

Voluntary, community and faith sector Manifesto: 9 Ambitions

One Newham is a network of voluntary, community and faith groups who share the objective of improving services and support for Newham residents. We have over 125 member organisations of all sizes and types. A list of members is on our website www.onenewham.org.uk

At our members' AGM in November 2021, One Newham member organisations said they wanted to create a manifesto, setting out the aspirations, needs and expectations of the voluntary and community sector in Newham. This is a summary of members' contributions.

1. Partners in an ecosystem supporting Newham residents

The sector would welcome an approach, led from the top, which:

- values the sector as essential partners in the ecosystem that supports Newham residents to thrive and succeed.
- recognises the unique place the sector occupies with regard to adaptability, flexibility, responsiveness, reach and trust with residents, and the areas where the sector is a more appropriate delivery partner.
- recognises the sector is independent and self-determining, and thrives with or without Council/Statutory interactions, as any other sector of the local economy.

A genuine and open dialogue between the sector and the Council on transformation: what does transformation look like and how can it be achieved together? Sector transformation should not be talked about without the sector being in the dialogue.

2. Utilising the sector's expertise in strategic decision making, needs assessment, planning and policy making.

- Formal seats for sector reps at key decision making Boards (the sector welcomes a discussion to identify suitable Boards and how sector reps could be recruited)
- Formal annual meeting for sector reps with senior elected member and/or senior official to undertake strategic review and planning of how the sector can collaborate with the Council to support the needs of Newham residents, allowing planned engagement. This could contribute to Council's annual planning and budget cycle.

3. Investment in resources to support Newham residents

- Following on from strategic discussions on needs' assessment, appropriate discussion on core services that should be commissioned from the sector to meet residents' needs and how to go about this. Commissioning of suitable and appropriate advice services or a community legal service might be an examples.
- A formal grants programme with appropriate commissioning mechanisms that enable small grassroots, community-specific groups to participate. This would complement the recent support service the Council has commissioned from Compost London. The sector would be delighted to assist in designing a scheme, and is able to suggest suitable alternative grant distribution and prioritisation methods to the system used in 2021 via Community Assemblies, as community groups felt unable to navigate the nomination process and found it excluding.

4. Providing Newham residents with a truly inclusive approach, that respects rights

The sector and statutory bodies should collaborate to make Newham a place where all people are able to fulfil their potential, be treated with dignity and respect and be properly included in all aspects of life, including education and wellbeing. We should aim for the elimination of all forms of racism, inequality and discrimination, including that experienced by deaf and disabled people and carers (including people with learning difficulties, hidden disabilities, mental health, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired, HIV, substance abuse, long-term health conditions and restricted mobility).

5. Utilising the sectors' reach and the trust placed by residents in the sector

- The sector would welcome an approach which recognises the sector's potential to facilitate good citizen engagement in partnership with the Council. In the sector we

work with residents who are not able or feel comfortable to participate through the Community Assembly structure. The sector is a constructive intermediary to facilitate quality engagement for residents, meeting their language and accessibility needs.

- The sector would welcome being part of the dialogue on priorities for S106 and CiL and resident engagement in securing benefits from strategic developments.

6. Collaborative leadership of key themes

- The Sector would welcome a genuine partnership approach to leading key themes, where the sector can make great contributions to the experience for Newham residents and may be better placed to lead and secure external funding. Often external funders expect a genuine commitment from Statutory sector. The Creative Newham consortium is an example of how a strong and dynamic collaborative sector and Council partnership could bring huge dividends to the borough.
- Genuine collaboration means the sector is part of the planning, not informed after plans are made and decisions taken, where the sector feels like an after-thought.

7. A code of good practice for procurement, contracting and grants

- Formal involvement of the sector in developing and co-producing “needs” assessment and commissioning plans. Involvement to take place in the early parts of the decision-making process rather than just at the point when delivery is being commissioned (co-production rather than co-delivery).
- Transparency in the process for undertaking procurement, awarding of contracts and awarding of grants. This could include clearly articulated commissioning, procurement and awarding process for grants and contracts, setting out clear responsibilities for approvals at each stage and deadlines for sign off.
- The sector would like to see commissioning that is:
 - properly inclusive and has equity, led by commissioners who are reflective of the communities they serve and who understand the needs of those communities and how funding would help address inequalities.
 - supports community wealth building by prioritising local community groups (as local businesses and employers as well as key local service providers).
 - supports good quality and value for money for Newham residents rather than the cheapest option. For example, contract costs that are supportive of London Living Wage, the costs of premises in Newham and the cost of providing tailored services to meet the needs of specific communities.
- A good practice regime around the length of time for contract paperwork to be produced, and for contract payments to be made. This would reduce the serious risks the sector currently carries due to delays in paperwork and payments. This could include payments in advance where appropriate. Clear processes at end of contract.
- Clear expectations around contract monitoring prior to the start of contracts or grants.

8. Proactive approach to supporting the sectors’ space and accommodation needs

One Newham has provided a written report to the Local Plan consultation collating the views of One Newham members regarding the need for more community space to be made available and for the space to be affordable. We won’t repeat the content of that report here, but the sector would welcome a collaborative approach to bringing closed buildings into use as part of this vision. This could include a more entrepreneurial approach to creating space for service delivery, including homelessness support, through the use of alternative models such as cooperatives and self-build partnerships.

9. Celebrate the sector as a valued part of the community and Newham ecosystem

The sector would welcome genuine recognition of the contribution the sector makes to the lives of Newham residents in partnership with the Council. The sector could be recognised in the Council’s regular communications in a tone that acknowledges the autonomy of the sector and communicates the wonderful services the sector offers.