1. **Introduction**

“For years we have fooled ourselves into thinking that charity and politics are separate. Yet I have found that civil society plays an increasingly important role in politics at all levels, from the very local to global governance, pursuing issues that matter to communities. A new generation of active citizens with political savvy are needed now more than ever.”  

*Dr Danny Sriskandarajah, Secretary General, CIVICUS, World Alliance for Citizen Participation.*

Citizens is the largest and most diverse Community Organisation in the UK with over 400 diverse local civil society institutions (including schools, churches, synagogues and mosques) in membership - divided into ten regional Chapters or Alliances that work together and raise their own funds to work for the common good. Our main charitable objectives are 'to develop the capacity of the people of the UK to participate in public life and strengthen their institutions in the process'. We have been Organising for nearly 30 years and now have a budget of £5m with 70 plus staff - 40 of whom are professional Community Organisers.

Increasingly we recognise that we are reviving the tradition of Community Organising across the UK - though much of the modern-day craft we have learned from our sister organisation in the US - The Industrial Areas Foundation. We are also developing and supporting similar Citizens groups in Denmark, Sweden and Hong Kong - and in partnership with established groups in Germany, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Whilst we campaign on issues including the living wage and safe passage, our main aim is to strengthen civil society and train and support a vast new generation of civic leaders on how to play an effective part in public life and grow their own institutions in the process.
We have also just published a report on The Missing Muslims as result of a Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life chaired by Dominic Grieve MP, QC.

2. Citizens UK (CUK) Objectives

The Founding Assembly of The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) was held in York Hall, Bethnal Green at a standing room only event of 1,200 organised citizens in November 1996. It was attended by the late Cardinal Basil Hume and other faith and civic leaders both national and regional. The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey sent his apologies but sent this warm message of support:

“I believe it is important to human dignity to play a part in the common life. It is good that apathy, social fragmentation and fatalism should be challenged through collaborative citizen action and that decision making, which sometimes can become concentrated in a few hands and partly concealed, should be held up to the light of public-spirited citizens’ groups. I hope that your work to strengthen the civic society of East London and make more of its people count for something in influencing its affairs will be richly blessed’.

The declared objectives of Citizens UK are for the benefit of the public:

- to develop the capacity and skills of the members of socially and economically disadvantaged communities in such a way that such members are better able to identify and help meet their needs and to participate more fully in society;
- to assist by directly promoting the more effective working of charitable community capacity building organisations designed to pursue that aim;
- to advance the voluntary sector;
- to advance physical and mental health;
- to relieve poverty, unemployment, or those in need due to youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage;
- to advance environmental protection or improvement and sustainable development;
- to advance the arts, culture, heritage or science; and
- to further such exclusively charitable objects according to the laws of England and Wales as the Trustees in their absolute discretion from time to time determine.

3. Links to Institutions

Citizens UK aims to develop the capacity of the ‘organised’ people of the UK to participate more effectively in public life, and to strengthen their institutions in the process. We are
obliged and privileged to work with and for civil society and to focus on the vital ‘mediating institutions’ of:

- education,
- faith,
- trade union,
- voluntary association.

Such institutions are critical to sustaining democracy and teaching people how to work together for the common good.

**Citizens UK Membership and Diversity**

4. **Campaigns and Project Highlights**

As well as working on local campaigns, CUK hosts several national campaigns and projects including:

**The Living Wage Foundation**

- There are now more than 3,400 accredited Living Wage employers, and more than one third of the FTSE 100 companies are accredited and pay the real Living Wage £8.45 in the UK or £9.75 in London.
To date, 166,541 workers have been lifted out of poverty through being paid the real Living Wage, based on what is needed to live.

New employers include Everton FC, Curzon Cinemas, British Library, Royal London and FTSE 100 organisations RSA Insurance and Land Securities.

Living Wage Week 2016 brought the campaign a higher profile than ever, with the new rates announced by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon and First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones. Over 21 million people saw the #Living Wage Week hashtag during the week. This year Living Wage Week is from November 5-10.

Associated schemes have also flourished, with over 20 grant-making bodies with over £600m of influence accredited as Living Wage Friendly Funders, including Big Lottery

**Good Jobs Campaign**

In its second year, the Good Jobs Campaign has continued to run four high-quality training pathways in engineering, health and the creative industries. The programme sets higher standards than government-funded training schemes and apprenticeships, with all participants undertaking industry-specific training and a core programme of employability training.

