

## Voluntary and Community Sector Action Plan 23/24

VCS Priority	Directorate	Service Area	Action	Update
Collaboration and Networking	People, Transformation and Performance	Children's Services	1.1 We will continue to ensure that our own workforce has the right information available to them for effective signposting and referrals to VCS organisations that can support our residents.	This action is now complete, and we have integrated it into business as usual.
	Communications, Strategy and Insight	Policy and Strategy	1.2 We will pro-actively support the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Inequalities in engaging and building relationships with the local VCS.	This action is now complete, and we have integrated it into business as usual.
	Communications, Strategy and Insight	Policy and Strategy	1.3 We will build on our relationship with the VCS sector, working with OCVA to establish regular OSCA (Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance) partnership meetings.	To strengthen our relationship with the sector further, we will be looking to refresh and relaunch OSCA meetings in 24-25.
	Communications, Strategy and Insight	Policy and Strategy	1.4 We will oversee implementation of the VCS Strategy across the council and help ensure service area actions are delivered and reported on internally and to OSCA.	This action has been completed as part of the 23-24 action planning process and will become business as usual for 24-25.
	People, Transformation and Performance	Customers and Cultural Services – Libraries	1.5 We will commit to renewing our existing partnership agreements with volunteers and Friends Groups in acknowledgement of the critical support they provide to local library services. We will	We are currently in the process of completing the renewal of all existing partnership agreements. The terms of these agreements are being extended (from 1- or 2-year

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			<p>explore widening this activity across the whole branch network.</p>	<p>arrangements, as was, to 3 years, as the general term) to demonstrate the service's and council's commitment to working with local communities to sustain and develop local library services.</p> <p>We are yet to explore the possible extension of Friends group arrangements.</p>
	<p>People, Transformation and Performance</p>	<p>Adult Social Care</p>	<p>1.6 We will continue to develop and build upon existing partnership structures within the Oxfordshire Way, such as Communities of Practice to extend the reach and range of community-led prevention strategies.</p>	<p>This action is in progress and has been integrated into business as usual.</p> <p>With the Integrated Care Board (ICB), we have supported the delivery of the well together programme. OCVA are the provider of the 2-year scheme, which is focused on the 10 most unequal areas in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Communities of practice continue to deliver great sessions across the county supporting best practice in support of the Oxfordshire way (OCVA)</p>

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	Environment and Place	Environment and Circular Economy	1.7 We will support the Community Action Group Network to deepen links with other relevant OCC teams to enhance and extend the impact of relevant projects, by holding and reporting on a minimum of two cross-departmental meetings per year.	We continue to support the CAG Network , with 3-4 big meetings each year, including colleagues from across different OCC departments (including establishing links to Circular Economy, and Community Wealth Building work).
	Public Health and Community Safety	Trading Standards	1.8 We will explore how we can best communicate and cascade consumer issues and advice to local community groups to improve resilience against fraud and consumer issues, identifying those groups or areas of the county who appear to be underrepresented in the available data we have.	<p>This action has been completed. We have integrated this into business as usual and are currently performing above our corporate target.</p> <p>We have shared advice with community groups, and engagement has been carried out with community events as part of the electric blanket testing campaign.</p> <p>We are working closely with other partners in this space to ensure that there is not duplication.</p>
<b>Volunteering and Social Action</b>	Communications, Strategy and Insight	Communications and Engagement	2.1 We will develop an external communications plan to promote the importance and benefits of volunteering in 2023/24, including events such as Volunteer Week.	This action is to be reviewed and agreed whether to roll over into 24-25 action plan.

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	Communications, Strategy and Insight	Communications and Engagement	2.2 We will develop an internal communications plan, in conjunction with HR, to promote the council's volunteering policy and volunteering opportunities, and celebrate the volunteering achievements of our employees.	<p>We have embedded volunteering opportunities into our annual internal communications plan.</p> <p>In June every year we celebrate Volunteers' Week (<a href="#">One in five people do this...   Oxfordshire County Council Intranet</a>) and we regularly promote volunteering opportunities.</p>
	People, Transformation and Performance	Customers and Cultural Services – Libraries	2.3 We will widen participation and strengthen volunteer voices across our Libraries by exploring new development opportunities and celebrating the key role our volunteers play in delivering services for our residents.	<p>We celebrated Volunteers week in June, by contacting all library volunteers and thanking them for their great work; and are due to meet up with community-supported libraries' volunteers in April 2024 to mark their contribution to the service.</p> <p>As noted in action 1.5, we have been actively meeting with Friends/Community groups to renew partnership agreements.</p> <p>We are in active discussions to extend and develop digital inclusion volunteer activities and Home Library Service.</p>

