

<b>Item No.</b> -	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 30 July 2018	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Health and Wellbeing Board
<b>Report title:</b>		Perspectives on the voluntary and community sector in Southwark	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All wards and groups	
<b>From:</b>		Gordon McCullough, CEO, Community Southwark	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Board note the current health and wellbeing challenges and opportunities from the voluntary and community sector's perspective

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The local voluntary and community sector (VCS) is not a single, easily defined entity. It is extremely diverse and in all its forms makes up a vital part of the social fabric of Southwark.
3. There are an estimated 1,200 registered charities in Southwark; 81% have an annual income of less than £500,000. There are an estimated 3,000 'below the radar' grassroots community groups in addition to the more formal, regulated sector. The models and ways of operating within the VCS are as diverse as the scale of the sector itself.
4. Grassroots organisations run on a voluntary basis make up a large section of the sector, they contribute vitally to communities being empowered, supported, connected and healthy, but often, as volunteer run, work in a very different way to the more formal sector.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The VCS both builds and draws on the capacity of communities to support themselves and the most vulnerable. It enriches lives and makes Southwark a healthier, safer place. Just under a fifth of people (18%) had been involved in social action once in the last year (2015). 36% of people were aware of people in their areas getting together to support a community project but were not involved in it.
6. Community Southwark support local people to feel more engaged and connected in their local community. As a result of our work on social action 42% of residents who have engaged with us (either Community Action Network meetings, outreach events or online) reported an increase in the opportunities to share views on their local community over the last 12 months. 45% reported an increased in the opportunities to make connections in their local community over the last 12 months.
7. The VCS supports local economic wellbeing. Like the public and private sectors, the VCS spends money locally, contributing to the local economy. It provides

paid employment so that people can support themselves (as well as inspire others into employment through social enterprises). The VCS also develops the skills of volunteers as well as service users, contributing to better job prospects, personal wellbeing, and a diverse economy. Almost six in ten Southwark residents aged over 16 have volunteered in the last twelve months (56%). This equates to an estimated 131,544 people. Volunteers contribute over 5 million hours each year in Southwark. If they were all paid the London Living Wage it would cost in excess of £47 million per year.

8. Community Southwark's volunteering advice service helped over 500 people last year to find volunteering opportunities in the borough. A month after visiting the service, 46% were volunteering with a local organisation.
9. The wider impact of volunteering on the individuals has been very encouraging. For example, 20% of individuals attending VAS (and who then went onto volunteer) experienced greatly improved well-being; 24% reported greatly improved mental health; 23% said they felt increasing confident to speak to new people. In relation to isolation and social connections, after volunteering 95% said they had meet new people.
10. VCS makes resources go further. Funds contributed by public bodies lever in other money from trusts, businesses and individuals, and many voluntary organisations also generate their own funds. The VCS benefits from donations in kind from other organisations and the value of volunteering has no parallel in any other sector. Distinct from the private sector, the VCS uses all of its resources (directly or indirectly) for the public benefit rather than to make profit for shareholders. For every £1 invested by Southwark Council in the VCS locally, a further £5.72 is generated from other sources.
11. In 2017/18 Southwark Council distributed a total of £4.5 million in grants and £12.9 million in contracts to the voluntary and community sector. The VCS has other distinctive characteristics which bring extra value to its work. For example, community organisations are often run by local people who volunteer their time. They have a personal knowledge of specific needs, they may be trusted by hard-to-reach groups who find it difficult to engage with the public sector, and they could act as a 'critical friend' to policymakers across the public sector. They help people to help themselves as well as providing community focused activities. Importantly, VCS organisations not only help deliver public services, but also go beyond the minimum of what must be provided by law.
12. The Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy (*Common Purpose, Common Cause*) expressed an ambition to have services built around the needs of the local community. Services should be designed and commissioned with an emphasis on the value and impact of locally delivered services with local provision being the default position.
13. As well as providing support to those in crisis who don't know where to turn, they often work in a preventative way, avoiding additional costs to the public sector in the future. 61% of the VCS is working with the general population and/or specific groups of people at risk to prevent problems from arising. One in three organisations are also working with those who have serious difficulties or face crisis.

14. In 2017, just under one quarter of Community Southwark members reported that they were thriving and feeling optimistic about the future (23%); a 34% increase since 2013. However, almost one in five organisations reported that they did not feel they would exist in 12 months' time; an increase of 74% since 2013.
15. Against this background there are several challenges and issues that the voluntary and community sector (in all its shapes and sizes) need to consider.
16. Planning ahead is the critical factor in enabling VCS organisations experiencing financial difficulty to recover. Regularly taking stock with staff and trustees, and seeking help if needed and clarification from funders and commissioners, will give charities the best chance of surviving and thriving. Too often organisations leave it too late and find their options diminished.
17. In times of change and greater external pressures VCS organisations need to understand what sustainability means, in light of their mission. This means asking a broad question: how can we achieve the biggest impact for our clients/cause, given where we are now and the outlook ahead? There is no doubt that these are difficult questions. The answer may point towards a different way of working, collaboration, or even closure if resources could be better used elsewhere.
18. Identifying different options for funding work is critical. Some types of funding, namely local government grants and contracts, are in short supply while others, such as social investment, are less well suited to smaller charities. Different charities will have different strengths that each lend themselves to different funding options. There is no one size fits all approach. Some charities may own buildings or assets while others may have a supporter base, good partnerships or networks they can leverage. Effective and regular communication with existing and new audiences, emphasising the role, value and distinctiveness of what that charity offers will be key to realising new income opportunities.
19. In many cases, charities will need to collaborate to achieve their mission. Collaborating by choice is preferable to collaborating under pressure from funders or commissioners, as is collaboration around values, rather than a pot of money. Voluntary and community organisations need to seek out appropriate partners but work hard to ensure they meet everyone's needs and not be afraid to walk away if the risks and disadvantages are too high.
20. Digital development might make collaboration easier and is just one way in which technological development could make smaller charities more effective and efficient. But taking advantage of this will require investment in digital capabilities which are too often overlooked.
21. Finally, every charity's sustainability will depend on the wellbeing of the people who lead and work with it. In tough times, staff often find themselves over-stretched and at risk of burnout which presents significant risks to charities. Trustees need to be proactive about considering the wellbeing of staff and volunteers and use available resources to help them.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Common Purpose Common Cause VCS Strategy		
<b>Link:</b> (copy and paste into browser) <a href="https://communitysouthwark.org/sites/default/files/images/VCS_Strategy_FINAL%20%281%29_3.pdf">https://communitysouthwark.org/sites/default/files/images/VCS_Strategy_FINAL%20%281%29_3.pdf</a>		
Southwark and Lambeth Early Action Commission		
<b>Link:</b> (copy and paste into browser) <a href="https://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/a5845188d1801a18bc_3nm6bkn3b.pdf">https://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/a5845188d1801a18bc_3nm6bkn3b.pdf</a>		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	N/a	
<b>Report Author</b>	Gordon McCullough, CEO Community Southwark	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	19 July 2018	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	19 July 2018	