**New Citizens Organising Team (NCOT)**

NCOT’s work this year has been focused on the refugee crisis. Refugees Welcome groups have been set up not only in every Citizens UK chapter, but also in areas without an established alliance.

Hundreds of young people have been trained as part of the Stand Up Stand Out campaign (SUSO), with actions around ‘No Place for Hate’ at six London Underground stations, meeting the Independent Press Standards Office to discuss hateful reporting on migration in the press.

NCOT has been working to promote the government’s Community Sponsorship scheme for resettling refugees,

**Safe Passage: supporting child refugees**

Safe Passage has been awarded three national and international prizes. Over 1,000 people have recently arrived in the UK via routes Safe Passage has helped open; 85 people received direct support from Safe Passage to arrive in the UK from five different countries; 118 clients were supported by Safe Passage after they arrived in
the UK, of whom 56 have now been granted asylum and 60 are in school; Safe Passage’s work on the Dubs amendment and more was covered in national and international print over 120 times; Safe Passage was featured in 44 national broadcasts, including five pieces on the BBC’s Today programme, a film by Vanessa Redgrave and numerous front pages.

Community Sponsorship of Refugees

- At the end of the financial year in March 2017, Citizens UK secured funding for three years to launch the Sponsor Refugee: Citizens Community Sponsorship Foundation. This will support communities and organisations to sponsor refugee families by finding accommodation and helping them through the first milestones of their life in the UK. The scheme will launch in October 2017.

Citizens UK Chapters around the UK highlights

Developing the Citizens UK Network – committed to using the tools of democracy, relationship-building and power which strengthen and encourage communities to work together for the common good

London Citizens

- With the London Mayoral election being held in May 2016, London Citizens formed a Leadership Group to build capacity for a campaign to influence the Mayoral candidates. This culminated in the biggest, most diverse assembly Citizens UK has ever put on, with 6,000 people set to gather at the Copper Box Arena on April 28th 2016.

West London Citizens

- Organising with residents in North Kensington led to a local assembly of 170 people on housing and regeneration issues and an agreement with Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to establish a Regeneration Charter.
- Commitments from RBKC's Tenant Management Organisation to introduce an online system and SMS service to inform tenants about repairs, later establishing a support network for former Grenfell Tower residents.

North London Citizens

- From across North London, over 1600 leaders pledged to attend the London Mayoral Assembly at the Copper Box Arena, with a number of leaders taking for prominent roles.
Local actions have focussed on the Living Wage – persuading both members and large employers to adopt the Living Wage.

South London Citizens

- Organised refugee welcome actions with local councils ensuring Lewisham, Lambeth, Southwark and Greenwich will take at least 50 Syrian refugees.
- The Good Jobs campaign celebrated training over 60 people in South London, a staggering 50% of these found employment.
- Lewisham Citizens got their site for a Community Land Trust agreed and subject to planning will be building approximately 15 affordable homes on Brasted Close in Sydenham.

The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO)

- Tower Hamlets Citizens are ready to celebrate the first 23 families moving into St Clements Community Land Trust (CLT)– the first in London!
- Getting Redbridge Council to significantly scale-up their commitment to 250 CLT homes and after 2 years of campaigning, Newham Citizens Boleyn Ground campaign won 300 affordable homes worth nearly £100m
- This year, we celebrate 5 years of the Living Wage for over 150 cleaners and catering staff at the University of East London

Leeds Citizens

- Actions on mental health have led to more culturally sensitive care for the elderly and a developing pilot programme for mental health navigators in primary care. Leeds Citizens members joined with other Citizens UK chapters to secure the inclusion of navigators in the NHS England Five Year Forward View for Mental Health.

Nottingham Citizens

- A public hearing for the Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life with strategy teams focused on Street Harassment, Diversity, Sanctuary, Care & Loneliness and Mental Health.
- The roll out of misogyny as a new classification of hate crime followed on from the Hate Crime Commission.

Maun Valley Citizens
Saw more than 400 leaders attend the Assembly, with commitments from the County Council Leader and Mayor on jobs, prosperity, safety and loneliness including developing a safe road crossing outside a local school.

**Citizens UK Birmingham**

- Actions have included a major Police Commissioner and Local Elections Accountability Assembly with pledges on increasing Syrian refugee resettlement total to a further 500, the piloting of CitySafe advice surgeries in Primary Schools and cross party pledges on Living Wage.

