15th July 2015

Dear Tony Lloyd

Re: Contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector to the Devolution of Greater Manchester

Congratulations on your appointment as Interim Mayor of Greater Manchester.

As voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations working across Greater Manchester, we are particularly interested in exploring the contribution that we as a sector can make to the future of the City Region and its citizens.

We have five proposals that we think could give our sector the opportunity to do that. We are very interested in your thoughts on these proposals and would welcome your advice.

Memorandum of Understanding
We would like to be part of the growing partnership of organisations which are systematically engaged and connected into the process of developing the roadmap for our collective future. We believe that we should be embedded as a sector and seen as a full partner moving forward.

As a sector, in Greater Manchester, there are 15,000 groups, with an annual turnover of £1bn, 23,600 FTE paid staff, and 330,000 volunteers worth a further £947m pa. Collectively, we deliver 21.2 million interventions for people in Greater Manchester each year.

We would like to see a set of principles supporting VCSE organisations’ involvement and the positive values of all sectors firmly established. Key points for us would be around:

- supporting fuller engagement and participation of communities
- working with our sector much earlier in the commissioning cycle and being open to improved coproduction, codesign and co-commissioning processes and having a clearer understanding of what that would entail

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• developing a fuller process for enhancing the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector's contribution, beyond commissioning, to shaping Greater Manchester's economic and social future
• developing more community-centred (and by that we mean both communities of geography and identity) and person-centred approaches and answers
• supporting our sector to better connect health and social care support to economic outcomes and create better pathways for our communities to economic success ('careers' not just jobs), and
• developing a fuller volunteering offer.

We see this as a starting point for more fully understanding how we as a sector can better contribute and drive positive change for the benefit of the citizens of Greater Manchester.

Secondments and placements
As devolution progresses, we understand that a small, central Greater Manchester team is being developed through secondments from public sector agencies. It is this team which will drive forward the agenda and we think that secondments and short-term placements from our sector would productively inform the make-up, knowledge-base and approaches of the team. We have a significant number of expert staff with experience of working closely with the public sector, of creating change, and helping policy and practice makers to think differently and act collectively. We have seen co-location of staff and interchange programmes be highly effective and powerful ways to create positive change. Our network of connections and expertise in engagement, co-design, outreach, and co-production could offer valuable strengths and insight in developing effective answers that connect to communities and build a strong working relationship with our sector.

Engagement and Communications
We feel this is a fundamental part of what we have to offer. There is enormous potential in developing and delivering an approach to engaging and communicating with the public, of bolstering and supporting scrutiny processes, and of developing and embedding a fuller appreciation of community-centred and community-led approaches to the future of devolution in Greater Manchester.

Not only do we see this as a necessary answer to our City Region’s future challenges but as a positive way to improve communities, services, and to drive genuine, positive change. We need to support the communities of Greater Manchester to grow in health, wellbeing and wealth and it is difficult to see how genuine, long-term change can be achieved without it being driven by communities.

We believe we have a vital role to play. Secondments and placements could be one way in which we could help you and your colleagues to create the new partnerships and insights in developing and supporting this process.

Transformation Fund
If the emerging Transformation Fund is to truly reform the delivery of public services for people and places, rather than institutions, we ask that 10% of the fund is ring-fenced to drive...
innovation in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and used to develop appropriate long-term answers at local and Greater Manchester levels. This fund would drive change in the VCSE sector, in public services and in the relationship between our two sectors.

Alongside this, and in order to support system change, we also ask that VCSE providers are incorporated into and engaged by the developing Provider Forum alongside public sector providers.

VCSE Strategic Partners Programme
In the longer term, in order to put our relationship on a firmer strategic footing, we believe a VCSE Strategic Partners Programme should be developed. We know this model can be highly successful. For example, the former Strategic Health Authority in the North West developed an engagement programme that was not only seen as inspirational but groundbreaking in developing leading equalities models and standards. NHS England, Public Health England and the Department for Health picked up on this model and continue to use it to this day. This latter partnership plays an important role in developing models, offering constructive support, driving change and shaping thinking; especially thinking that seeks to emphasise community sensitive and driven approaches. This model could similarly be seen as a highly constructive way to support sector engagement in the future of Greater Manchester.

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We know that devolution presents challenges and opportunities, and we think we have an important role to play in developing answers for Greater Manchester and the citizens of Greater Manchester.

Our final request is for a small number of us to meet with you and discuss these ideas and how we might develop an appropriate strategy for gearing up our sector’s role.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Paul Martin, Chief Executive, LGBT Foundation
Alison Page, Chief Executive, Salford CVS
Fay Selvan, Chief Executive Officer, The Big Life Group
Claire Henry, Chief Executive, The National Council for Palliative Care & Dying Matters
Mike Wild, Chief Executive, Macc
Diane Curry, Chief Executive Officer, Partners of Prisoners
Oonagh Aitken, Chief Executive, Volunteering Matters
Simone Spray, Chief Executive Officer, 42nd Street
Kate Macdonald, Chief Executive Officer, Young People's Support Foundation
Michelle Ayavaro, Chair, Manchester BME Network
Neil McInroy, Chief Executive, Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)
Karen Minnitt, Chief Executive, Bolton CVS
Liz Windsor-Welsh, Chief Executive Officer, Voluntary Action Oldham
Ben Gilchrist, Chief Executive, CVA Tameside

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Mark Nesbitt, Chief Officer, Voluntary and Community Action - Trafford
Michelle Warburton, Chief Executive, CVS Rochdale
Derek Burke, Chief Officer, Bury Third Sector Development Agency
Alison Giles, Chief Executive, Our Life
Ruth Ibegbuna, Founder and Chief Executive, Reclaim Project
Phil Mason, Head, Bolton Wanderers Community Trust
Suzanne Hilton, Chief Executive, Age UK Bolton
Atiha Chaudry, Director, BME Matter
Chris Dabbs, Director of Innovation, Unlimited Potential
Bernadette Conlon, Chief Executive Officer, Start in Salford
Chris Larkin, Regional Director - North West, Stroke Association
Neil Matthewman, Chief Executive Officer, Community Integrated Care
Robin Ireland, Chief Executive, Health Equalities Group
Rob Jackson, Area Director – North West England, The Children’s Society
Warren Escadale, Chief Executive, VSNW

CC Leaders and Chief Executives of Greater Manchester Councils
Chairs and Chief Executives of Greater Manchester CCGs
Leads on the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care and Devolution Programme