

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Key
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 11 March 2026
Subject:	Supporting Bury’s Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector through the GM VCFSE Accord and investment in Local Infrastructure Organisation provision	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion	

Summary

- 1.1 The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector is integral to the fabric of the Borough of Bury. Our *LET’S Do It!* strategy sets out the vital importance of the sector as a core component in delivering improved outcomes for local people.
- 1.2 The importance of the sector is recognised at a regional level through the Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord (“Accord”), which in recent months has been reviewed in light of the refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy. Bury Council, along with all Districts in the region signed up to the existing Accord agreement, and at the meeting of the Combined Authority in February restated this commitment by signing the refreshed GM VCFSE Accord 2026-2035.
- 1.3 This report reaffirms Bury’s commitment to the Accord, building on a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding with the VCFSE sector in Bury to deliver on Accord principles.
- 1.4 Central to a strong local voluntary sector is a high quality, connected and well led local infrastructure organisation (LIO). Local Infrastructure provision is the beating heart of a district’s voluntary sector and this specification sets out the requirements for infrastructure provision for the Borough of Bury.
- 1.5 Infrastructure provision is currently provided in the Borough through the Bury Voluntary and Community Faith Alliance, which provides quality assured support, accredited by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action. In recent years there has been significant progress against the pillars of leadership and advocacy; partnerships and collaboration; capacity building; and volunteering
- 1.6 Examples of delivery and impact include:
 - Joint leadership of GM Live Well implementation in Bury, including flagship centre in Whitefield, building on increased community voice within neighbourhood working, with VCFA representation in each neighbourhood Public Service Leadership Team
 - Funding leveraged into Bury by VCFA in 2023-2026 comes to over £1.1m including GM Moving; Community Led Violence Reduction Unit; UK Shared

Prosperity funding on capacity building and social economy and LGBTQI Forum. This includes £250k National Lottery Community Fund investment within the last six months to strengthen the voice, capacity and influence of voluntary sector organisations working with children and young people across Bury

- In the last year 339 VCSE groups and organisations (up from 183 in 2024) have received bespoke development support
- Growth of the VCFSE Leadership Network and increase in total number of member organisations from 83 to 173.
- Facilitation of collaboration between Bury Council, GMCA, Fair Futures, ADAB and New Lew Life church as part of GM Live Well Refugee Welcome programme.
- Work with 10GM and GM Moving including Wellness Investment Programme and tackling barriers to movement in Whitefield.
- Active involvement and influence in over 30 local authority, health and wider public sector partnerships advocating for the role of the sector in shaping and delivering services.- from Locality Board and Safeguarding Partnerships to Social Value.
- Working alongside Pennine Care and connecting to multi-disciplinary teams, facilitation of a link Worker specialising in housing and welfare support based within the Irwell Unit of Fairfield Hospital.
- Co-produced and launched the delivery of LET's Value Volunteering grants to support volunteer thanks and recognition. This scheme has now had a second round with over 120 successful applications