**Citizens Cymru Wales (Cardiff Citizens & Vale of Glamorgan Citizens)**

- 120 attended the Citizens UK General Election Accountability Assembly in and signed up all the elected MPs in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to the Citizens UK Commitment.
- 600 leaders from 36 of Wales’ 40 constituencies attended the first ever Governance of Wales Accountability Assembly in March 2016, where leaders of the 4 main political parties agreed to work with CUK if elected.
- Highlights include the Gurnos Zebras winning a zebra crossing in Merthyr Tydfil, and the campaigns to get Cardiff Council and the Welsh Government to accredit as Living Wage employers.

**Citizens:MK (Milton Keynes)**

- More than 1,000 conversations were had in nine Weaving Trust actions involving 180+ individuals from 11 member institutions. Community Energy and Refugees Welcome campaigns were launched, and Southwood Primary School got car parking at the back gate.
- Milton Keynes Council agreed to ‘support the development of an agreed set of proposals each year with Citizens:mk to be proposed at their annual assembly’.
- New alliances are being formed in Manchester, Colchester and Tyne and Wear.
- Citizens UK also has links with the Deutsches Institut für Community Organizing (DICO) in Germany, IAF in the USA and Canada, and Sydney Alliance in Australia remain strong and deep. Exchanges of leaders and organisers sustain us.

**New Citizens Organising Team (NCOT) around the UK highlights:**

- 138 parliamentary candidates from the three main political parties, including three government ministers, signed our pledge to support an end to indefinite detention.
- Hundreds of people gathered outside the Westminster Cathedral to pray and commit to working together to Welcome Refugees launching the Refugee Welcome Movement.

- Over 80 local groups across the country were built and supported by organisers to get local councils to commit to resettle Syrian refugees.

- The Xmas action in Trafalgar Square won a public commitment from government to resettle at least 1,000 refugees and to increase the UK quota to 20,000 people over five years.

- The Voter Registration drive led by young leaders got 25,000 people to register to vote, many of them with global roots.

- Over 150 young people from a migrant or refugee background were trained in community organizing and involved in campaigns on housing, safety and tackling racism and inequality.

- The Safe Passage partnership with Doughty Street Chambers, Islington Law Centre and Bhatt Murphy Solicitors won (Jan 2015) a legal case for government to bring refugee children with a right to reunite with their families in the UK. Three Syrian children arrived safely creating a precedence which led to dozens more arriving safely to be welcomed by their families.

5. Governance of the Nation.

Citizens UK works to play a key part in the governance of the UK. We organise to negotiate on the issues and concerns of our members and their families. We train to build a new and sophisticated leadership who are informed, determined and enthusiastic, so that they can play a role in the governance of their institution, their neighbourhood, their city or borough, and their country.

The course of action we have refined over the last 25 years includes:

- building a multi-issue agenda or manifesto through a disciplined listening campaign,
- gaining consent for this agenda from our membership,
- taking this agenda to the streets and the various political camps to debate and inform them of our proposals and seek their support,
- and finally holding a Citizens Assembly where the main candidates react to the Citizens proposals and are invited to work with us.

Recent years have been dominated by a pre-election listening campaign focussed on UK wide issues, the formation of the CUK Council and building the Manifesto for Civil Society.
6. **The Manifesto for Civil Society**

The second Citizens UK Civil Society Summit was held on 24th July 2014 and launched the ‘Citizens UK Manifesto 2015’. It was attended by 230 key Citizens UK leaders and organisers with the main guest being the then newly appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Childcare and Education, Sam Gyimah MP.

Citizens UK’s core focus on the Governance of the UK after the Summit was dominated by promoting and then refining the eight proposals for the Manifesto below:

- Improved Social Care,
- a Healthy Start for Every Child,
- More Permanently Affordable Housing,
- Dignity for Families Seeking Sanctuary,
- Improved Employment and Training Opportunities,
- Just Money,
- Progress with The Living Wage.

This journey included a roundtable with the Prime Minister on 26th February 2015; a UK-wide campaign to persuade hundreds of Parliamentary candidates to sign up to the Citizens Commitment (for better social care and the end to indefinite detention for immigration purposes); two workshops on the opportunities provided by the Localism Act for local groups to take more power at a local level; and a series of breakfast meetings with policy specialists and advisers to ensure our Manifesto proposals were sound and winnable.

