

SCVO response to the Accounts Commission

Consultation on Priorities

12 March 2021

About SCVO

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector. We champion the sector, provide services, and debate big issues. Along with our community of 2,000+ members, we believe that charities, social enterprises, and voluntary groups make Scotland a better place.

Overview

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) welcomes the invitation to respond to the Accounts Commission's consultation on priorities. The Scottish voluntary sector encompasses an estimated 40,000+ organisations, from grassroots community groups and village hall committees to more than 6,000 social enterprises, nearly 25,000 registered national charities, and over 100 credit unions. Many of these organisations work in [partnership successfully](#), both formally and informally, with local authorities across Scotland to ensure the delivery of many vital local

services. In the pursuit of the priorities outlined in this consultation, SCVO knows that councils will have to continue to work collaboratively with voluntary sector organisations.

We are therefore disappointed to see that the vital role of the voluntary sector has been entirely missed in this document. This is especially pertinent given the incredible role played by the sector in responding to the Coronavirus pandemic, pioneering innovative and agile practices to deliver key services to our communities. We would wish to see a detailed account of the crucial partnership work undertaken by the voluntary sector, alongside understanding of the financial constraints it operates under, as part of any audit of local authorities.

As part of any performance audit, and subsequent follow up review, we believe that substantial engagement with the local third sector interface and other local voluntary sector organisations is necessary. The voluntary sector brings a wealth of skills and expertise to local partnership working, and their role in ensuring high quality service delivery must be recognised.

Priorities

The five priority areas are well-chosen and we would not propose any changes to them as headings. We also recognise the thinking behind refocusing to the immediate 18 months over the previous five year strategy, though we are keen to see the right balance struck between short term needs and long term outcomes. SCVO also welcomes the commitment to reviewing and refreshing the programme throughout the year and believe the voluntary sector should be involved throughout this process.

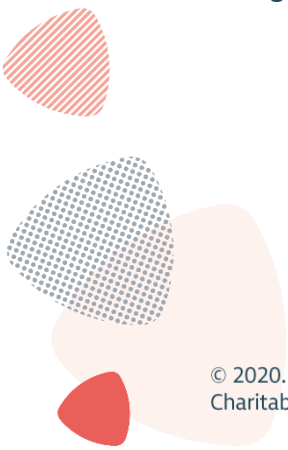
What is a key focus for SCVO within this is ensuring that the pivotal role of the voluntary sector is meaningfully captured in the planning, delivery and review of each of the identified themes.

On Economic Growth and Recovery it is important that the Accounts Commission note the successful partnership working between the voluntary sector and local authorities which has developed in response to the pandemic. Voluntary sector organisations have also played a key role in delivering EU funded projects and should be involved in any post-EU assessment.

There is clear inter play between the voluntary sector and local authorities in regard to the second theme on policy priorities and outcomes. As mentioned previously, the services of the voluntary sector have been invaluable in the response to the pandemic, with both formal and informal partnership working with local authorities. As well as this any review of the financial health and sustainability of the integration joint boards or lead agency must take into account the challenges faced by service providers in [delivering procured contracts](#). We also support the focus on school education, community empowerment, climate change, community justice, early learning and childcare and believe key local and national voluntary organisations should be involved in any audit of these areas.

We welcome the focus of theme three on inequalities and believe many voluntary sector organisations should be involved in the audit of this work, in particular around mental health provision, child poverty and the implementation of the Care Review recommendations.

In regard to theme four on innovation and transformation, we would hope the



pioneering practice of the voluntary sector during the Covid-19 pandemic is captured.

We believe theme five should be evaluated through the lens of Open Government. This includes examining evidence of co-design, collaboration and meaningful user involvement.