

## Item 4

4th March 2021



Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Empowerment , Community and Citizen Engagement City  
Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Glasgow Life

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### GLASGOW'S STRATEGIC VOLUNTEERING UPDATE

#### Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this paper is to update the WECCE Committee on the initial output of the City Volunteer Review which took place over the last quarter of 2020.

#### Recommendations:

Note: The Committee is asked to note the report and progress of the review.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes  No  consulted: Yes  No

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1**

People's responses to the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis have been outstanding and have served to illustrate the fundamental importance of people's unpaid contributions to their communities geographically and of interest, and more widely to the City. The range of examples of volunteering and activism is vast and demonstrates the need for a better understanding of what is required, to not just support this ongoing but, to enable it to reach full potential in the City going forward.

### **1.2**

A report to committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 provided an overview of the volunteering response to Covid-19 and an update on the work of the volunteering review which was taking place. The key aim was to inform any adjustments required to Glasgow's Volunteering Strategy and action plan 2019-24 as a critical element of Glasgow's economic and social recovery.

### **1.3**

Three key agencies in Glasgow have a role in the strategic development of volunteering. Their work ensures that people are encouraged to volunteer, there are more volunteering opportunities and that volunteering opportunities provide a quality experience for the volunteer.

- Volunteer Glasgow; lead on the volunteering strategy, volunteer recruitment and volunteer management
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS); represent and support the third sector organisations that host the majority of volunteering opportunities
- Glasgow Life; with key responsibility for volunteering for major city events as well as large volunteering programmes supporting culture, learning and sport in the city

## **2. Background**

**2.1** Glasgow's Community Planning Partnership Executive Group agreed to progress a City Volunteer Review in June 2020 charging the three key strategic partners for volunteering in the City, as above, to progress the review and report back with recommendations. Advantage Training Consultancy was commissioned to conduct the review of the City's Volunteering Strategy (2019-2024) and volunteering infrastructure in light of the Covid-19 response.

The aim of the review was to provide recommendations to help achieve the vision outlined in *Volunteering for All 2019*, that Glasgow becomes a place "where everyone can volunteer, more often, and throughout their lives."

## **2.2 Process**

The review involved a number of methods including analysis of existing data, of which there is no shortage, individual and group interviews and an online survey to increase the reach. There are a number of limitations noted in the report mostly resulting from constraints to engage fully due to COVID restrictions. That noted this has been an extremely useful process which has provided recommendations for the City stakeholders to focus on.

## **3. Report Review of Volunteering in Glasgow**

The Final Summary Report Review of Volunteering in Glasgow is attached and the full report can be provided to stakeholders if required. The following table shows the 17 recommendations from the report and the three commissioning partner's response. In some cases, the recommendations are accepted while others will need more discussion and agreement on how to proceed. However, at this stage, commissioning partners are looking for feedback from the Stakeholders to shape the developing action plan which must be informed by these recommendations.

### 3.1

<b>Consultant's Recommendations</b>		<b>Partners' Initial Response</b>
1	<p>Revise Glasgow's Volunteering Charter or use a different method to monitor and assess Community Planning Partner (CPP) commitment to volunteering.</p>	<p>The partners recognise the need for a Review of the Charter. Progress in this area has not been to the level that we would have hoped. Now is an excellent time for us to undertake that review. We recognise that different partners will have different aspirations and expectations. In particular, we think there are important differences between sectors (public, third and private) and between those organisations whose centre of decision-making lies in Glasgow, and those whose decision-making structures are more distant. Volunteer Glasgow will seek to take forward this review dependent upon resources. We want to learn from the development and ensure it is fit for purpose in the future. We believe there is potential to take the Charter further – including revising it to become a National Charter, taking into account the emerging priorities from the National Volunteering Framework</p>
2	<p>Marketing messages should be revised to highlight wider benefits of volunteering. Greater emphasis should be placed on 'volunteering to make a difference' and 'volunteering to give back', in addition to the health and wellbeing benefits. Caution should be used when speaking about employability benefits given the current economic climate. It may be better to speak of 'gaining skills and experience'.</p>	<p>The partners agree with this recommendation, although we would go further and reflect ourselves that it is not just the message that requires change, but also potentially our approach to marketing. There is a need for a consistent marketing approach that can be used consistently by the three partners but also able to be adopted by wider partners.</p> <p>We will focus work on this and aim to bring a paper to a future CPP / Social Recovery Task Force meeting as appropriate.</p>

