

Readout of the first meeting of the Civil Society Council: 22 April 2026

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The new Civil Society Council met for the first time yesterday in 10 Downing Street.

The Prime Minister began by welcoming new members of the Council and recognising the important work of civil society in supporting those most in need.

Civil Society needs to be meaningfully brought into the heart of government, the PM said, and that is why the launch of the Covenant, and the creation of this Council, have come at such an important time. Partnership must be at the heart of this, where civil society and government come together to deliver better outcomes for the British people.

The PM concluded with the importance of building stronger, more united communities, and the need for government and civil society to work together in instilling hope for the future.

Chris Ward MP, the Minister for Procurement then set out his ambition for procurement processes that unlock opportunities for civil society, while delivering the services local communities need through a new definition of social value. Minister Ward outlined progress that had been made, and invited Council Members' reflections on where challenges remained. The Minister agreed to work with Council Members and other civil society organisations in revising the definition of social value in procurement processes.

The Council then had a broader initial discussion in which Members raised a wide-ranging set of challenges and opportunities – from volunteering rates to civil society's capacity levels, particularly amongst small charities. They also discussed what good partnership between government and civil society looks like, and the barriers that need to be resolved to embed this way of working.

The Council Chair, Kate Lee, concluded by thanking Council Members for a constructive discussion and agreed that actions should be taken forward in smaller groups, with the support of the No10 team, to drive progress ahead of the next meeting.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/readout-of-the-first-meeting-of-the-civil-society-council-22-april-2026>