- 1.7 To reflect the ongoing delivery of *LET'S Do It!*, the refreshed GMVCFSE Accord and local Memorandum of Understanding, the specification for VCFSE local infrastructure provision has been updated and tailored to reflect the latest regional and local context and priorities. It is proposed that the funding agreement with the Bury VCFA continues to increase the resilience of the LIO as a core partner for the Council and broader Team Bury Partnership. This provision is to support the Bury deliver vital community capacity, inspiration and opportunity for greater participation – to improve outcomes for local people, tackle inequality and raise life chances – whilst ensuring effective use of ever scarce resource.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To confirm Bury's commitment to the Accord and champion through the Team Bury network through the local Memorandum of Understanding with the sector.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the revised Service Level Agreement with Bury Voluntary and Community Faith Alliance, as the local infrastructure organisation for Bury, is agreed and funded from 1st April 2026 on a 2+1 year basis.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Bury has committed to the refreshed Accord through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority governance given the value the Borough places on developing the VCFSE sector, as set out in *LET's Do It!*
- 3.2 The funding of infrastructure provision in the Borough provides a clear commitment to the importance of the voluntary and community sector. The agreement allows for a clear focus of activity to develop Bury's VCFSE ecosystem in a tailored manner to best meet local needs, in turn delivering on *LET'S Do It!* and GM VCFSE Accord commitments.
- 3.3 By refreshing the Service Level Agreement the report seeks to strengthen the recognition of the sector as key partner in improving outcomes for local people and the role infrastructure support plays in ensuring this is robust, recognised and representative.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- 4.1 To not fund, or make a reduction in funding would significantly risk the loss of infrastructure support in the Borough, destabilising the wider VCFSE sector and jeopardise the positive progress made in recent years. Whilst recognising the financial pressures that the Council itself is under, investment in the infrastructure support to the VCFSE sector supports steps to increase the resilience of the sector itself, including supporting groups to attract inward investment into the Borough and diversity income generation streams.
- 4.2 To not update the specification would fail to capitalise on progress made in recent years but more importantly miss the opportunity to further tailor and target the focus of infrastructure support provision to be an enabler and facilitator of a sector contributing in a pivotal way to realising the Borough's LETS vision. As such to not update the specification would have risked there not been the appropriate local focus on ensuring a sustainable VCFSE ecosystem, best positioned and supported to enhance and enable local outcomes at place.

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Background

- 5.1 The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector is the cornerstone of daily life across the country. From welfare and wellbeing support to grassroot sports groups, places of worship to peer support networks, the sector connects people and those people to place.

- 5.2 Bury's *LET'S Do It!* strategy and approach set out the importance of the role and impact of the sector on local communities, with the ecosystem of different VCFSE organisations spanning across communities of place, identity and experience.
- 5.3 Within the local sector there are wealth of groups of different size, reach and focus, as the most recent State of the Sector survey demonstrates, which outlines that Bury's VCFSE sector has:
- 1,249 voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises making a difference in Bury, ranging from local arms of national charities, to hyper-local mutual aid networks supporting specific communities of interest, and experience.
 - 71% of these organisations are micro-organisations with an annual income of under £10k
 - 13% of the sector as being a social enterprise
 - 91% of organisations have some direct dealings with other VCFSE organisations
 - ONS data outlines a paid employee workforce of 4,019 in Bury's VCFSE sector, equivalent to 2,452 FTE, a contribution of £44m per annum to the local economy. 44% of organisational responses indicated they paid the living wage.
 - The survey estimates that there are 26,229 volunteers supporting the VCFSE sector in Bury, proving approximately 131,145 hours of time each week; making an economic contribution of £65m per annum.

Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord

- 6.1 The Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord is a collaboration agreement which aims to put in place working relationships between the public and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector that will improve outcomes for Greater Manchester's communities and residents. It is based on a relationship of mutual trust, honesty, ambition and accountability and is jointly owned by the public and VCFSE sectors in Greater Manchester – including NHS GM, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Transport for Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, 10 local authorities, and the VCFSE sector (represented by the GM VCFSE Leadership Group).
- 6.2 The Accord recognises that The VCFSE sector holds a unique power: the trust, relationships, credibility, and insight that come from being rooted in communities. By ensuring the sector can lead boldly, strengthen its own capacity, and work on an equal footing alongside public sector partners, we will unlock the potential of community-led change.
- 6.3 In November 2021 Bury Council committed to the inaugural GM VCFSE Accord during which time Council colleagues have strengthened working relationships with the VCFSE sector in Bury, and with regional colleagues as part of regional bodies and partnerships.

