**An introduction to the new Third Sector Investment Fund Strategy for Hammersmith and Fulham Council**

May 2022

1. **Introduction**
	1. In October 2019, the Council agreed an ambition statement, as part of a report called “Developing our relationship with the voluntary and community sector”. To quote:

*Our philosophy in Hammersmith & Fulham Council is to enhance civic life by working with and empowering residents to change their own neighbourhoods for the better. We believe that our residents and their community and voluntary organisations can often change things for the better and do it faster than anyone else.*

*We are committed to reforming the Council with our third sector partners, communities and residents to help tackle some of the intrinsic problems facing the borough. We know we’ll succeed if we bring people together and work with them to tackle the barriers that hold us back. This includes supporting people, so everyone has a fair chance to be heard and to take part.*

*As we reframe the relationship with our communities and our residents, we need even better collaboration with our voluntary and community sector. A relationship that focuses on what is needed and who can contribute. With meaningful equal partnerships, cross-sector collaboration and best practice, we can address a myriad of local challenges. We are committed to lasting and sustainable relationships with the voluntary and community sector.*

This statement still stands. Our Council wants to renew, refresh and improve the way it works with the local voluntary sector. Early work on this commitment had already got underway and then, the Covid 19 pandemic hit and delayed some developments and changed the way we work in many unexpected ways. As we come out of the pandemic, the council is keen to build on the surge in community activity and the huge efforts made by community sector organisations to support residents and to response proactively to challenges coming out of the pandemic.. Hammersmith & Fulham Council remains committed to working with residents and community sector organisations when developing ideas, policy and solutions, and wants to implement the council commitment ‘doing things with resident not to them’ through co-production.

An example of what this work can look like in practice is coproduction with Disabled residents to design and redevelop the new Civic Campus, the coproduction of the council’s Independent Living Statement, which will drive transformation across all council services.. Details can be found here: <https://livingindependently.lbhf.gov.uk/strategies-and-reports/independent-living-h-f-vision-statement/>

* 1. H&F has six strategic priorities that reflect our vision

 They are:

* Building shared prosperity
* Doing things with residents not to them
* Taking pride in Hammersmith & Fulham
* Creating a compassionate council
* Bring ruthlessly financially efficient
* Rising to the challenge of the climate change and ecological emergency
	1. Recently the administration has set out commitments in its ‘[Rising to the challenges of our time, together’](http://democracy.lbhf.gov.uk/documents/s120330/Appendix%201%20-%20HF%20Labour%20Manifesto%202022.pdf) Manifesto, including the co-production of a new, post-pandemic Third Sector Strategy. This shows the council’s clear and ongoing commitment to boost the third/voluntary sector and promote diversity and remove barriers to inclusion wherever possible, by:
* **Building Alliances of Support** working with residents, local businesses, third sector organisations and others to find new ways to help people through these difficult times.

We will partner with other public and third sector organisations in the borough to join up services to residents, breaking down the organisational barriers that make it difficult for people who need help and Co-locating council and other services in the community.

* **Being ‘ruthlessly inclusive’**. We think that services should reflect the communities that we serve. Working to eliminate discrimination in all its forms, tackling racism in services; enabling Black, minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and other residents to shape the services they receive;
* **Be the best borough for Disabled people.** Following our ground-breaking independent Disabled People’s Commission, we have adopted the UN social model of disability and are committed to co-producing improvements with Disabled residents and expect services to be accessible.
* **Committed to co-production**: Continue to expand co-production across all council departments and services so that residents are fully involved from the earliest stage in shaping the services that affect their lives. Co-producing a new vision for Independent Living in the borough with residents.

Work with voluntary sector organisations in H&F to co-produce their services and ensure that our is the country’s leading borough for co-production.

* **Addressing the cost-of-living crisis** including supporting our partners in the fight against food poverty and working to tackle the root causes of poverty.
* **Promoting community lead initiatives that address the climate emergency.**
* **Creating a kinder happier Hammersmith and Fulham.** Boosting the arts, providing more and inclusive cradle-to-grave opportunities for local people of all backgrounds to participate in creative and artistic activities for fun and personal satisfaction.
* **Supporting children and our vulnerable residents:** Supporting children to have the best possible start in life, and first class education.

Delivering the new, locally-focused strategy to tackle Violence Against Women And Girls

Supporting people with mental health problems, people with dementia and their carers, ending ethnic health inequality

Providing a wide range of comprehensive support to all refugees hosted in the borough.

Ending rough sleeping and homelessness by building on the successes of the rough sleeping strategy and working closely with third sector partners to provide pathways out of homelessness

Other important commitments are made to more accountability in decision making processes and promoting volunteering.

* 1. The 3rd Sector Investment Fund has been part of the council’s support to local organisations and residents for many years. It consists of a main grants programme, supporting 37 organisations to provide 45 services up to March 2023 and 3 organisations to run 7 services from April 18 to March 2028, at a total just over £3 million per annum. It was meant to be re-commissioned in 2020/21, but was extended instead whilst services dealt with the pandemic emergency. About £100,000 p/a are available to fund small and start up organisations based on application all year round.
1. **Co-producing a strategy for the future of the 3rd Sector Investment Fund**
	1. We re-started the process of developing a new strategy for the 3rd Sector Investment Fund at in 2022 and held \*\* events with community sector organisations; we are planning more to have more and better opportunities for the local third sector to make their voice heard. Some organisations also had independent meetings to discuss the future relationship they wants to have with the Council. We have also looked at previous reports and documents to ensure we have captured relevant commitments and learning. Based on what has been discussed and reviewed we have come to the following conclusions:
	2. The voluntary sector generally wants to work more closely with the local authority, and on a more equal footing. The emphasis should be on “how can we best work together”, not on “how can we get the most out of each other”. Essentially moving away from a predominantly a transactional relationship to something closer to partnership working. This is a work in progress, but the following themes are emerging:
		1. Creating more opportunities for residents’ views to be heard. This could mean:
* Regular opportunities to influence council’s decision making for the residents supported by the voluntary sector
* Opportunities for the residents to be involved directly in the council’s decision making
* Improved feedback to residents about how their input has made a difference
	+ 1. A commitment to greater transparency around local decision making. This should involve:
	+ More systematic approach to identify gaps in services and support
	+ Clearer & more transparent lines of communication & decision making
	+ Improved and consistent approach to enabling VCOs to ensure their residents have a voice
		1. Better use of the council’s reach and potential influence beyond commissioning and funding commitments, to support and build resilience in the sector and help it to work more effectively. This could involve:
* A commitment to being more proactive in supporting the third sector with its applications for regional/national/local funding. This could be coordinated with departments in the council that have experience of resourcing funds from a range of areas (Economy and Regeneration).
* Help with training, support sessions on particular issues around finance, legal requirements, equality and diversity issues.
* Clearer communication lines. It would greatly help the 3rd Sector if there was a central contact team or officer for them to get in touch with, someone who could draw together information and establish a rapport with the areas and departments in the council relevant for organisations who want or need to work with them.
* Encourage and support events that help unite the third sector in its effort to meet the needs of the people it supports. The how can we work together philosophy should apply to relations between organisations as well as to relations between the council and the third sector. We should create a shared vision beyond organisational boundaries, identify and build on opportunities for organisations to collaborate and work together, share skills and knowledge and develop relationships built on trust.
* Create a culture in Hammersmith & Fulham where volunteering is
celebrated, underpins more inclusive and resilient communities and
where neighbourly activity is the norm