Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2022-2027 Consultation Findings

Executive Summary

1. The Council has developed a five year Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) strategy to set out our commitment to support a sustainable sector, through co-production with the VCS, district and city council colleagues and Oxfordshire County Councillors

2. Between 13th of May 2022 and 12th June 2022, the council invited feedback on the draft priorities and ambitions that underpinned the emerging strategy, that had been developed by a Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy Co-Production Group.

3. In total the council received 45 survey responses.

4. Overall, the consultation findings validate the priorities and ambitions for the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the priorities and ambitions consulted on were the right ones for the strategy.

Methodology and Communication

5. The strategy consultation was open for over four weeks, between 13th of May 2022 and 12th June 2022 on the Let's Talk Oxfordshire Platform. Paper copies were available on request.

6. The strategy was co-produced, with a strong approach to engagement throughout. In December 2021, we hosted two virtual workshops which over 90 local VCS organisations registered to attend. The workshops allowed us to gather the initial evidence from the sector about their challenges and decide how to bring forward the co-production of the strategy.

7. From this, we developed a voluntary and community sector strategy co-production group, open to anyone in the local VCS who wanted to join. We then worked in collaboration with the group to analyse the evidence from the workshops held last year and develop the priorities and commitments for the strategy for consultation.

8. The primary audience for the consultation were local voluntary and community sector groups. The consultation link was shared with all participants who registered for the December 2021 workshops, as well as spread widely through council networks. Furthermore, it has been promoted via direct emails to key influencers in the sector, asking them to cascade to other sector colleagues. We have also included articles in stakeholder e-newsletters, and encouraged Oxfordshire County Council members to respond.

How to interpret this report

9. This is a consultation exercise and has not been designed to be a piece of representative research. Therefore, the council cannot attribute any statistical confidence intervals to the data. The people who participated are entirely self-selecting.

10. The report is presented in two parts, with the first section focusing on the key themes that came through in written answers, and the second section summarising the quantitative data where respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the priorities and ambitions.

11. In total, the council received **45** survey responses and no written responses. Not everyone chose to answer each question (as was permitted) and this report uses variable base numbers based on the number of people who had their say for each question.

12. This survey contained several open-ended questions, where people responding could share their thoughts. All comments have been read and carefully considered. Where we report on the common themes, we have grouped responses on these areas for reporting purposes.

Findings

Common themes:

13. The consultation allowed respondents to comment on each ambition within the priority areas individually, creating a large number of text responses. We have gathered together and grouped feedback on these into themes, as similar comments were made across different ambitions.

14. A general criticism under some of the ambitions was questioning how they would be delivered and implemented in practice. There were also comments raising the question as to whether some of the ambitions were box ticking exercises.

15. There were also several references to the increased need for funding to the sector, as well as funding and resource for the strategy in order to implement it.

16. Within the priority area of **Networking and Collaboration**, a common theme was the need for clarification around terms, and the use of jargon, specifically including 'The Compact' and 'The Oxfordshire Way'.

17. In the priority area for **Volunteering and Social Action**, respondents felt that work was needed with other sectors, such as the private sector and youth groups, to attract volunteering. There was a strong emphasis on the need to ensure that workforces were not undermined by using volunteers for roles that should be paid. Furthermore, other respondents felt large scale changes outside the remit of the strategy were needed to attract more volunteers, for instance through access and cost of childcare. Finally, some respondents felt that the

sector needed to change its approach to volunteering and look at more short-term and flexible ways of offering volunteering opportunities.

18. In the priority area **Capacity and Skills**, a couple of respondents felt that support for strategic priorities needed to be reciprocal, and not just from the voluntary sector to the council. There was also support for the idea of a hub model to support VCS organisations in areas like training, but respondents felt this needed to be accessible to all organisations.

19. Within the priority area **Supporting a Sustainable Sector**, some respondents felt more information was required on the council's new Social Value Policy. There were also requests for the ambition to explore commissioning processes to also consider grants.

20. There were only a small number of individual comments received for the priority area **Reducing Inequalities**. The feedback was mixed but included respondents who felt the priority needed to be resourced, and a few specific areas within inequalities that needed focus, for instance mental health.

Priority and Ambitions:

21. Across each of the priorities, and each of the ambitions that sit within them, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that that priorities and ambitions were the right ones for the strategy. Respondents could choose from; strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree.