6.4 During 2025 work has taken place with the VCFSE sector across the region to refresh the Accord – taking account of further devolution agreements to Greater Manchester, wider work on reforms across different topics and the development of the new Greater Manchester Strategy. As such the GM Accord has been updated, with the key components detailed below:

GM VCFSE Accord 2026-2035	
<i>Vision:</i> A thriving Greater Manchester where everyone can live a good life: a place of equality, opportunity, and belonging.	
<i>Mission:</i> A thriving VCFSE ecosystem that can play its full role in driving change for Greater Manchester’s people, communities and places in trusting collaboration with public sector partners.	
<p><i>Shared Beliefs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We achieve more together than alone. • An integrated, connected, and well-resourced VCFSE ecosystem benefits everyone. • The rich diversity of our local communities is where we will find the expertise to drive change and justice in society. • Decision-making in partnership enables outcomes to be more inclusive and effective. • Values must be lived, not just stated. 	<p><i>Shared Values:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust – We commit to create conditions of mutual trust and understanding. • Honesty - We commit to creating spaces where honesty is encouraged alongside reciprocal care and respect. • Ambition - We commit to continuously strive for better outcomes, resilient through our shared purpose and ambition. • Accountability - We commit to accountability founded on transparency, integrity and positive impact.
<p><i>Shared Commitments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve and Devolve: We commit to deepening collaboration across sectors by working together to involve the VCFSE sector and devolving power to our communities • Resource and Enable: We commit to increasing investment in, and ensuring fair, transparent and sustainable resourcing of VCFSE organisations 	

- Recognise and Value: We commit to recognise and value the contribution of VCFSE organisations through efforts to improve understanding, involvement, practical support and investment.

- 6.5 The refreshed Accord was tabled at the meeting of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in February 2026 and unanimously agreed. It was agreed that each District would reaffirm their commitment to the Accord by supporting the GMCA sign off with acknowledgement within local governance processes. Locally, the Accord refresh has been informed by the Council, public services and VCFSE leads, and dovetails with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by leads across the sectors in the late summer of last year. The MOU is a multi-agency collaboration agreement between the Bury Health & Public Sector represented by the members of the Bury Integrated Delivery Collaborative and Bury Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector represented by the Bury VCSE Leaders Group.
- 6.6 Bury's MOU was cognisant of the refresh of the GM Accord and is therefore well placed to be the means by which the GM Accord will be delivered locally. The document sets out shared principles and commitments to work together more effectively, recognising the vital role of the voluntary sector in delivering services, tackling inequality, and enhancing the wellbeing of Bury's residents. The MoU was developed as the result of an co-design process between Bury VCFA, local voluntary organisations, and public sector leaders. It localises the Government's Civil Society Covenant. It aligns with the Greater Manchester VCSE Accord as well as the borough's *Let's Do It!* strategy, ensuring that community voices are central to decision-making and service delivery. The key pillars of the MOU are:
- Embedding the importance of the VCFSE sector to support co-design and co-production
 - Ensuring that the voice of the VCFSE sector and local communities is heard and valued in strategic governance
 - Ensuring a financially resilient VCFSE sector
 - Shared ambition for One Workforce
 - Embedding social value
- 6.7 This reflects the growing work between different teams within the Council and the Bury VCFSE ecosystem on both project based initiatives, as outlined in section 8.5, alongside enabling activity to strengthen relationships with, and opportunities for the sector. The latter element of this includes work with workforce development leads on shared access to learning resources and mutual (reciprocal) coaching; through procurement to strengthen opportunities through Bury's Contract Procedure rules; and increased involvement in social value approaches.

