

# 'Big Society' in the City – forward from 2011

## Introduction

In autumn 2007 the Voluntary Sector subgroup of The City Together<sup>1</sup> undertook a major business planning exercise to develop the City's Third Sector Development Strategy (2008-2011)<sup>2</sup>.

Three years on, the global economic downturn and a change in UK government have brought about a very different policy and funding context, so it seems timely to evaluate progress against our original objectives and to re-prioritise for the next three years.

## Our Vision

An independent, vibrant, strong and sustainable Voluntary Sector<sup>3</sup>, able to identify and respond to the changing needs of the City's diverse communities; and to influence planners and policy makers.

The Voluntary Sector subgroup will work to ensure that the Voluntary Sector is robust enough to play its full part at every level in the City.

## Voluntary Sector Strategy

The following outcomes were identified in 2007 as the long-term changes that we aspired to bring about in and for the City's Voluntary Sector. This table shows some of the progress that has been made, and whether these outcomes remain a priority for the coming years.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Desired Outcome:</b>	<b>Examples of Progress:</b>	<b>Future Priority? ✓ ? ✗</b>
<b><i>Strengthening infrastructure in the City</i></b>		
A 'joined up' Voluntary Sector in the City able to reflect the views and experience of the sector when engaging with public sector partners – at member as well as officer level	CITY.COMM website constantly updated (including Community Directory, Venues and COMMunity Trading) annual CITY.COMMunity Fair	Continue e-bulletin Maintain website Continue to hold annual Community Fair
Clear lines of communication within the Sector and between the Sector, public bodies and business	CITY.COMM monthly e-bulletin sent to over 850 local recipients Strategic engagement with partners through The City Together Board and subgroups	As above Continuing need for engagement through The City Together. Likely increased level of commissioning.
The Compact used as a working tool by all parties – developing in line with need, constraint and ambition	City Together Compact promoted and refreshed August 2010 Compact documents available on CITY.COMM website Compact included in CoLC contracts with Voluntary Sector providers	Awaiting result of Government consultation on new Compact proposals.

<sup>1</sup> The Voluntary Sector subgroup was formerly known as the Inclusive and Outward Looking City subgroup.

<sup>2</sup> City of London ChangeUp Strategy and Business Plan (December 2007)

<sup>3</sup> The City's Voluntary Sector includes all the charities, voluntary and community groups, faith communities, and social enterprises either based or delivering services in the 'square mile'.

<sup>4</sup> Updated following the meeting of the Voluntary Sector subgroup on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

CITY.COMM established as a key delivery arm for the VCS	CITY.COMM work now funded from more sources existing CoLC and City Bridge funding extended until March 2011	Current funding of CITY.COMM all ends at end of March 2011 apart from 1 yr more of BASIS OD work 3 days pw. <b>Need to define priorities.</b>
Membership of the Voluntary Sector subgroup includes faith communities, neighbourhood representation and arts, culture and environment groups (or their representatives)	Voluntary Sector subgroup re-launched and membership widened (June 2010) CITY.COMM website / database upgraded to be able to support thematic or ad-hoc email networks	<b>Vol Sector Subgroup</b> – poss areas for focus/influence/development include – Compact; personalisation; commissioning; residents groups; premises; faith organisations; small grant funding in the City; volunteering; links to CSR.
The Voluntary Sector subgroup regularly reviews its work, is open to scrutiny by its specific membership and wider constituency	Voluntary Sector subgroup meeting dates and minutes are available on the CITY.COMM website	Continuation of CITY.COMM role in info/comms with other organisations. <b>Clearer vision re other constituencies?</b>
<b><i>Integrating equalities</i></b>		
Mechanisms established and are used to ensure that the spirit of the equalities agenda as well as its letter is integrated into all aspects of Voluntary Sector development	The City's small resident population means that 'communities of interest' may often require a link with resident / support organisations in the City Fringe or further afield, so sub-regional and regional partnerships also important.	Partnership with Tower Hamlets to support IT toolkit fro VCS development workers to support small groups.
BME and 'community of interest' groups and organisations access generic resources within the City	CITY.COMM Organisational Development Officer ensures that emerging communities / organisations have access to advice and representation (e.g. Portsoken Health & Community Centre consultation). City LINK work-groups (e.g. Portsoken, Mental Health)	Continuation of work to support communities in Portsoken.
The specific needs of community of interest groups known and understood and inform the development of future strategy	Social enterprises / CICs enabled to network for mutual support and development of partnerships (e.g. page on CITY.COMM website to enable social enterprises to publicise their services and products within the Sector). Grassroots research and needs assessment (e.g. Mansell Street Women's Group, Portsoken Health & Community Centre).	Continued regular contact and joint work with City LINK.
<b><i>Financial and environmental sustainability</i></b>		
Groups develop in a sustainable way – with clear pathways as they move from being local groups to employer organisations and so on	Strategic engagement to improve funders' understanding of the unique Voluntary Sector in the City (e.g. the costs and best models for delivering services). Targeted Organisational Development support that takes into account the capacity of organisations to be involved in public sector commissioning and procurement, those that do not wish to be involved in procurement, and those that wish to develop social enterprise.	More specific work to improve capacity of organisations to develop roles for volunteers and recruit successfully. Also support for VCS re commissioning. Continuing OD support face-to-face.

