

Report from the Director of Place to the meeting of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on December 14th 2023

V

Subject: Volunteering Initiatives in the Bradford District 2022-23.

Summary statement:

This report gives an update on volunteering initiatives across the Bradford District supported by Stronger Communities and VCS partners.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

Our work supporting volunteering, is designed to be inclusive and benefit all local service delivery across the district. Whilst this is right and consistent with the principle of equalities at the heart of everything we do; it is also the case that our investment needs to demonstrate how it is enabling us to make sustainable progress in equality, diversity and inclusion and culture.

All grant funded, contracted partners and projects recognise the single statutory duty to promote equality under the Equality Act 2010. All our partners ensure and demonstrate that services delivered, consider the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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Portfolio:

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Corporate

1.0 SUMMARY

Bradford District has a strong and vibrant civil society sector with an estimated 5,000 plus voluntary and community groups, 30,000 regular volunteers and 100,000 occasional volunteers committed to making Bradford District a better place to live. Our projects are connecting more and more people to volunteering opportunities in which they can make a difference. We also support community organisations offering volunteering opportunities to provide valuable local services in challenging financial times.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- Volunteering provides a platform for communities to engage in neighbourhood activities through events and enables them to self-identify key issues that they want our support with. This collective working towards common causes helps bring down barriers to integration and cohesion in neighbourhoods. It also helps in general to strengthen our communications and improve environments where people live.
- We have promoted volunteering successfully, across localities, in all fields including health, environment and recycling, culture and arts to promote cohesion, integration and pride in neighbourhoods. Volunteering also has an impact on individuals, building their cv, reducing loneliness, supporting people with mental health issues, instilling confidence and pride in where they live. It also impacts heavily on service provision, through community clean ups or adopting green spaces and running local libraries. There is both social and economic value to the contributions volunteers make.
- The Voluntary and Community Sector support volunteering comprehensively through training, local opportunities, providing support for those wanting to participate and crafting a 'Volunteering Standard' award for organisations who meet a good threshold for supporting volunteers in their service provision.
- The VCS Service Improvement contract provision for supporting volunteering in the Bradford District, includes recruitment and training. It also involves creating a database for volunteers and working local communities, partners, and businesses to provide organised volunteering opportunities. One of the initiatives that we are jointly working on is the volunteering week to be held in all five of the constituency areas from January to March 2024.
- It should be noted that while volunteering increased across Bradford District during the covid pandemic, the impact of which was captured in the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2022, the number of reported volunteers has dropped since then due to a variety of factors such as cost of living pressures and the elderly who make up a good proportion of those who volunteer decreasing; due to the need to socially isolate for health reasons.

3.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There are a range of projects and initiatives that support volunteering in the Bradford

District. Some of the projects supported by the Stronger Communities Team include: Covid Community Champions, Citizen Coin, Community Ambassadors, Big Lunches (which were part of the Jubilee celebration events) volunteer recruitment, training, and a volunteer 'Volunteering Standard' for organisations that take on volunteers.

3.1 People Can - Make a Difference – Campaign

'People Can Make a Difference' is a long-term campaign to promote and encourage strong and active communities. We continue to engage Council Teams and external organisations to amplify awareness about People Can. The launch of the Council refreshed Employee Volunteering Policy in early 2024 will serve as an opportunity to raise even further awareness and a communication plan will help us to deliver this.

People Can is used across the council and is more prevalent in the five area offices who each have their own social media sites and post on a regular basis. People Can branding is used extensively on community litter picks and local events organized by ward officers. The People Can hashtag on X – #makeadifference is used to post inspirational and motivational text evidencing communities giving back, this suggests it adds value in getting messages across and used in the right context for our services.

The People Can resources and materials are also used when events and clean ups are undertaken by external groups, the bags, litter pickers and tabards making it clear that their activity is supported by the council. The table below gives the numbers of followers on Facebook and X

People Can - Facebook	followers	Views	reacted
BFD South	2700	9468	160
BFD East	3049	31809	969
BFD West	2200	29290	1,066
Keighley	802	907	
Shipley	1200	6516	141
Stronger Com Team	1700		
Twitter X			
Keighley	909		
Stronger Com Team	2075	2811	37

Please Appendix B for People Can for examples of promotional posters.