Investment in Bury's Local Infrastructure Organisation

- 7.1 The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) notes that, *“An active voluntary and community sector needs consistent, high quality support from local VCFSE infrastructure support organisations (LIOs). LIOs act as both convenor and connector at place between different statutory bodies, local authorities, charities and VCS organisations that, when working together in partnership, drive and accelerate action, and contribute to positive change.”*
- <https://www.navca.org.uk/news/the-power-of-local-infrastructure-how-a-new-government-can-work-with-navca-members>
- 7.2 A Local Infrastructure Organisation is a voluntary/community group in its own right (with respective governance and charitable objectives set out as required by the Charities Commission) but whose principal purpose is to co-ordinate, facilitate and support the broader ecosystem of VCFSE groups in a given area. Typically, this is through:
- Building strategic relationships and bringing together community knowledge and skills.
 - Developing partnerships with key organisations and enabling collaboration.
 - Acting as a trusted partner, effectively communicating with and representing communities.
 - Building the capacity of VCFSE organisations.
 - Supporting early intervention and providing rapid response in crises.
 - Contributing to local economic development through employment and volunteering
- 7.3 Local Infrastructure Organisations advocate and champion for the sector, nurture the conditions of the ecosystem to allow it to flourish. They provide insight to/from the ecosystem and ensure that is appropriately and fully represented in partnership activity (planning, delivery and evaluation). They act as convenors and facilitators as much as direct delivery vehicles of services and are not regulatory bodies or inspectorates but provide support to ensure organisations and networks on meeting such regulations.
- 7.4 Nationally, NAVCA have set out the key components of what would enable LIO's to fulfil their role in improving outcomes for local people, which has informed this report and set in the context of *LET's Do It!*
- Work with the VCFSE sector as an equal strategic partner
 - Work with the VCFSE sector at an early stage to help define problems, hear the voice of lived experience, and co-design services to meet need.
 - Deliver long term stable and sustainable commissioning and funding arrangements
 - Invest in local infrastructure as the convenor, partnership enabler and capacity builder to enable communities and the VCFSE to thrive

LIO Provision in Bury - progress

- 8.1 In Bury, infrastructure support to the VCFSE is provided by Bury Voluntary and Community Faith Alliance (Bury VCFA). In comparison to many other Boroughs in Greater Manchester (particularly Manchester, Salford and Bolton), Bury VCFA is a relatively new LIO - Salford CVS for instance has been in existence in its current form since 1973 and has connections back to the start of the 20th century.
- 8.2 Formed in 2017, the Bury VCFA is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered with the Charity Commission, and has developed into an integral partner in Team Bury through the development and delivery of the *LET'S Do It!* strategy.
- 8.3 As referenced, the VCFA is a VCFSE organisation its own right, and therefore is required to set out their purpose through the Charity Commission for England and Wales: *To promote and strengthen the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector for the benefit of the community in the Borough of Bury. To coordinate, organise and enable partnership working to enable positive change in communities.*
- 8.4 In 2023, Bury VCFA become the first LIO in Greater Manchester to be successfully achieve the Local Infrastructure Quality Accreditation from NAVCA, the national membership body for local infrastructure organisations, whose quality assurance framework is used to benchmark LIO activity in order to best support the voluntary and community sector in England. This was followed up within the last year with the award of the Volunteer Centre Quality Award (VCQA) following an independent assessment.
- 8.5 NAVCA outline 4 functions for thriving communities, where people belong and can take action on things that matter to them.
- Leadership and Advocacy
 - Partnerships and Collaborations
 - Capacity Building
 - Volunteering

These functions have formed the framework for the specification with Bury VCFA, to which specifics in relation to the *LET'S Do it!* delivery and local priorities have been highlighted. This builds on the existing delivery by the VCFA against these 4 functions, with examples provided in the table below.

