

**Subject: Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector
(VCSE) Accord**

Report of: Tom Sharman, Engagement Officer

Introduction

A decision on this matter was expected to be made at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 24 March 2020. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, central government announced on the evening of 23 March 2020 further restrictions on when and how people could meet and leave their homes. In response to this announcement the Cabinet meeting was cancelled.

Standing delegation HPS11 in Part 2.9 of the Constitution allows the Head of Paid Service:

To take an urgent decision where a decision needs to be made urgently and it is not practical to convene a quorate meeting of the Cabinet or relevant committee or subcommittee of the Authority, in consultation with the Chair (or in their absence a Vice Chair) of the Cabinet or relevant committee or subcommittee, the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

It has been agreed with Mayor Driscoll, as Chair of Cabinet, the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer that all the decisions expected to be made at Cabinet on 24 March 2020 will now be made by the Head of Paid Service as Delegated Decisions in accordance with HPS11 to ensure the efficient conduct of the Authority's business.

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is threefold:

1. To further recognise the value of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) in the North of Tyne. To date the Mayor has appointed Robin Fry as his Ambassador and co-chairs the North of Tyne Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group with his Ambassador.
2. To agree an Accord between the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) and our VCSE partners.

3. To begin to scope how the NTCA can add value to the work of our local government partners with the VCSE to build capacity, sustainability and be a catalyst for an inclusive economy.

Recommendations

The Head of Paid Service is recommended to approve the Accord between the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) and our VCSE partners. See appendix A.

1. Background Information

1.1 What is an Accord?

- 1.2 An accord is 'an agreement between parties', in this case between NTCA and NoT VCSE. The Accord sets out a framework for a new relationship between NTCA and the VCSE sector. It includes building and sustaining the VCSE sector's strategic capacity to deliver our shared vision of an inclusive economy.

Background to the Sector

The North of Tyne Combined Authority area has a diverse and active voluntary, community and social enterprise sector which is committed to improving the lives of our citizens. Thousands of independent organisations exist, many of them working to support the most isolated and vulnerable people in our society, tackle inequalities and improve social cohesion. In 2020 we wish together to celebrate the achievements of the sector and acknowledge the vital role played by VCSE organisations, both now and in the future.

The VCSE sector across the North of Tyne covers everything from small volunteer-led groups to large international charities employing teams of highly skilled professionals. The sector in the North East consists of more than 7,000 organisations employing approximately 37,500 full time equivalent employees. The vast majority of these organisations are small (with an income of £10k-£100k) or micro (with an income of less than £10k). The sector also benefits from an estimated 930,000 volunteers across the region. The VCSE sector across the North of Tyne is supported by three key infrastructure organisations: North Tyneside VODA; Connected Voice Newcastle & Gateshead; Northumberland CVA. Each of these VCSE sector infrastructure organisations operates as a registered charity and has well established relationships with their local authority, sitting at key strategic boards to reflect the interests of their members.

2. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 2.1 This agreement sets out the key principles for the way in which the Combined Authority and the VCSE sector will work in partnership to ensure all members of our society have a chance to be heard and involved, and to create prosperity we can all be part of. We will work together towards the vision of a more inclusive economy that brings together people and opportunities to create vibrant communities and a high quality of life, narrowing inequalities and ensuring that all residents have a stake in our region's future.

3. Key Risks

- 3.1 The key risk is NTCA's capacity and resource to engage with an incredibly diverse sector who are operating in an era of austerity, rising demand and increasing complexity. The Accord sets out how NTCA and the VCSE will work together to deliver their shared vision, it does not create legal obligations on any party.

4. Financial and Other Resources Implications

- 4.1 Whilst the NTCA will seek ways to facilitate and enable financial, practical; and commissioning support for VCSE organisations it is understood by both parties that there cannot be ongoing resource implications.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on this report.

6. Consultation/Engagement

- 6.1 Following a consultation exercise with VCSE organisations, the Accord has been coproduced with the key leadership organisations of the VCSE in the region.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 It was agreed at the Cabinet meeting of 14th January 2020 that Robin Fry be appointed as the Mayors Ambassador.

9. Contact Officers

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10. Glossary

- 10.1 None

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Accord

The North of Tyne Combined Authority commits to:

- Recognise the economic value of the VCSE as a key sector contributing to the regional economy;
- Respect the independence of the VCSE sector and the need for it to actively challenge decisions;
- Develop a mutual and equal relationship, acknowledging the strengths of the VCSE sector to represent local (and often unheard) voices;
- Collaborate openly with the VCSE sector to lead the way on new, improved standards of working;
- Engage, co-design and coproduce with the VCSE sector to develop appropriate mechanisms which will ensure VCSE involvement and support for joint priorities;
- Facilitate and enable financial, practical and commissioning support for VCSE organisations based in the North of Tyne area;
- Work with the VCSE sector to realise the potential of social value, through economic impact, in commissioning processes.

The North of Tyne VCSE sector commits to:

- Engage, inform, consult, mobilise and where needed, represent residents and communities who are not always reached by the Authority;
- Share knowledge of the barriers facing some of our communities, and the opportunities and expertise needed to remove them;
- Use its extensive knowledge of local community needs to enable NTCA investments to achieve greater impact and reach;
- Bring its own resources (including funding, volunteers and skills) where appropriate to support inclusive growth outcomes;
- Facilitate the development of strategies for the Authority which supports local communities and local community wealth building.