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	<p>People, Transformation and Performance</p>	<p>Customers and Cultural Services – Museums and Heritage</p>	<p>2.4 We will develop opportunities to broaden volunteer participation across Heritage services and work to better capture the benefits of volunteering in improving wellbeing and combatting loneliness.</p>	<p>As well as celebrating Volunteers week in June, we had a recognition celebration over Christmas to thank the Heritage services volunteers for their work.</p> <p>We produced a regular Museum newsletter that goes out to volunteers and also actively contribute to the Friends newsletter too.</p> <p>We have had positive meetings with the Swalcliffe Society, who support operations at Swalcliffe Barn, about how they can be better assisted and are developing the offer at this site.</p> <p>We have regained accreditation status for all our Heritage sites (including The History Centre and The Oxfordshire Museum), and our returns detailed the work undertaken across the service by volunteers.</p> <p>We still have work to do to capture the impact/benefits of volunteering.</p>
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				<p>We have not yet broadened volunteer participation via digital channels, however volunteer effort is maintained at existing levels, which is vital to cataloguing and digitising output.</p>
	Environment and Place	Environment and Circular Economy	<p>2.5 We will further develop community volunteers through town and parish councils such as volunteer flood wardens, highways maintenance and school crossing patrols.</p>	<p>Work is in progress and this action is becoming business as usual.</p> <p>We finished the flood warden pilot at the end of March. We are currently receiving feedback, and this will be incorporated into business as usual.</p> <p>As of March 2024, we reached 10 volunteers for the pilot Flood wardens scheme.</p>
Capacity and Skills	People, Transformation and Performance	Children's Services - Youth	<p>3.1 We will offer £50,000 of our surplus apprenticeship levy to enable the development of a skilled youth workforce. 10 Youth Work Level 3 Apprenticeships will be funded through this offer.</p>	<p>We offered the apprenticeship levy to local VCS organisations working in the children's sector, however this was not taken up by any organisations.</p>
	Public Health and Community Safety	Public Health	<p>3.2 We will engage smaller VCS organisations in delivering domestic abuse training contracts</p>	<p>We have completed this action, with new contracts starting in April 2023.</p>

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			for professionals and expanding the champions network for professionals and in local communities.	
	People, Transformation and Performance	Partnerships and Delivery	3.3 We will deliver grant support of £300,000 to strategic VCS advisory services to provide additional capacity	This grant funding has been provided to eight advice organisations within the County. It is being primarily used to boost the provision of debt and benefits advice. Monitoring is being collected on the provision of these services. One set of data has been submitted and the second is due in April.
	Environment and Place	Highways	3.4 We will train and develop 100 new FixMyStreet Super Users and network volunteers, over the next three years, across the County with the skills to support their local network and community. We will expand our work with communities in managing biodiversity sites.	This action is complete – as of March 2024 there are a total of 117 volunteer Fix My Street Users.
	Environment and Place	Environment and Circular Economy	3.5 We will support the Community Action Groups to engage local communities across the county on environmental topics by delivering community activities, training and information sharing through the Community Action Groups network. We will report on the number of activities and events	The report on CAG's activity from 23-24 will not be available until May 24.  For the project year April 22-March 23: CAG supported 4,297 activities, 84,883 participants, 97,613 volunteer hours, and £1,756,529 of

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			delivered annually across our service areas including waste reduction, climate resilience, public rights of way and tree planting.	network fundraising and income generated.
Supporting a Sustainable Sector	Communications, Strategy and Insight	Policy and Strategy	4.1 We will refresh the Community Asset Transfer Policy.	Work to refresh the Community Asset Transfer Policy is in progress.
	Communications, Strategy and Insight	Policy and Strategy	4.2 We will promote the Councillor Priority Fund to the VCS and implement a more streamlined approach to administering the fund.	This action has been completed, and a LEAN review is currently underway to improve the process
	People, Transformation and Performance	Adult Social Care	4.3 We will work with NHS, District and City Council and the voluntary and community sector to develop social prescribing and community capacity and capability. This will include development of grant provision for anchor organisations and community groups to support people in the community and avoid admission to hospital or care placements.	<p>Along with the City and Districts, Public Health, and the VCS, we have mapped the provision of “connectors” in the community.</p> <p>A further round of grant funding of community assets has been completed with Oxfordshire Community Foundation, OCVA and Community First Oxfordshire delivering grants to the value of 500k supporting 104 local community groups. This generated a further 120K of additional funding from local sponsors via OCF supporting</p>