<p>Funding opportunities communicated to Third Sector organisations in a transparent and timely manner</p>	<p>CITY.COMM e-bulletin and website Annual funding conference (held jointly with VAW) CITY.COMM delivery partner in Grassroots Grants scheme.</p>	<p>Booking started for Funding Conference Jan 2011. Reward Grants bid process widely advertised. Awaiting GG replacement.</p>
<p>Third Sector organisations understand and able to communicate the true costs of their activity</p>	<p>CITY.COMM and ACE (community accountants) provide training and advice on fundraising, financial management, etc.</p>	
<p><b>Strengthening groups and organisations</b></p>		
<p>A co-operative VCS able to collaborate or enter into partnership on the basis of ability and interest rather than purely on the basis of pragmatism</p>	<p>New page on CITY.COMM website to enable social enterprises to publicise their services and products within the Sector. CITY.COMM and ACE training and advice to enable groups to analyse the actual cost of services and thus build sustainable organisations (full cost recovery).</p>	<p>E.g. C.C and Fossbox developing sustainable IT as part of basic OD toolkit.</p>
<p>Volunteering understood and best practice adopted by those who involve volunteers</p>	<p>CITY.COMM, CSV, and LINK input to City Volunteering Strategy to promote good practice in volunteer involvement and recruitment. Liaison with City Action regarding employee volunteering.</p>	<p>?Volunteering subgroup of Voluntary Sector subgroup</p>
<p>200 front line organisations which are skilled and able to engage in the wider agenda</p>	<p>CITY.COMM e-bulletin includes details of forthcoming (free or paid for) training from various providers. CITY.COMM provides training bursaries to enable groups to access appropriate courses. Engagement with Children's Workforce Development initiative to address barriers to learning and employment. CITY.COMM networking events, training, e-bulletin and Organisational Development support all help groups respond to a changing policy environment (e.g. commissioning, individual budgets, Big Society, etc) CITY.COMM collaboration with Citizens Online and Fossbox to offer IT training and advice to ensure that groups use ICT to its full potential. CITY.COMM collaboration with St Katharine &amp; Shadwell Trust to provide free PCs for City groups.</p>	<p>Training bursaries may not continue if funding reduced after March 2011.</p>
<p>Premises available for new and groups in phase II of their development; costs of premises understood by funders; and premises well managed by 3rd Sector organisations</p>	<p>CITY.COMM research into Voluntary Sector premises needs and exploration of S106 funding for a voluntary sector 'hub'. Improved communication and information so that any available premises and sharing opportunities are made more widely available. CITY.COMM website publicises available premises in the City or its vicinity at prices that are affordable for voluntary and community groups.</p>	<p>Survey established that groups' premises needs were more diverse than anticipated (i.e. need for cheap, flexible and part-time spaces; need for safe, private consultation spaces). Organisations with space to rent need to maximise income from it during economic downturn.</p>