3.2 Citizen Coin

Through app-based technology, the Citizen Coin scheme rewards people for doing social good. It connects our voluntary organisations with their neighbourhoods and our communities with businesses. The project underpins the Council plan by promoting better skills, creating more good jobs and better health. It supports us to ensure we create safe, strong, active communities, whilst helping to grow our economy, sustainably.

The project sits within the Stronger Communities Partnership's Strategy under Pillar Three: Getting Involved which focuses on increasing civic participation. Activities under this outcome are to ensure that 'more people from all backgrounds will connect with

others, participate in civic life, and get involved in their own communities. The project intends to bring local residents of different backgrounds together to engage in local activities. This is captured via the Citizen Coin scheme which enables people to earn digital discount coins when undertaking social value activities, such as volunteering, that they can then use to get discounts off goods and services. Those earning the digital discount coin can also opt to donate their coins to other people and organisations.

The evaluation report on the pilot is available from: <https://bradfordforeveryone.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Citizen-Coin-Evaulation-Report-2022.pdf>

3.3 Citizen Coin Current Position

Some key highlights include:

1. Data Snapshot (as of 8 November 2023) - Reflects percentage changes since January 2022, marking the transition from project pilot to going live.
 - 2517 registered users/volunteers (208% increase).
 - 168 retailers offering discounts off goods and services (50 % increase).
 - 162 rewarding organisations using the scheme to advertise activities (170% increase)
 - 13,421 coins generated and are in circulation (330% increase)
2. Training and building connections.
 - Actively promoting Citizen Coin with internal departments at the Council to join the platform this includes Public Health; Sports and Leisure; BEEP; Theatres; Museums; Libraries as well as engaging with external organisations and programmes such as: Born In Bradford; JU:MP; Gateway Centre; Windhill Community Centre; Ammy Construction to name a few.
3. Working with education establishments
 - University of Bradford; Carried out two training sessions with senior staff; attended Staff Benefit event days and delivered two information sessions.
 - Bradford College: Fresher Week and Staff benefits events.
 - New College: A pilot project has run involving the recruitment of student volunteers who will serve as Champion students to promote Citizen Coin
 - Shipley College: To offer staff training and working with the Business Department to work alongside students taking a lead of the promotion and development of citizen coin in Shipley as part of their qualification.
 - Bradford Grammar have successfully implemented the scheme within their sixth formers. The school Coordinator manages the account; providing various volunteering activities which students sign up to and then are rewarded internally using the app. The students also sign up to volunteering activities that are external to the school.
 - SkillsHouse: Working closely with colleagues in ESOL and SkillsHouse to offer Citizen Coin to all new learners.

4.0 Community Events

4.1 Kings Coronation - May marked the Coronation of a new Monarch, His Majesty King Charles III. It is the first coronation since Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. It was celebrated across the country and The Commonwealth and marked with a three-day bank holiday weekend from Saturday 6 May to Monday 8 May 2023. We supported people from across the district to get involved in organising and attending events and activities to celebrate by organising Big Lunches in their localities and opening the invitation to all their neighbours.

- 216 funded projects across the Bradford District
- Over 25,000 people participated at events - promoted cohesion with neighbours.
- Over 1,000 volunteers organise local events.

4.2 Refugee Week District Wide Impact

Refugee Week 2023, ran from 19 June to 25 June, offering an action packed, wide range of 31 events and activities across the district. [Refugee-Week-2023-Programme.pdf](#) (bradfordforeveryone.co.uk) These events extended across all five constituencies with a noticeable presence in both Bradford East and Keighley.

The events successfully attracted public participation, and in addition, there were some bespoke events organised specifically for the more vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers within the district. In total, approximately **3,900** people engaged with the full programme of events offered during the week.

The Shared Coffee Morning provided an opportunity for Afghan and Ukrainian women to meet. This private gathering brought together Afghan ladies housed in the Bridging Hotel and Ukrainians from Keighley. The event facilitated social mixing opportunities between groups that might not usually have the opportunity to meet. The women enjoyed sharing food and stories which enabled them to discover commonalities and appreciate the unique circumstances of one another. Notably, the event had a significant impact on an older Afghan lady and an older Ukrainian lady, who particularly valued the opportunity to connect and share their own life stories.