Leadership and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led the co-production across VCFSE sector and with public sector partners on the MoU (as 6.6) as localised delivery of GM VCFSE Accord • Represented Bury and local VCFSE sector at GM VCFSE networks to ensure local voices shaped regional Accord. • Growth of the VCFSE Leadership Network and increase in total number of member organisations from 83 to 173.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive input through facilitating appropriate representation at Team Bury partnership meetings including quarterly leadership groups and refresh of <i>LET's Do It!</i> strategy. • Active involvement in over 30 local authority, health and wider public sector partnerships advocating for the role of the sector in shaping and delivering services.- from Locality Board and Safeguarding Partnerships to Social Value. • Championing workforce development and voice, including as a new Supporter of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter; leadership of the Community Cohesion workstream of the Community Safety Partnership and Be A Good Neighbour This Winter campaign. • System leadership on response to Heaton Park synagogue attack in October 2025 and subsequent local and regional recovery and cohesion workstreams.
Partnerships and collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint leadership of GM Live Well implementation in Bury, including flagship centre in Whitefield, building on increased community voice within neighbourhood working, with VCFA representation in each neighbourhood Public Service Leadership Team. • Development of the Sustain Project focusing on food aid to food trade and shaping of a Food Pantry Toolkit • Facilitation of community safety related activity through the Bury Community Led Violence Reduction Programme working with young people and their families to address the underlying causes of violence and build aspiration and opportunity. • Work with 10GM and GM Moving including Wellness Investment Programme and tackling barriers to movement in Whitefield. • Facilitation of collaboration between Bury Council, GMCA, Fair Futures, ADAB and New Lew Life church as part of GM Live Well Refugee Welcome programme. • Working alongside Pennine Care and connecting to multi-disciplinary teams, facilitation of a link Worker specialising in housing and welfare support based within the Irwell Unit of Fairfield Hospital. • Facilitating Right to Grow campaign and supporting new group to become established to become the first site.

Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last year 339 VCSE groups and organisations (up from 183 in 2024) have received bespoke development support including funding searches; bid checks; support with governance and legal structures; start-up guidance for completely new groups; setting aims and objectives; development of constitutions and registration with the Charity Commission; and support on recruiting volunteers. This support included the delivery of training to organisations on adult safeguarding; governance; bid writing (including storytelling); Connect 5 Mental Health training and trauma informed practice. • Over the last twelve months over £326k of funding and investment has been distributed by the VCFA in investment into the sector, relating to community safety, anti-poverty provision, culture grants, volunteer recognition and physical wellbeing interventions with a Local Grants Celebration Event held in July 2025. Funding leveraged into Bury by VCFA in 2023-2026 comes to over £1.1m including GM Moving; Community Led Violence Reduction Unit; UK Shared Prosperity funding on capacity building and social economy and LGBTQI Forum. Over 400 funding opportunities have been promoted in adding to an expansion of 'Meet the Funder' events to support local groups in accessing external funding including sessions with Forever Manchester, National Lottery and Easy Fundraising. • Successful application for £250k National Lottery Community Fund investment to strengthen the voice, capacity and influence of voluntary sector organisations working with children and young people across Bury. • Trading for Good promotion and facilitation of the Bury Social Enterprise Network • Introducing the Royal Horticultural Society into Neighbourhood Connections meetings leading to 13 groups succeeding at North West in Bloom in turn helping groups to attract new volunteers and funding opportunities.
Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Volunteer Centre Quality Award Recognition, with assessor noting commitment to making volunteering accessible, rewarding, and impactful • Promoting good practice in volunteer management through training for VCSE volunteer-involving groups and providing a 'Volunteer Bank' facility for individuals to register for opportunities. Over 285 volunteers have been directly recruited and supported through the volunteer bank.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued delivery of Bury Volunteering Strategy which contains system-wide commitments to ensuring Bury is a great place to volunteer and recognising the benefits that volunteering brings to individuals and community wealth building. • Facilitation of a volunteer development forum to provide learning opportunities, networking and peer support. This has included a focus on volunteer retention and supported the development of new support factsheet. • Activity to enhance Employee Supported Volunteering including through Bury Council for the LET's Local litter picks; AECOM who supported Milton Field environmental works; HSBC branch activity with Bury Hospice; and youth volunteering at Woodhey High. • Working alongside Bury Council, Bury VCFA co-produced and launched the delivery of LET's Value Volunteering grants to support volunteer thanks and recognition. This scheme has now had a second round with over 120 successful applications.
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LIO Provision in Bury – proposal

