

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Corporate Plan: A summary and analysis of the role of the VCFSE sector

On 24th July 2020, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority published their roadmap for delivering a “stronger, fairer and cleaner” LCR within their 62 page [Corporate Plan](#).

The Corporate Plan outlines the long-term vision for the City Region and what activity the Combined Authority will undertake over the next three years to achieve the objectives identified. With forewords signed off from Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram, Deputy Metro Mayor Janette Williamson, leaders from all 6 boroughs and the new LCR CA Chief Executive, Katherine Fairclough, it is fair to say that the plan has a substantive level of influence and backing.

However, it is important to understand how and where the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector fits in with the Combined Authorities ambitions, and how the Corporate Plan aligns with the [LCR VCFSE Manifesto for 2021-2024](#). In this document we have outlined key areas of the Corporate Plan that are most relevant for the VCFSE sector and would benefit most from VCFSE sector involvement.

Priority areas and themes

The plan is broken down into 5 priority areas under which all activity will be undertaken, emphasising the need to work collaboratively with all partners to improve outcomes across these areas of work:



Alongside the priority areas, the plan has three cross-cutting themes that run through it, reflecting the most pressing challenges that the City Region faces for the next three years and beyond:

- **Recovery** – From the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Equality** – Tackling inequalities that the pandemic has exposed and widened
- **Sustainability** – Addressing the climate emergency

Fairer City Region

Social innovation, inclusive economy, tackling inequalities, opportunities

This area of the LCR Corporate plan focuses on the people that live within the City Region and providing support and opportunities to unlock the potential of people and places. Strategic objectives include:

- Improving access and pathways to employment
- Increasing the range of support available for people experiencing poverty, exclusion, and inequalities
- Improve equality of outcomes across all protected characteristics

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- Promoting and supporting positive health and wellbeing.

Where does the VCFSE sector fit in?

This is a particular priority of the Corporate Plan that the VCFSE sector is perhaps most morally aligned to and invested in, to improve outcomes for our people and places. Many of the key activities described within this priority mirrors the LCR VCFSE Manifesto objectives and does reflect the influence and lobbying activity that the sector has had on the Combined Authority, through the likes of the VS6 Partnership. Some key activity areas of interest for the sector are:

- **A “Young Person’s Guarantee”:** Working with LA’s and “other partners” to support young people out of work for more than six months into employment, training, or apprenticeships
- **Homelessness Framework:** Working with LA’s, develop a framework that identifies how the CA will complement and enhance solutions for people who are homeless
- **Food Poverty Reduction Strategy:** Working with a wide range of partners, take a convening role to develop sustainable approaches to addressing food insecurity
- **New funding opportunities for VCFSE organisations:** Provide more than £1m of funding to support 100 grassroots organisations across every LA area, including the development of a new Mayoral Charitable Fund
- **Race Equality Programme:** Deliver a £3.6m programme to tackle systematic injustice and inequality to drive forward positive change for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority employees and residents
- **Digital inclusion:** Working with LA’s and other partners to support programmes addressing digital inclusion
- **Equality Scheme:** Promote equality and diversity across LCR
- **City Region approach to mental health:** Continue to support a consistent focus on ensuring that everyone is able to access the mental health support they need
- **Pipeline of employment and skills projects:** Develop and delivery demand-led portfolio of projects to support delivery of strategic objectives

The above activity planned by the Combined Authority links directly into the VCFSE Manifesto, and much of the service activity and programme delivery that the VCFSE sector already undertakes as part of day-to-day service provision and values. It is therefore imperative that the CA works closely with the VCFSE sector on all of these areas of work, utilising the sector’s expertise and community closeness.

Stronger City Region

Business and innovation, good quality jobs, social value & community wealth building

This section focuses on the need for “good” businesses investing in the City Region, from community organisations to large scale employers, and creating good quality jobs to rebuild and recover. It also touches upon empowering local communities through Community Wealth Building and maximising social value of the CA. Strategic objectives include:

- Strengthen and develop the post-COVID and post-Brexit business support offer
- Further embed community wealth building approaches and increase social value
- Improve the attractiveness of the City Region for business
- Attract investment in research and development

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Where does the VCFSE sector fit in?

The plan refers to the importance of community organisations in rebuilding the economy and providing social value, as well as empowering communities and enhancing economic resilience of places through Community Wealth Building. These are areas covered within the LCR VCFSE Manifesto. Particular key activity pertinent to the VCFSE sector includes:

- **Developing and deliver a £150m COVID Recovery Fund:** Create new jobs across LCR
- **Community Wealth Building:** Work with LA's and "other partners" to embed a City Region wide approach, including plans for a Community Bank
- **Fair Employment Charter:** Sign up a minimum of 75 businesses
- **Develop and embed a Social Value Framework:** Improve the social, financial, and environmental impact of CA funding with annual reviews.
- **Strengthen and develop the business support ecosystem:** Ensure the whole economy is supported

It is hoped that the £150m COVID Recovery Fund includes the VCFSE sector, following the significant role the sector had in supporting people and places throughout the pandemic. As identified in the VCFSE Manifesto, there will be an exploration of the barriers faced by the VCFSE sector in signing up to the Fair Employment Charter and how funding may need to change to reflect this priority. The sector is also well placed to support the development of a Social Value Framework and a Community Wealth Building approach to recovery.

