root out any areas of duplication, ensuring better co-ordination of existing resources and thereby maximise the impact of our funding to the VCS sector.

Procurement

Strategic Procurement notes the contents of this report and confirm there are no procurement related matters preventing Cabinet approving the recommendations stated in paragraph 3 above.

Strategic Procurement will continue to support VSC organisations and the proposed action plan where appropriate.

Head of Legal & Governance

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives a local authority the power to do anything that individuals generally may do. The council's contribution to costs associated with the launch and development of the schemes within this framework is within the scope of this general power.

The Authority will need to ensure that the distribution of grants is fair and proportionate and complies with its duties under the Equality Act, set out in more detail below

Equality

The council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not

The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic

The VCS Action Plan supports compliance with the Duty by promoting inclusive, culturally competent services and aiming to reduce systemic barriers for marginalised groups, including racialised communities, disabled people, and those with no recourse to public funds.

The priorities identified by HCC seek to address negative experiences and poor opportunities felt by groups with protected characteristics, including those affected by intersectionality. Positive impacts include targeted support for groups disproportionately affected by cost-of-living pressures, health inequalities, and employment barriers (e.g., disabled and neurodivergent residents, older people, refugees, and ethnic minority communities). Employability and skills priorities aim to create inclusive pathways into work and volunteering, addressing structural inequalities. The plan seeks to strengthen community cohesion through shared spaces, co-production, and partnership working. Initiatives such as Challenge Funds and capacity-building programmes should encourage collaboration across diverse communities. The intention will be to monitor outcomes and potential impacts for those from protected groups once delivery is underway.

Between July – October 2025, HCC, supported by the Council, gathered insights from 52 Haringey-based VCS organisations through our borough-wide survey, alongside 42 VCS participants and 23 representatives from statutory partners (NHS and Haringey Council) across two VCS Priorities Workshops (online and in person) and a 'Cabinet in the Community' event. Priorities were co-produced with the VCS, ensuring voices of grassroots and seldom-heard communities shaped the Action Plan. Future development of the Community Strategy will continue this approach, embedding equalities in design and delivery.

10. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 Haringey Community Collaborative Priorities
Appendix 2 Haringey VCS Action Plan 2026-27

11. Background papers

- a. *Civil Society Covenant July 2025:*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-covenant/civil-society-covenant#forewords>
- b. *The state of strategic relationships between Councils and their local voluntary and community sector, LGA 2022:*

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/state-strategic-relationships-between-councils-and-their-local-voluntary-and-community>