3	<p>More emphasis is needed to encourage, support and capture data on 'volunteering', in its widest sense, in deprived areas. This might involve working in different ways such as co-locating advice and support for those interested in offering their time in unpaid capacities in existing community venues such as libraries or health centres.</p>	<p>We recognise the value of this work, although it has been particularly difficult to do during Covid-19 and the changes that have been happening for partners during the period. We will seek to develop proposals for co-locating support and development services and there is potential to continue our research group to support increased data capture. It is however resource intensive. There are strong links in this recommendation to Recommendations (2) and (13). Glasgow does have an apparently unrivalled amount of population data on volunteering and further discussions are required with stakeholders to explain key findings and to inform decisions on the best use of resources for optimal combination of polices, programmes and services.</p>
4	<p>Since Volunteer Glasgow is considered by some to 'quality assure' the volunteering opportunities it advertises, perhaps it should consider only advertising those which offer to reimburse volunteers for any out-of-pocket expenses as soon as they are incurred. This may help reduce financial barriers to participation.</p>	<p>We have considered this recommendation and we understand the value that this would bring. However, there is also a significant value in having one single database for volunteering. Excluding volunteering opportunities because they don't meet our standards risks alienating partners and driving the development of multiple places to seek volunteering opportunities. We see a need to strike the correct balance. As such we will continue to work to support organisations to pay expenses, while also considering how we can provide additional promotion to those opportunities that are compliant with our expectations of good practice.</p>
5	<p>There still seems to be some way to go to make many volunteering opportunities accessible to those with physical disabilities. Some awareness raising may help advise VIOs that not all 'reasonable adjustments' have significant financial implications.</p>	<p>We agree the recommendations here and recognise this as a critical area. This is an area that highlights the importance of good communications work. Some existing work has been successful and can be maintained and developed by the partners. There is key work here for GCVS in regards to their work with the Health and Social Care Partnership.</p>

	It may also be worth thinking creatively e.g., could Self Directed Support direct payments enable those eligible to access volunteering opportunities more effectively?	
6	Volunteer Glasgow 'Taster Courses' are well received by traditionally excluded groups. Consideration should be given to increasing the reach of this programme across the whole city and to include other groups such as young people.	The partners welcome the feedback on this bit of work which has been innovative and well-received. Resourcing will be a challenge, but we will prioritise this work within that.
7	Childcare responsibilities are a barrier to volunteering for some groups. Thought could be given to encouraging partnership working between childcare providers/NC, HNC or SVQ childcare placements and VIOs; potentially linking the Volunteering Strategy with the (Vocational) Education Strategy.	We agree these recommendations, although some areas are more challenging than others. We see three key strands interconnecting here which we must address to reduce this barrier: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Childcare providers as volunteer involving organisations, well-placed to understand the needs of parents and children</li> <li>2) The importance of expenses for volunteers, recognising that childcare is a valid expense and encouraging organisations to cover this cost.</li> <li>3) Developing more 'Family Volunteering' opportunities, where families volunteer together, thus reducing the need for childcare while also supporting good quality family development.</li> </ol>
8	VIOs should be encouraged and supported to put volunteers through certificated courses.	This has merit, but some consideration is needed as to when this is appropriate. This needs to be targeted towards where it most relevant –for example where volunteering is contributing towards employability. It will be important to review this regularly to check progress.
9	To be more inclusive and accessible, the volunteering database of opportunities could be developed.	We do recognise the challenge here. The software (Kinetic) that is used by the partners is a relatively low-cost off-the-shelf model. As such we have reduced ability to adapt the software. Recommendations can be made to the organisation that runs the system. It is possible to commission standalone developments, but this would require

		significant co-design and specification to get us to that point, alongside the resource to commission the work.
10	To be more inclusive, accessible and efficient, there should be a simple, universal application form for all volunteering opportunities advertised on the central Glasgow volunteering database.	<p>While this is attractive, we have concerns about its viability in practice. In developing such an approach, we would have to consider the needs of both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. We would also need to take into account the different information needs associated with different volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>That said, at its core this is an equalities issue, and as such we will do some work alongside Recommendation (9) to consider how we can make the application process for volunteering simpler.</p>
11	<p>Building on what was delivered during COVID-19, better, more accessible volunteer management training is required; training suitable for Mutual Aid organisations and informal volunteering too.</p> <p>Thinking creatively, this support could perhaps come from the private sector, offering their expertise in a voluntary capacity.</p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation, although we do not agree that the private sector is the appropriate place from which to identify more volunteer management training.</p> <p>The partners have developed online learning, which we believe will make it significantly more accessible for some communities. A blended approach to include those who cannot or don't want to engage online will continue to be necessary.</p>
12	<p>There is a need to work more closely and more effectively with the private / corporate sector.</p> <p>In the wake of COVID-19, with both people and organisations feeling an increased social responsibility, now might be the time to have conversations with corporations about how they can support VIOs (in the widest sense) more effectively to support the local community e.g., as Trustees/Board Members/Advisors on specific topics including digital literacy/inclusion and mental wellbeing support for volunteers.</p>	<p>This is a strong recommendation and one that GCVS and Volunteer Glasgow will take forward jointly. GCVS are already involved in work with key partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Directors and Volunteer Glasgow have had discussions with Social Good Connect.</p>