These events exemplify inclusive and community development spirit that Refugee Week instils in the Bradford District, fostering connections, understanding, and support among diverse groups within the community. -

- 95% of participants rated the events they attended as 'Very Good' or 'Good.'
- 82% 'Strongly Agreed' or 'Agreed' that the events fostered a sense of belonging to their local area.

- 86% 'Strongly Agreed' or 'Agreed' that the events helped them connect with people from different backgrounds and communities to their own.

5.0 Bradford for Everyone Ambassadors - Volunteer Programme

The Ambassador Volunteer programme is another project that continues on from the Bradford for Everyone programme. The Ambassador group is made up of Bradford District citizens, who ensure that the voices, knowledge, and experiences of local people are included in the design, delivery, decision making and evaluation of our work.

The Ambassador programme has been an extremely successful project, that has had positive impacts on many other projects and wider benefits beyond those directly involved. The Bradford for Everyone – Ambassadors film highlights the journey, learnings, and impact of the project: <https://youtu.be/tq1YBFm-j20> The Bradford for Everyone's Volunteer Ambassadors work was also highly commended for Community Involvement in the LGC Awards in 2021.

Ambassadors promote the work of integration and social cohesion and encourage others to also get involved in creating a 'Bradford for Everyone'. The group forms as a Delivery Partner Sub-group to the Stronger Communities Partnership Board and five Ambassadors from each constituency are elected to represent the voices of communities on the Stronger Board.

6.0 Refresh of Bradford Council Employee Volunteering Policy

Bradford Council acknowledges that volunteering helps our communities to thrive, connects us all and can help make our citizens feel that they belong. The contributions our volunteers make are invaluable, unique and can positively benefit users of council services, employees, local communities, and the volunteers themselves. As a large, diverse local authority we recognise and value the contribution made by our volunteers, and we want to build on this.

Current Position:

- We have updated the Employee Volunteering - Manager & Employee Policy & Guidance.
- Obtained feedback from staff and managers on the new Policy & Guidance.
- Conducted an external review to benchmark what other Councils do and see what the participation rates have been for them. Presented the findings to the Council's Senior Leadership Team in October 2023 to gather input and decisions from Assistant and Strategic Directors.
- Building a new Bradnet Page (internal intranet) – this will provide information on the People Can Campaign and Citizen Coin; it will also provide up to date information on where other volunteering opportunities can be sought; this will include City of Culture volunteering opportunities, volunteering with support from Participate and CABAD. Council Teams and Area Teams will also be encouraged to use this platform to recruit volunteers promoting volunteering and civic participation.

7.0 Research Work

7.1 Volunteering and Social Cohesion Research Project: **Power of Connection** The Volunteering and Social Cohesion Research Project, started in September 2022, and had active participation from Bradford's Stronger Communities in the Advisory Panel. The recently published Literature Review - Linking Volunteering and Social Cohesion, has been published.

To complement the research insights, a new online resource 'The Power of Connection' has been developed. This toolkit aims to assist organisers and supporters of volunteers in fostering meaningful connections among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Launched in July 2023, with Bradford's Stronger Communities contributing to the presentation panel, the toolkit is now being promoted for use with partner organisations across the district to help us all to build on social cohesion.

7.2 Shaping the Future with Volunteering - As part of a national volunteering research project 'Shaping the Future with Volunteering', Community Action Bradford and District (CABAD) is working alongside national charities to better understand current statistics, trends, motivations and potential barriers for people volunteering across Bradford. This research will feed into wider UK analysis of why people do or don't volunteer. The survey undertaken in December 2023, has had over 750 responses. Early reviews show many of the findings reflect similar trends in the recent NCVO 'Time Well Spent' survey such as people having less time to volunteer despite a desire to help, with flexible hours and expenses being key considerations for volunteer-involving organisations. Positively, there is a wide appetite from people to volunteer regardless of their circumstances, with interest in both national and local causes.

8.0 VCS Service Improvement Programme - Volunteering

8.1 Here4BDCC is a partnership of Community Action Bradford & District (CAB&D), Participate Projects, HALE and The VCS Alliance and this partnership is the main provider of voluntary and community sector support in Bradford. CAB&D and Participate are the leads within the VCSE SIP contract by the Council to support the vision within Bradford of diversifying the volunteering offer across the district, improving the quality and safety of volunteering and bringing volunteer-involving organisations together to share good practice and work towards sharing the capacity of volunteering in Bradford. The team has more than 30 years' experience in the field of supporting and managing volunteers, including at scale.

