



## VCFSE Consultation Workshop – Summary Report

**Date & Time:** Thursday 25 September 2025, 11:30–13:30

**Venue:** Rugby Art Gallery and Museum (RAGM)

**Facilitator:** Centre for Thriving Places

**Organiser:** Rugby Borough Council

**Attendees:** Partnership organisations from the VCFSE sector currently receiving funding from RBC or recently funded through UKSPF community support grants; 15 organisations invited, 11 attended

### Purpose of the Workshop

- To explore how the Council's Corporate Strategy 2024–2034 can be realised in collaboration with the VCFSE sector.
- To build on August 2025 written consultation responses.
- To gather practical ideas shaping commissioning arrangements for 2026/27.

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### Workshop discussion

#### 1. VCFSE Alignment with Corporate Priorities

In the first discussion, groups mapped their activities against the Council's four priorities. What transpired was a clear and strong alignment, with the sector uniquely contributing to all four objectives rather than just one. A strong sense of pride emerged in their role supporting local communities, and the graph below highlights the key points raised by participants.





## 2. Emerging Themes

Discussions highlighted several themes including:

- **Collaboration, not competition:** Participants noted that past grant systems encouraged competition between organisations, which is not healthy for the sector.
- **Future of funding:** With UKSPF grants now ended and only SLA agreements in place, organisations called for longer-term support and simpler processes that provide stability.
- **Relationships and equality:** Some organisations felt they are not always treated as equal partners; stronger representation and better-quality engagement with the Council would help.
- **Information and visibility:** Request for better links between various Council departments and community organisations.
- **Practical collaboration:** Appetite for Council officers to provide training sessions to VCFSE groups, for example on completing housing application forms.
- **Language:** Preference for using the broader VCFSE acronym to reflect the diversity of organisations.
- **Community of Practice:** The Centre for Thriving Places shared an example from Maldon District Council. There was strong interest in creating a Community of Practice in Rugby, where groups can share learning, pool resources, and work together on joint solutions such as food poverty, access to green spaces, and inclusion.

## 3. Priority Ideas and Asks

- **Community of Practice / Collaboration Hub**
  - Council enables collaboration rather than solely commissioning outputs
  - Allows VCFSE groups to work as equal partners, not just contractors
- **Simplified and Longer-Term Funding**
  - Multi-year commitments and reduced bureaucracy.
- **Strengthened Relationships and Communication**
  - Structured engagement across Council departments.
  - Shared representation and clearer collective voice.
  - Centralised information-sharing platform.

## 4. Next Steps for the Council:

- Explore piloting a Community of Practice model in Rugby.
- Incorporate workshop outputs into the 2026/27 funding arrangements.
- Consider longer-term, simpler funding mechanisms.
- Emphasise equal partnership working.
- Develop centralised communication and collaborative initiatives.



- Respond to appetite for ongoing collaboration; networking lunches, already organised by WCC, are valuable for relationship-building, but additional workshops could further encourage collaborative work and collective solutions.

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