"You Said, We Did"

How your views helped shape
KCC's VCS policy

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Why do we need a KCC VCS Policy?

This is KCC's first VCS policy- it sets out our future relationship with the sector in the context of our move to become a strategic commissioning authority and offers clarity at a time of great change taking place across the local authority and the public sector. It is a starting point for working together with the sector to move us from a relationship in the past which has been criticised as overly paternalistic, to one of equal partners. It recognises the professionalism of the sector and the important role it plays within communities across Kent.

The policy also introduces a new Grant Framework for the Council which affirms our commitment to grants within a commissioning approach but also recognises the need to have a standardised approach to grants across the Council. The framework will ensure that grants are used appropriately and that all grants support the delivery of our strategic and supporting outcomes set out within our Strategic Statement.

How have you made a difference?

We asked for views on the policy, in particular the sector's future support needs and how we could ensure that grant funding was more accessible and transparent. Your feedback has been used to change the policy and in particular to help shape the principles which will underpin the future offer of support to the sector and our grant framework. The feedback we received both online and face to face was invaluable and we were pleased that much of the comments were positive about the creation of a KCC VCS policy.

The feedback was clear; that the policy must be backed up by action and we have taken these comments on board. We are now beginning to develop a number of key pieces of work to support the delivery of the policy. For example, your feedback was clear that short term, 12 month grant funding was destabilising the sector and so we have committed to wherever possible awarding grants over a 3 year period. Although we reserve the right to review this on a case by case basis given our financial pressures. Another consistent message was that there needed to be more information available about our grant funding and so we have committed to developing a grant prospectus setting out our grant funding over a 3 year period, linked to KCC's strategic and supporting outcomes.

Your feedback also told us that current infrastructure support was not meeting the needs of the wider sector and the types of support which would be most needed in the future.

This has helped to shape the principles which will underpin our future offer of support and we are now putting in place plans to review our support in line with this.

These are just some of the changes we have made, an overview of all the comments and subsequent changes are set out in the table below in more detail.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who took the time to take part in the consultation and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Language and tone

You said	We did
The policy could go further in recognising the diversity of the sector particularly that the sector went beyond the health and social care arena and included organisations that were 'doing their own thing' The language and tone of the policy was felt to be very 'local government speak' and there was some concern that it could be overly paternalistic and patronising and not recognise the important contribution the sector makes to the wider economy The policy could better recognise the importance of Social Value and how the policy will help KCC to deliver on its Social Value objectives The link to other KCC documents such as the Compact should be strengthened and consideration given to how the two documents interplay The policy needs to adapt to changing circumstances.	We have updated the policy to emphasise the diversity in the sector, the contribution the sector makes to the economy and clarify that many organisations are not indeed funded by KCC. However the policy clarifies that our future relationship and support should reach organisations right across the sector. The principles on page 5 of the policy have been updated to reflect these changes. We have placed greater emphasis on the need to view the sector as an equal partner and set out a future relationship with the sector built on collaboration. Not an overly paternalistic relationship driven through our funding arrangements (as set out in the diagram on page 9 of the policy). We have made changes to the language and tone of the document in response to the feedback received, however this policy is intended to be an internally focused document, which will guide and support our commissioners and so the style of the document must reflect this. The policy sets out our commitment to social value and recognises the inherent social value of the VCS. However, it recognises that the detail of how we consider social value and develop our approach within all our commissioning is better considered within other KCC documents such as the Commissioning Framework and toolkit, which the policy links to. We have made the links to other documents such as the Compact more explicit and agreed that we will review the Compact since it has not been refreshed since 2012. We have proposed that we review the policy no later than 2019.