- Here4BDCC are promoting Citizen Coin Reward Agency sessions on their training website for Community groups across the district.
- Providing on going training and recruitment for volunteers

- Volunteers' Week from 1 to 7 June - Area networks for Volunteers Week 2023, theme was "Innovation in Volunteering" - The area network events were organised in partnership as part of the [Here 4 BDCC](#) contract, funded by Bradford Council.

8.2 The area networks are designed to support all voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations with a range of topics during the year. In Volunteers Week these focussed on volunteer recruitment and retention. This was a free event for organisations looking for volunteers. They ran workshops on volunteer recruitment and diversification, looking at ethnicity, age, disability, service users representation and community ownership/accountability helping attendees to share their experiences and problem-solve as well as sharing good practice. The events were held in:

- Bradford East area network, Thursday 1 June 2023 (10am to 12pm), in person at The Springfield Centre.
- Bradford West area network, Friday 2 June 2023 (10am to 12pm), in person at Manningham Mills Sports Association.
- South area network, Monday 5 June 2023 (12.30pm to 2.30pm), in person at Bierley Community Centre.
- Shipley area network, Tuesday 6 June 2023 (1pm to 3pm), in person at Caroline Street Social Club, Saltaire.
- Keighley area network, Wednesday 7 June 2023 (5.30pm to 7.30pm), in person at Clarke Foley Centre, Ilkley.

8.3 Participate Projects – Bringing businesses and communities together. They provide a unique delivery model, including a bespoke service that meets the needs of the volunteering organisation, whilst maximising the impact for the community organisations supported.

8.4 Participate have built a solid reputation of building relationships with national and local businesses to connect with them with community initiatives as part of their corporate social responsibility. Positive and sustainable impact in our communities is at the heart of their effort. The skills and invest from businesses act as catalyst for other community investment and enable communities to develop and help themselves.

Within the VCSE SIP Participate Projects are providing an online matching service, called Bradford Together, supporting publicly contracted businesses to meet the social value commitments (in partnership with the council) and developing with business volunteers, a new database of volunteering opportunities for businesses (which will sit beside an impact/social value measurement tool).

8.5 Business Team & Skills Volunteering -Business team volunteering is a great way to build teams, develop individuals and make a real difference in communities. Participate work with some of the largest companies in the UK to develop and deliver their team volunteering whilst supporting their ESG. Our Skills for Good project identify the skills,

knowledge and expertise within business so we can match available projects at local non-profits. In the last year Participate have delivered:

- £184,256 Value of Business Brokerage
- Community Impact 78,245 Hours of Volunteering

See Appendix C for VCSE SIP contract and case studies.

8.4 City of Culture 2025 and Volunteering Cities Programme – The Stronger Communities Team including our partners CABAD, Participate, Equality Together and CoC25 culture and volunteering the project supports the delivery of two strategic outcomes in our Council Plan 2020-24: “Skills, good jobs and a growing economy” and “Safe Strong and Active communities”.

- The Council’s Cultural Strategy (Culture is Our Plan), co-created with over 3,000 Bradfordians, also aligns to Spirit’s desired outcomes. The delivery of the Cultural Strategy provides an opportunity to grow our cultural volunteering.
- The Stronger Communities Team successfully bid for The Spirit of 2012 Volunteering Cities Fund and is supporting the CoC25 team and gearing up the offer for volunteers to get involved, a grant of £200,000, with additional funding of £50,000 to cover costs that reduce barriers for people taking part, such as access costs. The project is expected to last between two and two and a half years, finishing by the end of March 2025. We expect that in early 2024 to fast track progress as new staff have been recruited and the launch of a logo and communications strategy the new year.
- Stronger and Communities, CABAD and Participate are supporting CoC25 by recruiting just under 4,000 volunteers, a number of which will have the opportunity to get accredited training from Shipley College. They will have a ‘uniform’ and opportunities to engage in both short term and long volunteering ongoing support in their roles.

9.0 Community Stars - This December we celebrate Bradford District’s prestigious Awards for all those people who always strive to make a difference in their communities through volunteering. Organised by Bradford Council and the Stronger Communities Team gives the opportunity to say thank you to those enriching the lives of Bradford people. This year around 25,00 people have voted in the Telegraph & Argus for the nine categories of volunteering. The awards ceremony will take place on 6 December at Bradford Hotel.

