

Social Infrastructure Report: VCSE consultation questions and feedback

Context:

- Two workshops, online and in person, with representatives from the VCSE sector were held in November 2023. A total of 12 VCSE representatives took part in these workshops as well as an online survey which was shared on the council's consultation platform.
- Respondents noted that in the last few years while the current contract has been in operation, trust has grown between VCSE groups and organisations; there is more diversity in decision-making, including resident involvement; networked approaches have enabled groups with similar goals to share resources and knowledge to strengthen their missions; and Barking and Dagenham is now recognised as a place of radical innovation in the social sector.
- Positive support that representatives acknowledged through the current contract's provision included spaces to learn from and support one another as well as the inclusion of a learning partner to help colleagues think outside the box and progress work in the best interests of residents.
- To achieve organisational vision, VCSE representatives noted the importance of training, capacity building, encouraging collaboration and ensuring smaller groups are given opportunities to get involved and share views, access to shared spaces, longevity of funding and projects, and a coordination function to support groups collectively.
- To build trust, transparency and honesty were the main themes noted in the VCSE consultation. These can be improved through joint events to heighten communication between groups and between sectors, sharing best practice, and being open to adapting.
- To help organisations work together more collaboratively, shared spaces and events were again noted as the key themes. Using stories and sharing learnings and experiences can help inspire organisations to work differently.
- The relationship management between the VCSE sector and the council that the provider will play should act as a point of independent influence and challenge, acting on behalf of the sector for any issues that arise, with the ability to negotiate for smaller groups.

Questions used, in both in person and online workshops:

1. What has happened across the VCSE sector over the last four years that you are most proud of?

2. Over the last few years, what types of support have you received from the BD_Collective?
3. Going forward, what do you need to achieve your organizational vision?
4. How can we continue to build trust across the sector and with the council and other partners?
5. The borough has a wide breadth and depth of civil society organizations. What would help you work together more often to support residents?
6. What is the primary role you want the social infrastructure provider to play with regards to the VCSE's relationship with the council?
7. What have we missed? What else would you like to suggest and see from a support service?