13	<p>Language is important. ‘Volunteering’ needs to be rebranded to include the breadth of people’s contributions to their neighbours and communities.</p> <p>Many people do not see what they do as ‘volunteering’, nor are they attracted to what they perceive to be ‘volunteering’ in the traditional, formal sense.</p> <p>Emphasis should be placed on ‘giving back’ and ‘community benefit’. Opportunities within the public sector, mutual aid groups and other forms of informal volunteering should be highlighted.</p>	<p>We agree that language is important here. We don’t recognise any bit of language that better describes what we mean than volunteering – but we do recognise that the public often has an inaccurate and outdated perception of what volunteering is. There is an importance here in being part of a wider Scottish approach, and this issue will be discussed with national partners to see what opportunities exist for joint working.</p>
14	<p>Celebrate volunteering in its widest sense.</p> <p>Many of those consulted with as part of this review felt volunteers were not fully appreciated. There was a desire for some sort of celebratory event where the full range of contributions were acknowledged at a city level – including the informal roles prevalent during the pandemic response.</p> <p>Volunteer Week (June) might be the obvious time to conduct such a celebratory event, and it may be prudent to seek feedback from volunteers about how they want to be recognised.</p>	<p>We agree with this strongly, but there are resource challenges from the scale of the city. Again, there is an opportunity to look for national approaches as this challenge is not unique to Glasgow.</p> <p>In our experience there is often a disconnect here between how individual volunteer involving organisations recognise their volunteers, the wider recognition schemes that are put in place, and the way that volunteering is valued and embedded in public policy.</p> <p>That disconnect needs to be addressed as part of developing our response to this recommendation.</p>
15	<p>There is a need for a single, focused leadership with a strong, cohesive vision for volunteering and the capacity to provide corresponding support to VIOs.</p> <p>A single leadership body, with the power and accountability to drive forward the volunteering strategy across the city – to get ‘buy in’ at an operational level – is required.</p>	<p>The partners accept the recommendation and understand the challenge.</p> <p>This is a complex area and will require ongoing discussions between the partners. The partners are committed to having these discussions and to consider all possible options.</p>



16	<p>Consideration should be given to liaising with the national charities responsible for the COVID-19 volunteering response. Migrating responsibility for ongoing contact with those Glasgow residents not used in the national programme, to a local body, may foster better relationships with potential future volunteers.</p>	<p>We understand this recommendation and have been frustrated at the approach that was taken nationally. Those potential volunteers who gave permission for their details to be shared with Volunteer Glasgow (the overwhelming majority of those who signed up via Volunteer Scotland) have been contacted regularly by Volunteer Glasgow since. There are lessons to be learned from the recruitment approach taken by Scottish Government.</p>
17	<p>Traditional sources of funding have significantly altered in financial year 2020/21. Perhaps new funding streams from the Council / Health &amp; Social Care Partnerships etc. should be linked to the Volunteering Strategy and include requirements to work better together.</p>	<p>We agree with this and will work with partners to support the implementation which is outside of our control. The recommendation has been referred to the Third Sector group to consider as part of their work looking at funding. We will need to work across public / third sector to identify opportunities to gain resources for volunteering in the city. We are hopeful of Scottish Government confirming what they will fund directly as part of the delivery of the national Volunteering for All framework.</p>

## 2. Policy and Resource Implications

### Resource Implications:

N/A

*Financial:*

*Legal:*

*Personnel:*

*Procurement:*

**Council Strategic Plan:** **Resilient and Empowered Neighbourhoods**  
86. Extend the number of volunteers in Glasgow and record what skills they can offer the city

And also supports the following;

#### **Vibrant City Theme**

13. Maintain Glasgow's reputation as a world class city for heritage and events building on the legacy of 2014 and support Glasgow to become more active and meet the outcomes set for an Active Scotland.

#### **Excellent and Inclusive Education**

29. Refresh and deliver Glasgow's Community Learning and Development Plan.

### **Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:**

*Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2017-21* Yes

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?* Positive impact

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio economic disadvantage.* Yes

**Sustainability Impacts:** N/A

*Environmental:*

*Social, including  
opportunities under  
Article 20 of the  
European Public  
Procurement  
Directive:*

*Economic:*

**Privacy and Data  
Protection impacts:  
N/A**

### **3. Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to note the report and progress of the review.