



Voluntary Sector Strategy

Update at Localism Select Committee

November 2020



Introduction

- Buckinghamshire has a strong and diverse voluntary and community sector (VCS).
- Members have spoken many times about the value and vital role the sector plays. The importance has been highlighted within legacy councils, as a shadow council and as the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council.
- As well as the council, partners across the county have highlighted the importance of the sector and advocating a strong sector and a culture of a mature relationship that is not predicated on funding.
- The VCS deliver key services and build social connections. They are vital in strengthening and supporting the County, in delivering shared priorities, providing valuable insight and offering referral pathways as they sign post, and enable prevention or early intervention.
- No single organisation can solve complex problems by itself, together we are greater than the sum of our parts.
- By harnessing, building on the enthusiasm, relationships and opportunities for collaborative working, we can make the most of our collective skills, knowledge and resources to better understand and respond to the needs of our communities in innovative and creative ways.
- There is a place based ambition of 'no wrong front door' in Bucks.

Covid-19

- The launch of the new Buckinghamshire Council coincided with responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our local response highlighted the strong partner relationships that exist both in the county and nationally.
- We saw how it was possible to swiftly collaborate, adapt services and embrace new ways of working.
- It demonstrated our beliefs around the need to think differently, creatively and be innovative with transformation.
- New and stronger alliances have been formed with a targeted focus on protecting our vulnerable residents and a common goal to work together for Buckinghamshire.
- It is vital that we continue to collaborate effectively at every level to safeguard our communities and improve their health and wellbeing.



Buckinghamshire
Council



NOMINATE NOW!
Nominations close: 27/9/2020

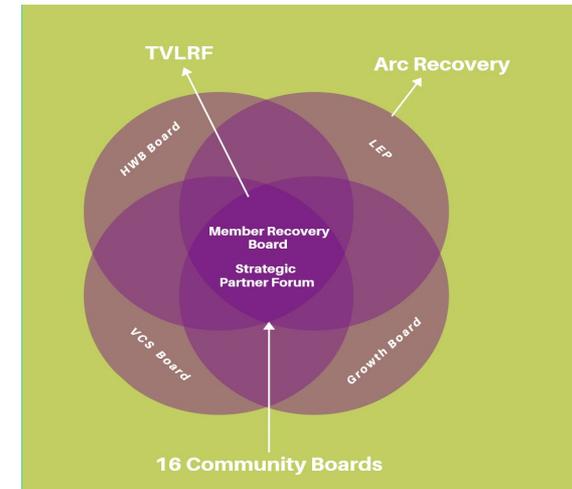


Buckinghamshire Council partnership

- Covid-19 highlighted impressive partnership collaboration and passion for the sector.
- The new Localities and Strategic Partnerships service has a core part of their service as working in partnership with and championing the voluntary sector.
- We have solid foundations and good collaborative working:
 - VCS strategic group (last 3 years)
 - VCS funding group
 - VCS Recovery Board (*further info on next slide*)
 - Representation at Strategic Partners Board
 - Representation at Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Representation at Children's Partnerships
 - Corporate Plan
 - Co-location, rental subsidy, grants, commissioning
 - Other connections (speaking at each others events, Action4Youth Inspiration programme, sponsorship with awards, support with recruitment and inductions)

Moving forward together - The VCS Recovery Board

- The VCS Recovery Board is one of four thematic partnerships tackling the long term social, economic and environment challenges arising from Covid-19 pandemic in the county.
- It brings together senior officers from key organisations to provide invaluable insight and constructive call to action.
- This group represent distinct aspects of the very diverse sector and help to drive forward thematic discussions, understand the wider VCS landscape with its fragility and risks as well as maximise recovery opportunities.
- 4 key roles:
 - Senior representation for strategic and tactical 'call to action' with a solution focused approach.
 - Share insight to consider the impact of Covid on communities and the sector.
 - Enable more joined up thinking for future emergency responses and help drive recovery forward action in a more coordinated manner.
 - Focus on maximising resources including finding opportunities and mobilising volunteers.



Whose involved:

Chair, Mark Ormerod (Leap)
Vice Chair, Jenifer Cameron (Action4Youth)
Martin Gallagher (The Clare Foundation)
Karen Irons (Citizens Advice)
Henry Allmand (Heart of Bucks)
Andrea McCubbin (Bucks Mind)
Ellie Stout (Rothschilds)
Katie Higginson (Community Impact Bucks)
Bernadette Ashcroft (Age UK)
Colin McGregor-Paterson (Oasis Partnership)
James Boulton (Wycombe Homeless)
Graham Peart (One Can Trust)

Plus more on working thematic groups

A 'strategic framework'

- Covid-19 highlighted impressive partnership collaboration.
- Being a new unitary council provides an opportunity to transform and begin an ambitious journey of being 'best in class'.
- There is an intention to develop a VCS strategy to provide a high-level framework to guide how as partners across Buckinghamshire we can work together towards a whole system, place-based approach to working with the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) and local communities to address needs.
- The framework would be about positive relationships and the importance of innovative solutions.
- It would highlight the council's commitment, passion and belief in the collaboration.
- It becomes a coat hanger document for other council policy, behaviours and commitments.
- It's a statement of the value of a vibrant and thriving voluntary and community sector.
- At its heart, its recognition that VCS is critical in delivering shared objectives and plays vital role in maintaining strong local communities.
- It will help continue exploration on how can we renew relationships to focus on community needs and enable a legacy of community spirit so visible during Covid.