Cleaner City Region

Net-zero, clean energy & sustainability

This priority area builds upon the CA's commitment to be a net-zero carbon City Region, and desire to become a pioneer in sustainable approaches to living, travel and business to address the climate emergency. Strategic priorities are:

- Accelerate plans for a net-zero carbon economy by 2040
- Develop the City Region's renewable energy offer
- Improve the energy efficiency of buildings and houses
- Improve sustainability of public transport

Where does the VCFSE sector fit in?

Climate change is a threat to everyone, and climate justice is important to reduce health and social inequalities across the City Region, with people living in the most deprived areas also likely to live in areas with poor air quality and few green spaces. Additionally, the VCFSE sector is made up of a number of environmental charities, from small grassroots initiatives and youth-led groups to wildlife trusts and conservation charities. Key CA activity for the VCFSE sector includes:

- **Achieving net-zero carbon target:** Develop an evidence-based plan
- **Explore the potential to establish a municipal energy company:** Retail power from Mersey tidal power and other renewable energy sources
- **Pipeline of strategic, community focused green infrastructure projects:** Across all LA's with funding for delivery
- **New interventions to create more green jobs**
- **Continue to implement the Air Quality Action Plan**

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Within the VCFSE Manifesto there is desire to have the VCFSE sector at the centre of a green and inclusive economy, working alongside the Combined Authority to recognise and fortify the sector's role in achieving green and net-zero ambitions and empowering green communities. Establishing a municipal energy company could be a great opportunity to provide social energy for communities through a green co-operative and other ways to shape a local, place-based response to the climate crisis.

Connected City Region

Connecting communities, digital inclusion, reformed transport system

This priority focuses on the importance of a well-connected City Region to improve access to opportunities, education and businesses through digital connectivity and sustainable transport. Accessibility is a key factor within this section of the plan. The strategic objectives are:

- Improving digital and physical connectivity between people and places
- Enhancing the role of transport and infrastructure as strategic enablers
- Transition towards further devolution of transport and increased public ownership.

Where does the VCFSE sector fit in?

The VCFSE sector in LCR were delivering digital inclusion projects long before the pandemic began, however the last 18 months has shown the urgent need for ensuring everyone has access to technology and the skills to use it. With many essential services moving online and the way people communicate with friends and family becoming increasingly digitised, the role of VCFSE sector will be crucial in achieving these objectives. Additionally, we need to ensure that transport is accessible for all to reduce its impact on inclusion and food insecurity. Key activity identified for the CA and relevant for the VCFSE sector includes:

- **Fast and reliable digital infrastructure network:** High broadband speeds across all six areas, aligned to digital inclusion ambitions
- **Local Transport Plan:** How transport planning will deliver the LCR vision and address long-term strategic transport challenges
- **Implementing the City Region Digital Strategy:** With an emphasis on digital inclusion
- **Digitising concessionary travel:** Continue to provide residents with access to affordable concessionary travel

Although transport is not a specific ask within the VCFSE Manifesto, it is included within our ask to develop a sustainable and affordable food plan for the City Region, following on from the recommendations from the VS6 Food Insecurity Assembly held in 2020 for the need to have affordable, accessible transport. Digital inclusion is a priority within the VCFSE Manifesto, particularly cementing the sector's role and leadership in this area and as equitable partners in the CA's Digital Strategy.

Vibrant City Region

High streets, cultural offer, communities, housing & wellbeing

The last priority area of the Corporate Plan celebrates the City Region's diversity, vibrancy, and cultural offer, linking in with the area's tourism and visitor economy and how this has been a catalyst for economic development whilst recognising the place-based challenges facing many residents. The plan is to revitalise places and support local authorities to improve outcomes in their places for the overall strength of LCR. Strategic priorities are:

- Ensure people have access to quality, affordable homes
- Support plans for a vibrant place-offer across LCR
- Enhance the cultural offer and the City Region's attractiveness as a visitor destination

Where does the VCFSE sector fit in?

Liverpool City Region has a diverse and vibrant VCFSE sector, supporting people and places across a variety of services, areas of interest and cultures helping to make the City Region a fair and inclusive place to live. The VCFSE in LCR is also made up of a number of arts and culture focused groups, from smaller groups using arts to support mental wellbeing, to nationally recognised brands including Africa Oyé and FACT. The VCFSE sector strengthens the Liverpool City Region's identity as a cultural tourist destination and needs to be included as part of this offer. Key activity includes:

- **Town Centre Place-Making and Development Programmes:** Provide direct investment and strategic support
- **CA Response to the Town Centres Commission:** Implement and deliver three pilot projects
- **Develop visitor attractions:** Within CA ownership and fund new projects to enhance the City Region's cultural offer
- **Deliver the LCR Cultural Compact Plan**
- **Publish the Spatial Development Strategy**
- **Implement the LCR Brand Strategy:** Strengthen the region's profile nationally and internationally
- **Pipeline of public land assets:** Maximise the positive impact for local people through the Land Commission

In order for the City Region's cultural offer to support people and places, there must be connectivity through the CA to the VCFSE sector, recognising the sector's offer in this area and how to further maximise and enable the positive impact the sector has on communities. Including the VCFSE sector within the CA's plans for revitalising town centres, spatial development, and the use of land for local people will be essential.