<b>Partnership and engagement throughout the City</b>		
Volunteering Opportunities for all parts of our community – business, residents and students	<p>CITY.COMM, CSV, and LINK input to City Volunteering Strategy to promote good practice in volunteer involvement and recruitment.</p> <p>Promotion and awareness-raising of the Voluntary Sector amongst the City's business community (e.g. Livery Companies, Ward Clubs, etc.)</p> <p>CITY.COMM collaboration with CoLC consultation and engagement initiatives (design and delivery) to improve access across local cultural barriers.</p>	<p>Need to provide access to training for Voluntary Sector staff and volunteers who are engaged in coaching, training and mentoring volunteers on the National Citizen Service programme.</p> <p>Need to help organisations develop the capacity to cope with extra volunteers (i.e. cost, time, skills).</p>
The City Voluntary Sector subgroup an active partner in the implementation of the Community Strategy	NI7 (building the environment for a thriving third sector) adopted as one of the City's local priority indicators in the 2008 LAA	Uncertainty over future of LAAs, National Indicators, etc.
The City Voluntary Sector subgroup championing the Compact as a tool to achieve robust partnerships between public, private and third sector organisations	<p>City Together Compact promoted and refreshed August 2010</p> <p>Compact documents available on CITY.COMM website</p> <p>Compact included in CoLC contracts with Voluntary Sector providers</p>	Further work on Govt renewed Compact tbc in 2011.
Partnerships and networks established, skilled and supported in the City	Strategic engagement with partners through The City Together Board and subgroups	
<b>Participation in the wider world</b>		
Cross-borough partnerships in place	Representation through CITY.COMM on sub-regional and regional partnerships	Future uncertainties v. future opportunities
The City has engaged with lead up to Olympics and Paralympic Games and poised to engage with Games in 2012 and its legacy		Increased interest from groups and residents, volunteers etc. as Games become more imminent.

### **The Big Society in the City**

The new coalition government has a policy to “empower local people and communities, building a Big Society that would roll back big government, bureaucracy and Whitehall power”. Aspirations include increased volunteering, more social enterprise, and reforms to public services:

- A neighbourhood army of 5,000 full-time, professional community organisers (who will raise funds for their own salaries) will be trained to identify, recruit and develop local community leaders; help people start their own neighbourhood groups; and develop campaigning on local priority issues.
- The Big Society Bank will enable hundreds of millions of pounds of unclaimed assets and dormant accounts to finance neighbourhood groups, charities, and social enterprises.
- Mutuels, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises will be created and supported to have a much greater role in delivering public services. These groups will provide personalised services to the most disadvantaged people and help to tackle the most “stubborn” social problems.
- A new National Citizen Service for 16-year-olds will help them develop skills to be active, responsible citizens; mix with people from different backgrounds; and start getting involved in their communities.

Communities will have a greater say over local planning and services, and a general power of competence for local councils (together with a review of their finance) will remove restrictions on their work.

- Neighbourhood grants for the UK's poorest areas will encourage local people to form neighbourhood groups and support social enterprises and charities in these poorest areas.
- The National Lottery will be more independent of political control and focussed on arts, heritage, sport and 'good causes' with the BIG lottery no longer funding any public sector bodies.
- A review of the bureaucracy and paperwork relating to charities will include reforming the CRB checking system and making Gift Aid easier to use.

The extent of and commitment to voluntary and community action (the "Big Society") in the City of London is already impressive. However, the new government's ambitions will not be achieved without a great deal of awareness-raising, training and capacity building within both the statutory and voluntary sectors, so that the City's communities are best placed to take full advantage of these new opportunities.

In addition to those identified above, the Voluntary Sector subgroup also identified the following desired outcomes for 2011 – 14:

The positive environmental and social impacts of sourcing services from local and socially-responsible organisations to be recognised in CoLC and NHS procurement.
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The new City Volunteering brokerage to increase the amount and profile of volunteering, and for there to be greater public recognition of voluntary and community action.
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