Support to the sector

You said	We did
Infrastructure should be impartial and not be competing for funding for delivering projects That the support needs of the sector are varied and future support needs to be accessible to a wide range of organisations, in particular small organisations Particular areas where help is needed are: accessing funding and making grant applications, tendering for service contracts, business support- HR , marketing and payroll Mentoring and a 'business link' style organisation to support the VCS was also suggested That many VCS organisations are social businesses and as such they would benefit from support to help them develop such as financial and business planning/development.	The feedback from the consultation has been used to develop the principles upon which KCC's future offer of support will be developed (page 11 of the policy); setting out those areas which were highlighted as priorities by the sector, this must also be viewed in conjunction with the section on engagement. The policy commits to a support model in the future that must be independent and recognises that KCC's contribution to any future model is significant. However, it also states that it is equally important that any future model is sustainable; this means it will need to be able to diversify its funding. The policy recognises that support must be flexible to be beneficial for organisations in a range of areas and therefore the design of any future model will need to consider the diverse set of skills and expertise required and how best to achieve this.

Engagement

You said	We did
Engagement was an area where improvements could be made	This is a new section added into the policy on the basis of the feedback received. Whilst the infrastructure support to the sector will have a big role to play in engagement it was felt that the critical role of engagement that was highlighted throughout the consultation, required a specific focus in the policy.
There is an appetite for more sharing of information	
Networking must be justifiable as organisations are often time poor although making new contacts is valuable	The policy commits to looking at how KCC can facilitate engagement, information sharing and networking opportunities within the sector and across sectors. However taking on board feedback, this must be carried out in a way that does not interfere in the sector in a detrimental way. Whilst we take on board the comments about mapping we believe this has been carried out extensively in the past and more recently within some areas. However, this information is quickly out of date due to the constant changes taking place within the sector and it is therefore felt that facilitating better engagement within the sector would be more effective in bringing organisations together and building connections.
There is potential for bringing different sectors and groups together in innovative ways	
Mapping the sector would be beneficial to growing connections	
Encouraging connections outside of the sector e.g. with the business community could be valuable	
KCC should play an active role in facilitating information, skill sharing and engagement. Others believed that this was not the place of the local authority.	The policy is clear that whatever the mechanism, our future engagement must take into consideration both the need for engagement with commissioners but also collaboration and information sharing with the sector beyond these arrangements. In this sense we will ensure that there is an engagement mechanism at the heart of KCC not just through our funding arrangements as set out in the diagram on page 9.

Grant framework

You said	We did
There was a need for more transparency and clarity around grants and a proportionate process There were some concerns that funding timeframes for grants could lead to an abrupt end to programmes before they can become sustainable The timeframe for Innovation grants needed to allow for project set up and evaluation That short term grant funding is making organisations unsustainable KCC must be bold in their grant funding KCC needs to fill the gap – fund capacity building and development in the sector KCC should consider the development of a grant prospectus as has been successfully developed in other local authorities so that organisations can plan for application deadlines well in advance and target their applications to where is most appropriate KCC should consider the possibility of working with a third party organisation to administer grants to enhance collaboration with other funders KCC should publish all grants that are awarded The KCC website and portal were not considered fit for purpose in terms of making it easy to apply for grants, a downloadable application form may be more appropriate.	Given the consistent criticism about the patchy information available around grant funding the policy commits to developing a grant prospectus and that all grants will be advertised on our website. Although there was some feedback about using an external website it is felt appropriate that the KCC website is used for all grants we administer. The policy commits to developing a standardised application form, which is proportionate and we agree that this should be downloadable. Given the consistent feedback that short term (12 month) grant funding has destabilised the sector we have committed to wherever possible awarding multiyear grants. However we reserve the right to review this on a case by case basis and withdraw this offer when necessary. Grants should not be used for the provision of services, which should be delivered under contract. However as we move to a strategic commissioning authority model, founded on an outcomes based approach we may use grants to support the delivery of our strategic and supporting outcomes as set out in our strategic statement. In this respect all grant funding should be linked to our outcomes, whether outcomes are met through a contract or by using our grant framework will be down to the relevant commissioning manager. KCC already publishes all grants awarded and the link to the grant register is now provided in the policy document. The principles underpinning our grant funding have been made more explicit given the repeated comments about the importance of clarity and transparency.

How can I find out more?

- You can read the new VCS policy online here

- You can find out more about the changes we have made as a result of what you said in our report to Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee here

- If you would like to share your views in the future, you can register with our Consultation Directory. Tell us the issues you are interested in, and we will send you an e-mail notifying you when relevant consultations are launched.