Co-design with the VCS Recovery Board

- Research into other council's approaches showed a huge variety in approach. These documents instantly sets the tone for the vision and relationship.
- Lots of discussions for quite a few months and a partners workshop on 25th August hosted by the Clare Foundation.
- The workshop emphasised a need for a strategic framework that is accessible - too long it risks going into too much detail and detracting from key messages.
- Be pragmatic and don't make it too complicated. Should be produced fairly quickly and light touch as the focus should continue to be on covid, limited resource, important to codesign.
- Needs to be high level. Much of the detail will come from engagement sessions that will form a codesigned delivery plan.
- Highlight what is out of scope – too wide and it loses its impact. Avoid financials or contracts, not a strategy for the VCS; the sector is an equal and self-determining partner.

Ambitious & accessible
Visual short document
Avoid council jargon
Place based approach
(something stakeholders will relate to and want to be involved with)
Recent case studies of collaboration
A living document
Flexibility to adapt to changing needs
Evolving through review and monitoring

- The workshop identified it would be beneficial to produce over the next few months a high level framework that highlights the importance of collaboration to ensure Buckinghamshire is a great place to live, work and grow up in.
- A document that promotes the principles of working together to ensure there is no wrong front door for people to receive help and support.
- A document that isn't limited to the council showing commitment but instead enables a place based approach with other sectors (health, police, fire, LEP etc) showing commitment to the ambition.
- A document that shows the common purpose, the 'can do' attitude of collaboration and sharing skills, expertise, learning and risks.
- Initial suggestions are 3 ambitious headline themes which would be underpinned by a detailed delivery plan that is also co designed through sector deep dives.



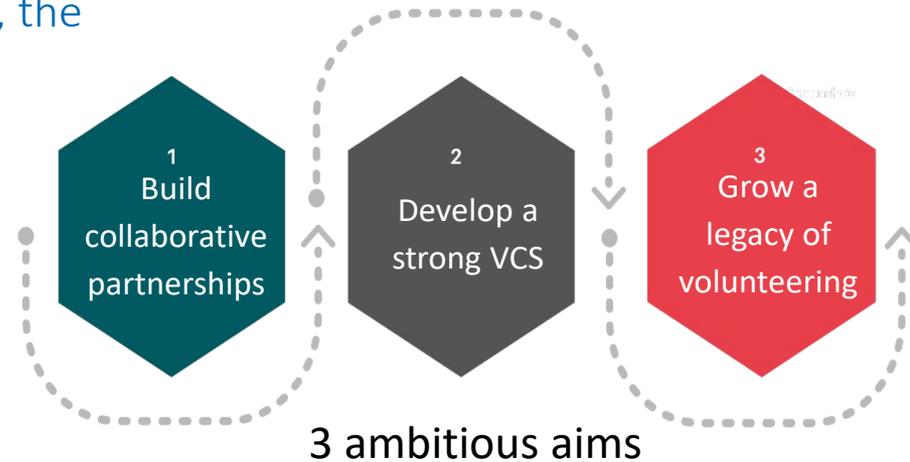
Mark Ormerod @MarkOrmerod1 · 26 Aug

My first proper @Leap_BMK face-to-face meeting in months . . . it was energising! Vital that we carry forward the momentum built through the Voluntary & Community sector during the pandemic. 30 years in the sector and never before has there been so much 'can-do'; let's keep it up



Gareth Williams @GarethWatBucks · 25 Aug

Great workshop with Bucks charities today drafting a new Voluntary and Community strategy for @BucksCouncil. Crucial to start by listening to those on the ground! Thanks to @tcf_uk for hosting. @Leap_BMK @WycombeHomeless @Action4Youth @One_Can_Trust @BucksMind @TheOasisCharity



- The Council naturally has its own channels for monitoring effectiveness – including select committee scrutiny.
- The VCS Recovery Board has suggested that given the current climate, and the need to be responsive, flexible and adapt to changing needs, the delivery / action plan accompanying the high level framework shouldn't be a static document but one that continually evolves with the changing environment .
- The VCS Recovery Board is happy to drive the engagement and development of the delivery plan.
- Next steps are to continue reflections with a view to have a final product ready for formal decision by the end of the year.

Working together example

Community Resilience

A partnership with the Fire and Rescue service, supported by Manchester University, brings an opportunity to reset our approach to community resilience. Working with the new Community Boards, partners and volunteers to understand the changing local risks as well as learning by the amazing community spirit shown during covid. Peoples' needs and vulnerabilities are changing, local capability and services or support can be delivered in different ways including by those working most closely with communities. Community resilience tackles the causes of emergencies, identifies local needs, reduces vulnerabilities, and creates capacity – making Buckinghamshire a safer community-led place to live.