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				<p>an additional 16 community groups.</p> <p>Local Area Co-ordination has been launched in two Localities (Bicester East and Chipping Norton) with support from West and Cherwell District Councils.</p>
	Public Health and Community Safety	Public Health	4.4 We will work with VCS partners to co-produce our public health research governance processes and strategy. This will include setting up a Community Research Network and support/training for Community Research Champions.	<p>We have established a Community Research Network and associated Community Steering Group.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the new Head of Research will lead on the development of a research strategy and governance framework with input from the VCS and other stakeholders when in post.</p>
	People, Transformation and Performance	Partnerships and Delivery	4.5 We will partner with OCF to run a second round of VCS grants, providing a further £240,000 of funding to those groups supporting residents in the cost-of-living crisis.	<p>We provided £110,000 to support the delivery of this £240k programme. We received an initial report following the award of grants to 32 organisations.</p> <p>A final report will be received in the spring of 2024 to provide feedback on delivery.</p>

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	Environment and Place	Highways	4.6 We will explore the possibility of supporting the VCS by providing parking permits for volunteers that deliver core services across the county.	This action is to be reviewed and carried over into the 24-25 action plan if appropriate.
	Public Health and Community Safety	Trading Standards	4.7 We will promote Friends Against Scams as a community-led approach to scam harm reduction. In 2023/24, we aim to train 200 'Friends' across Oxfordshire communities to increase resilience against scams, with a view to prioritising a train-the-trainer approach in future years, recruiting 'Scam Champions' to take such learning into their communities.	Work is in progress on this action.  As of the end of Q3 in 23/24, we have trained 156 Friends.
Reducing Inequalities	People, Transformation and Performance	Children's Services – Youth	5.1 We will ensure that the Department for Education (DfE) grant funding allocated to us each year is used to provide our Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF), to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds and other vulnerable groups throughout school holidays.	Work is in progress on this action as part of current business as usual.  DfE grant funding should continue until March 2025.
	People, Transformation and Performance	Customers and Cultural Services – Libraries	5.2 We seek to further develop the Home Library Service (HLS) with external funding and volunteers, to better support independent living, combat loneliness and widen	We have put in a funding bid to the current round of budget planning to expand the Home Library Service and are awaiting a decision on this

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			<p>participation for residents, as well as monitor and celebrate volunteer impact and achieve improved sustainability.</p>	<p>front. We have continued to actively engage with our volunteers and maintained service levels at maximum capacity. We carry out a bi-annual survey of HLS customers to gauge satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.</p>
	<p>People, Transformation and Performance</p>	<p>Customers and Cultural Services – Museums and Heritage</p>	<p>5.3 We will work with local communities and partners to enhance engagement with heritage collections and increase participation, specifically addressing diversity, inclusion and underrepresented communities.</p>	<p>The History Service has worked with Film Oxford on projects focusing on highlighting under-represented community groups and their stories (e.g. African Caribbean residents, members of the LGBTQ+ community).</p> <p>We have restructured the Museums Team and created a Curator of Social History, and an Access and Engagement Manager post to give additional specialist capacity to work in this area.</p> <p>We are planning to undertake a museums collections development review, and establish a strategy for proactive collecting that will see an increase to the diversity of our heritage collections.</p>

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				<p>We have received Arts Council funding to assess the accessibility of our Museum services and have already started to make improvements off the back of evidence that is being generated by this review. An Accessibility Panel has been set up, and we have directly involved people with lived experience and specialist consultants.</p>
	Public Health and Community Safety	Public Health	<p>5.4 We will support signposting to the VCS with the promotion of social prescribing and through the Better Housing Better Health service. The Better Housing Better Health service will provide training to the VCS on fuel poverty and potential solutions to residents.</p>	<p>Work is in progress for this action through the Better Housing Better Health service.</p> <p>In addition, the Community Outreach Active Travel programme is specifically targeted at supporting VCS in disadvantaged communities to address barriers people experience to cycling and walking more.</p>
	Public Health and Community Safety	Public Health	<p>5.5 We will fund two VCS organisations to lead and deliver community insights reports to create the final two community profiles in 23/24, utilising the expertise and insight of our</p>	<p>This action has been completed.</p> <p>Oxford Glue carried out the community insight for the central Oxford profile and Community First Oxfordshire</p>

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			partners to steer this essential strategic work.	carried out the community insight for the Littlemore profile.  Both were published in December 2023.
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