22. Overall, the priorities received strong support, with 25% (11) strongly agreeing, 66% (29) agreeing. 5% (2) neither agreed or disagreed, and 2% (1) disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Q. To what extent you agree or disagree that the five priorities are the right ones for our Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy?

Base: 44

Category	Value
Strongly agree	11
Agree	29
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	1

23. The ambitions sitting under the priorities also received broad support, with no respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing to any of the priority areas.

Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the ambitions in:
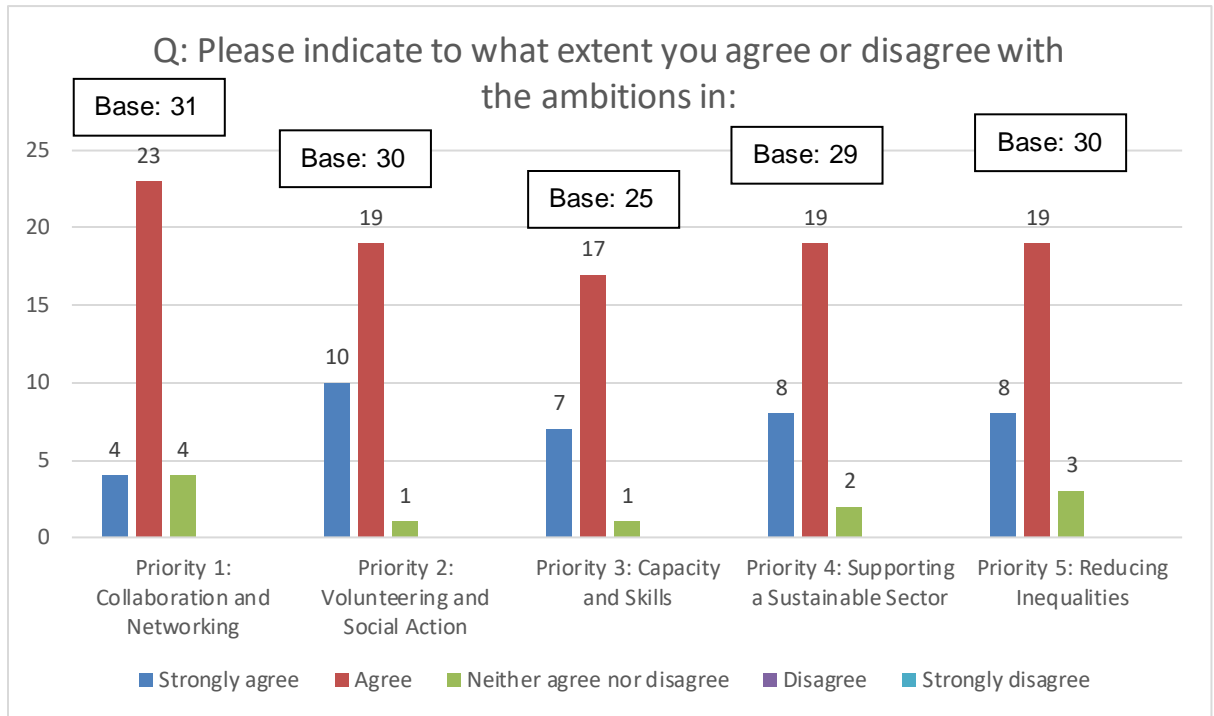
Types of Respondent

24. Overall, 45 people responded to the survey. As the primary audience for the strategy and consultation is the voluntary and community sector, the usual profile questions were not asked as it was determined this data would not be helpful. Rather, respondents were asked how they were responding, to determine their relationship with the sector.

25. The majority of respondents 48% (21) were staff members of VCS organisations, responding on their behalf. We also received responses from volunteers on behalf of VCS organisations (23%, 10 respondents) and individuals who were staff members or volunteers of a VCS organisation but responding in a personal capacity (14%, 6 respondents). Five members of the public (11%) also responded, as well as one employee from the county, city, or districts, and one respondent representing a statutory service.

I am responding to this survey as:

A member of the public **5**

A staff member or volunteer of a VCS org, responding in a personal capacity **6**

A representative responding on behalf of a statutory service organisation **1**

A city, county or district council employee **1**

A volunteer representing a VCS org **10**

A staff member representing a VCS org **21**