7. **None partisan Citizens’ Assemblies**

This period of action was followed by four major Citizens UK Assemblies focusing on specific aspects of the Manifesto. This included the Citizens UK General Election Assembly on May 4th 2015 attended by Ed Miliband for Labour, Nick Clegg for the Liberal Democrats and Sajid Javid for the Conservatives, along with 2,500 Citizens members and guests. Together these Assemblies were attended by over 7,000 well informed and engaged citizens, several senior politicians and hundreds of Citizens leaders giving testimony, chairing and often speaking for the first time in public.

Citizens UK’s focus on the role played by civil society in the governance of the UK remains as solid as ever and the non-partisan position we have always adopted means that we continue to seek a solid and mutually beneficial working relationship with the Conservative Government until the next Election.
The very positive relationship with the Conservative London Mayor Boris Johnson, forged since 2008, is a great example of how our approach to (non-partisan) politics and governance has worked for our members. London Citizens members met with Mayor Johnson or his senior colleagues regularly throughout this time. The first Community Land Trust site, as well as positive and active support for our Strangers into Citizens, CitySafe, Good Jobs and Living Wage Campaigns came from this mutually respectful relationship.

Hundreds of CUK leaders met parliamentary candidates across the UK to talk about Citizens UK and gather signatures to support our proposals for social care and the end to indefinite detention. We hosted national themed Assemblies in Nottingham (on Social Care, turnout 2,400) on March 24th and Birmingham (on Sanctuary, turnout 650 citizens, a Youth Assembly (jobs and skills training, turnout 250), and other local assemblies in Croydon, Brent, Milton Keynes, Islington and Haringey.

CUK worked to register over 10,000 people to vote and held the most diverse Assembly of the whole (2015) Election period on May 4th at Central Hall with 2,250 of our members and the leaders of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, plus Business Secretary Sajid Javid.

8. Developing the Capacity of the People to Participate in Public Life

Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public life

A significant development for Citizens UK was the growing anxiety amongst our membership about the relentless pillorying of Islam across Europe and specifically in the UK. The growth and threat of Daesh combined with terrorist or extremist atrocities in Woolwich, Paris, Tunisia, Yemen and threats elsewhere compounded the challenge for Citizens UK’s Muslim leadership and member institutions to participate in UK public life.

Driven by evidence that the UK’s Muslim communities were the most generous yet the poorest and least participating, Citizens UK Trustees agreed a Citizens Commission to conduct research and drive significant changes in attitude, legislation and practical assistance by the major power players of the state, market and civil society itself.

Former Attorney General, Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP, QC agreed to Chair the ‘Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life’ along with a diverse and distinguished group of Commissioners. We owe a major debt to Sir Stephen O’Brien CBE (former Citizens UK Trustee) and Dr Mohammad Abdul Bari (former Secretary General of Muslim Council of Britain and now member of Citizens UK Council) for their leadership and inspiration behind this significant challenge.

9. The Missing Muslims
The Missing Muslims – Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All, was published in July 2017, and highlights the many factors at play as to why Muslims are distancing themselves from public life, and recognises that unlocking a fuller Muslim presence in and contribution to British public life, could help reduce perceptions of increasing polarisation within British society.

The Commission held Hearings in London, Nottingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Croydon, Leeds, Birmingham, Portsmouth, Newcastle, Leicester and Glasgow – alongside groups of Commissioners meeting with Muslim Women, the Business Community and other key players.

The report calls for:

- an independent review of the government’s Prevent Strategy;
- the Government to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice, informed by the definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the Government in 2016;
- Muslim umbrella bodies, such as the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) to introduce voluntary standards for mosques and Islamic centres, focusing on governance and access for women; with support from business and other faith groups;
- existing mentoring schemes, such as those offered by Mosaic (an initiative of The Prince’s Trust), to adapt elements of their service offering to address the specific needs of Muslim individuals; including employers providing mentoring of young people from Muslim backgrounds in their local communities.

The Founder of Citizens UK, CUK director Neil Jameson, says of the report:

“This Commission is absolutely not about seeking ‘special treatment’ for British Muslims. Rather it is an ambitious and timely attempt to find ways of encouraging full and active participation in public life for all communities, challenging the systems and narratives that threaten this, and promoting the many examples of good practice by our Muslim communities that the Commission has heard up and down the country. Citizens UK appreciates that the hard work starts now, but we welcome this challenge and know the importance of harnessing any untapped talent pool of energy and enthusiasm from which UK public life and the common good can benefit.”

The recommendations will be taken forward by CUK chapters to the Government and Business Community. The full report is available at: www.citizensuk.org/missingmuslims

Ends.