10.0 Impact and outcomes of volunteering – we know that there many reasons people will volunteer for example doing things in memory of loved ones, supporting local community organisations and charities or just by wanting to support services to vulnerable people. All the projects and initiatives outlined above contribute to positive outcomes.

The impact of volunteering is immense both at personal level and for those that benefit from services provided. IT is estimate that nationally a saving of £17bn is made through support provided by careers looking after relatives or others in their communities. Some of the impacts of volunteering are given below:

- Pride and belonging, people feel that they are part of a community or a locality through volunteering, whether they offer their time to a local library, clean a green space or run a community centre.
 - By learning new skills and increasing their knowledge they can build a CV to help gain paid employment or move into another field of work
 - Saving resources – as mentioned with the example above volunteer carers reduce pressure on health and social services, by getting involved community clean ups pressures on cleaning services is reduced.
 - Social mixing allows people that are lonely to interact with others and give them a purpose to get active and give opportunity to make friends. It effectively tackles social isolation. It also allows people from different backgrounds and age groups to mix and get to know each other's culture, background and concerns for their neighbourhood.
 - Health benefits, by getting socially active helps their mental wellbeing and engaging with others on worthwhile local initiatives people remaining active.
 - Sharing information and ideas leads to newer initiatives, sharing of best practice, resources and creativity in neighbourhoods.
 - Supporting communities, we saw with Covid-19 that community ambassadors played a key role in disseminating vital information, food hubs provide much needed support to those struggling with the cost-of-living crises. Food banks run by volunteers are a much-needed resource and have a increasing role in supporting vulnerable people.
 - Promotes safe, strong, and active communities.
 - Helps community organisations and charities to operate by having volunteers with a range of skills and knowledge to sit on boards, committees etc.
 - Helps businesses to use their Corporate Social Responsibility to undertake opportunities with their staff.
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- The Stronger Communities Team are currently working on capturing Social Value - Social value calculations aim to quantify the positive impact on people and communities. There are many tools that can be purchased. Stronger Communities has been utilising the HACT Social Value Metrics which has a Social Value Bank containing 88 outcomes, 11 themes e.g., employment; environment; health; financial inclusion; youth; social groups & hobbies; physical activity; homelessness, and more. The HACT Social Value Metrics has transitioned into an online tool with associated costs, having previously been

utilised as a free of charge spreadsheet. Whilst we can provide information on Social Value captured through the Citizen Coin technology, we are exploring the use of other tool options.

Please see Appendix A for case studies.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 There are no additional financial or resource matters. Funding for the above schemes and projects is provided through existing Council budgets and the VCSE Service Improvement contract.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 There are significant risks arising out of the implementation of the proposed Recommendations.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 There are no legal issues arising from this report.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The contribution of volunteers in all aspects of the delivery of services across the district support the principle of sustainability. For example, community clean ups of green spaces, recycling of waste, better use of resources and provision of activities for all demographics which include better health outcomes and maintenance and use of community assets.

7.2 TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS

There are no impacts on greenhouse emissions arising from this report.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community Safety implications arising from this report. DBS checks and safety equipment are available when required for specific projects.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights issues arising from this report.

7.5 TRADE UNION

There are no Trade Union issues arising from this report

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The volunteering support and initiatives, such as the Volunteer Week and Citizen Coin, are available in all wards and are coordinated with the area offices.

7.7 AREA COMMITTEE LOCALITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The projects and initiatives for volunteering are in line with Area Committees ward plans.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Volunteering initiatives benefit services provided to children through organised local activities, examples are scout clubs, youth clubs, play schemes etc.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

The confidentiality of personal data is paramount in all of the work we do relating to our workforce and resident volunteers. We do not anticipate that any additional actions arise from the work outlined in this report.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

9.1 That the initiatives and projects promoting volunteering both internally and external to the council are supported by officers.

9.2 The Council officers and departments cease to support all volunteering initiatives and projects.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee acknowledge the initiatives and volunteering that support services to local communities.

10.2 That a further report is brought back to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on the impact of the VCSE Service Improvement Programme and the Volunteer Coordinator to support volunteering across the district in 12 months.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A Case Studies

Appendix B People Can posters that promote Volunteering

Appendix C

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1 Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 10th March 2022