- 9.1 Through the continued delivery of Bury's *LET'S Do It!* strategy and commitment the regional VCFSE Accord and local MoU, the importance of the voluntary and community sector in enabling improved outcomes for local communities is as high as ever. In this context it is recognise that a strong and forward-looking local infrastructure provision is vital.
- 9.2 Based on ongoing conversations, both formally through networks such as Team Bury and the Public Service Reform Steering Group; through conversations with sector leads, and through insight gathered through organic discussions across sectors, an updated specification has been tailored to evolve from previous provision. This builds is anchored in both the pillars of local infrastructure provision as set out by NAVCA, but crucially these have been set against the principles set out in *LET's Do It!* and are detailed in Appendix A. This recognises the ongoing maturity evidenced by the LIO over recent years and deepening of relationships across sectors.
- 9.3 Where possible the specification sets the outcomes to be achieved rather than overly 'prescribing' a set of tasks, recognising the LIO will be able to craft delivery with and through the sector through 'working with' colleagues and partners.
- 9.4 Examples of the key areas of amplification and revised focus in the updated specification are:
 - Updated reference to the national and regional policy landscape and the opportunities these present for leadership, advocacy and

collaboration, including the GM Live Well Model and Prevention Demonstrator.

- More explicit reference to the role the LIO can play in championing and support system leadership on safeguarding arrangements, particularly in the context of Working Together.
- Emphasis on VCFSE impact in place-based activity – building on the latest report from NAVA on the value and importance of neighbourhoods for the sector: [1763568881-The value and importance of neighbourhoods - Nov 2025.pdf](#)
- Reiteration of the role of local infrastructure in connecting communities through common bonds to further cohesion, as set out in: [Connecting communities, enabling common ground: the role of local infrastructure](#)
- Specific focus on identification and foundational support to new and emerging communities and networks, taking an early help approach. Escalating the insight into commission discussions whilst coalescing individuals/ networks with fundamental infrastructure support.
- Responding to 2024-2026 Pulse Survey feedback from the sector including top identified support needs, namely funding (particularly volunteer expenses); support around vetting and DBS checks; how to market / promote volunteer opportunities Working with businesses (Employer Supported Volunteering) and increasing the number of young volunteers
- Greater emphasis on the role of volunteering as a route into (re-) employment and skills development, building on the achievement of NAVCA Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation in the context of contributing to tackling economic inactivity, a core Team Bury priority.

9.5 The current Service Level Agreement with the Bury VCFA, at an investment level of £170k per annum, comes to an end on 31st March 2026. This specification has been developed at a time of significant socio-economic pressures, as the sector and wider system recovers from the legacies of Covid pandemic (including the stepping back of emergency funding and capacity) and deepening economic constraints which directly impact on VCFSE organisations in terms of expenditure and funding, as public services face significant budgetary pressures. Bury is not immune to such challenges but is keen to strengthen collaboration with the VCFSE sector to best support local people and communities. There is the ever-present challenge of seeking to manage financial pressures that take effect of reducing Council budgets, seeking a diversification of income sources, increased organisational running costs and providing fair funding in keeping with the VCSE Accord.

9.6 In light of this, this report seeks to approve a multi-year funding agreement to provide a clear commitment to VCFSE through LIO investment to enable greater forward planning and resilience. To align with the Medium Term Financial Strategy it is proposed that agreement is a 2+1 year agreement from 1st April 2026.

9.7 Funding has been identified from within Council and partnership resource (for which the Council is accountable body) with a base being the current level of investment (£170k pa) but will now include an annual inflationary uplift. This

allows for the core components of a Local Infrastructure Organisation to be delivered and provides the resource from which to attract further match investment to deliver increased contributions to local outcomes, such as the aforementioned National Lottery Community Fund investment secured in November 2025.