Working together example

Covid-19 Strategic Funding Group

A partnership of funding organisations that supported communities in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Since March 2020 Heart of Bucks, Buckinghamshire Council, The Clare Foundation, Leap, The Rothschild Foundation and The National Lottery Community Fund came together to ensure over £1.5 million of emergency funds and grants were swiftly distributed to local charities and community groups with a coordinated approach. The group help maximise funding opportunities and also look to help the sector stabilise and recover.

Working together example *Creating a Partnership Capacity Fund*

The 'Buckinghamshire Wellbeing Capacity Fund' is a collaboration of three local charitable foundations (Heart of Bucks, The Rothschild Foundation and The Clare Foundation) to increase capacity in a challenging area during the Covid crisis. This is a unique and innovative way for local funders to come together.

Managed by Heart of Bucks, the fund recognised that collaboration amongst the sector will be critical to long-term community stability, as such it encouraged applications from partnerships of two or more local charities that helped address one or more of the following key areas:

- BAME groups
- 'Green' recovery and environmental sustainability
- Digital inclusion & accessibility
- The LGBTQ+ community
- Young people aged under 25
- Physical activity & health

Four applications, each with at least five different charities involved, were made to the fund. One trustee from each of the funders, plus the Cabinet Member for Communities at Buckinghamshire Council, were invited to form the decision-making panel. The grant of £73k was awarded to the consortium led by The Oasis Partnership. Their project, 'Listen, Learn, Adapt', is intended to work alongside and closely with BAME communities, enabling local non-profit organisations to become more inclusive and diverse and supporting improved community engagement.

Working together example *The Street Association*

The Street Association, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner, is a resident led initiative to encourage strengthened communities and local connections. Partners include Thames Valley Police, Trading Standards, Housing Associations, Neighbourhood Watch, local groups and residents who contribute ideas and provide local data to inform on issues. Residents identified training needs and a programme was established to upskill residents. Over 450 residents accessed free workshops which covered community safety and health and wellbeing themes including domestic abuse, scams, county lines and modern slavery. This has enabled over 500 referrals to preventative services.

Working together example *Olympic Lodge*

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, The Olympic Lodge and other buildings at the Aylesbury stadium were transformed into a contingency facility to ease pressure on Buckinghamshire hospitals. In just three weeks, the lodge was repurposed as a care and re-ablement centre to look after vulnerable adults during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Up to 240 beds were available and the lodge was set up to be staffed by a team of care workers and volunteers who were able to give round the clock care. The facility is a great example of how all organisations worked together to plan how to organise staff and volunteers, pull together procedures, including health and safety and safeguarding guidance for the site at short notice as well as ensure sufficient equipment and PPE.

Working together example

#ProudofBucks

The critical relationships between Buckinghamshire Council, charities and voluntary groups to beat the coronavirus emergency featured in a Vlog with Leader Martin Tett.

Martin's guests are Katie Higginson (CIB) and Martin Gallagher (TCF) who talk about the vital role of volunteering in supporting people in the community during the Covid-19 effort. The two organisations developed a volunteer matching service works in partnership with the Council.

Katie, CEO of the Community Impact Bucks, spoke about the overwhelming response across the county and, as a result, how the current community need is being met. "There is so much support taking place in our local communities, it's absolutely fantastic," she says. "But looking ahead we anticipate there'll continue to be a huge need for volunteers."

Martin, CEO of the Clare Foundation, talks about how they have been working with charity leaders to help them think ahead, how the foundation has worked collaboratively to meet needs throughout the county and to ensure volunteers have the right skills, tools and guidance. "When you think of all the work by volunteers and the voluntary sector, we couldn't have got to this point in the crisis without them," says Martin.

Katie and Martin also focused on addressing the inequalities for BAME communities with facilitating roundtables.

Working together example

Covid-19 Mental Health

Coronavirus had a severe impact on mental health. The fear of contracting the virus, coupled with separation of families and job insecurities, caused widespread anxiety. A Buckinghamshire partnership of mental health organisations covering all ages formed an alliance to tackle the challenges in a strategic and coordinated approach. The partnership will leave a lasting legacy to work from and to whilst reaping many benefits in the meantime. Together we have mapped national and local online provision for mental health support, shared intelligence and learning, created a new bereavement support task and finish group, shared key themes, found solutions to combat the challenges service users face, introduced a digital inclusion pilot project for older adults, the sharing of funding opportunities and supporting wellbeing in the workplace.

Working together example

Early prevention

Heart of Bucks are working closely with the CCG and Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust to pilot an innovative way of increasing early prevention of certain types of cancer. The NHS are providing a funding programme, managed by Heart of Bucks, directed towards the non-profit sector in Bucks. The fund helps Not for Profit and community organisations locally, who have excellent local connections to marginalised or disadvantaged communities, and encourage/educate/engage at-risk members of these communities to attend cancer screenings much earlier, as early detection increases the survival rate significantly.