

# **GREATER MANCHESTER VCSE LEADERSHIP GROUP**

**the sector's voice in Devolution**

29<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**Dear Mayor Andy Burnham and Local Authority Leaders,**

We're contacting you with urgency as we see significant opportunities to deliver positive change for communities in Greater Manchester through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund but are concerned that in haste we will fail to take these and fail to fully ensure the voice of communities shape developments.

We, like many in Greater Manchester, were disappointed when the Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Both with the insufficient funding and insufficient time given to properly develop plans to change the long-term futures of our communities. We are pleased with the level of flexibility on offer and see a strong opportunity to do things differently with this funding.

In the past major schemes have been too restricted to truly meet local needs and caused significant sums to be tied up in disproportionate and inflexible contract management & monitoring. Complex bidding processes have kept community based organisations from delivering activity, have allocated funds too often to larger organisations without connection to places and caused many to waste precious resources preparing unsuccessful bids.

We are concerned that in the rush to put plans in place we are at significant risk of repeating the mistakes of the past. The voice of communities needs to be strong in shaping and designing changes to local neighbourhoods; delivery needs to occur as close to communities as possible and we need to make full use of the flexibility on offer. Business as usual will produce the results of the past and not the change we need now.

At this stage, we feel it is imperative to establish clear principles and direction for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in Greater Manchester. We suggest the following:

- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations with strong community links must have a role in all 12 of the selected UK Shared Prosperity Fund interventions
- The GM UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan must mention the VCSE Accord, role of the VCSE sector and joint commitments made with the sector
- Implementation Planning must involve VCSE leaders at both GM and locality levels
- Implementation Planning should see communities control or deliver at least 25% of UK Shared Prosperity Fund across the programme through their local VCSE organisations
- All areas should use VCSE Accord and Commissioning Framework as a guide to building relationships, identifying opportunities to partner with the VCSE sector, projects where VCSEs take a lead, and routes to market which might include grant-giving, commissioned services, partnership agreements and secondments from and to VCSE organisations, whichever is best suited to achieving the looked-for outcomes.

The GM VCSE Leadership Group, including local infrastructure organisation representation from all 10 districts, want to help and support action on these areas rather than just make demands of our public sector partners. We want to be able to understand how we can align and develop our resources alongside the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to make the best of this opportunity to change the fate of many of our neglected neighbourhoods.

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We have seen trust develop and new opportunities emerge for partnership through the development of the GM VCSE Accord. We recognise we have much common ground with public sector partners and are keen to find new ways to support our communities together. We do recognise that we need to act quickly on this issue and would be keen to discuss this with you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W Escadale', written in a cursive style.

Warren Escadale, Chair,  
On behalf of the GM VCSE Leadership Group