- 9.8 Oversight of the activity of the Local Infrastructure Organisation will be through the Strategic Partnerships function of the Council and primarily Communities portfolio, though connectivity across all portfolios will be increased during 2026. This will include reporting to demonstrate the direct, and facilitated, delivery against each of the *LET's Do It!* outcomes to demonstrate the impact of strong LIO provision.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

Bury's *LET'S Do It!* strategy repeatedly demonstrates the crucial role community, voluntary and faith-based groups and social enterprises play in our local neighbourhoods and the opportunities for the sector to be central to delivering our collective vision for the future. Through the Team Bury partnership, there is a pivotal role for the VCFSE infrastructure provider to assure, enable and exploit the exciting opportunities set out in both the plan and crucially the principles for delivery – to ensure the VCFSE in Bury is integral to developing resilient neighbourhoods, where local people are inspired and enabled to come together to improve local outcomes.

VCFSE activity plays a key role in delivering against each priority of the Council's Corporate Plan – most fundamentally in tackling inequalities (be that across communities of place, identity or experience). Across every pledge and pillar of the plan the voluntary and community sector will continue to drive collaborative activity in our communities to strengthen community capacity and assets and increasingly connect people to these, to drive self-help, self-care and wellbeing. By working at a neighbourhood level the sector will increasingly connect the most vulnerable with resources and support that best meets their needs and to play a more active role in their communities and take control of their own lives.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

Bury VCFA lead a number of inclusion related groups, bringing together voluntary and community organisations to co-ordinate and collaborate activity in relation to inclusion in Bury.

Inclusion is specifically referenced within the SLA specification, in terms of increasing seldom heard voices across the sector, increasing representation within and across the sector, and Bury's Inclusion Strategy referenced in relation to accessibility of provision. As such the refreshed agreement strengthens system leadership within the VCFSE on inclusion.

Increased reference to Safeguarding, including Working Together is included and there is a specific Children and Young People Voluntary Sector Forum which is facilitated through the Local Infrastructure Organisation and chaired by one of the Bury VCFA trustees.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

Bury VCFA work with a number of climate action related groups and networks, from links place based Climate Action Partnerships to 'Friends of' Groups with local parks and green spaces to increase public guardianship. This includes provided group/network development support, promotion of funding opportunities and opportunities for collaboration.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Sufficiency of funding	Previous risk of funding availability addressed through clarification on specific budget lines across different sources, aggregated to provide the funding. Although funding base remains unchanged, there is inflationary uplift added to support cost recovery. Bury VCFA increasingly demonstrating ability to attract inward investment and this will strengthened through longer term LIO agreement.
Opportunity for local VCFSE groups to be best positioned for local commissioning organisations	VCFA provision allows for group development, to strengthen governance and maturity of elements of the sector to be aware of, and best structured (in terms of finance and governance) to be in a position to be commissioned by health providers in particular, reducing demand and cost on statutory provision whilst increasing resilience within elements of VCFSE system locally.

Legal Implications:

1. Whilst there is no statutory obligation on the Council to provide the funding and/or enter into a service level agreement, in considering whether to approve the recommendations that are set out in the report, Cabinet may have regard to the evidence as to the effect that withdrawing and/or reducing funding might have. Specifically, in terms of destabilising the local VCFSE infrastructure and/or undermining recent progress.
 2. Continued investment supports sector resilience, inward investment and is in line with the Council's strategic objectives. The proposed approach and recommendations sought for approval are therefore within the Council's powers, and represent a lawful exercise of discretion supported by clear operational jurisdiction.
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Financial Implications:

3. The Service Level Agreement with Bury Voluntary and Community Faith Alliance, will be funded from within existing general fund revenue budget.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Bury VCFSE Infrastructure Support specification from 2026

Background papers:

None.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
LIO	Local Infrastructure Organisation
NAVCA	National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
VCFA	Voluntary and Community Faith Alliance
VCFSE	Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector