

# **Notes of VCS Assembly Steering Group**

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015 12.00 noon – 2p.m.**

**Present:** Sharon Spurling ( acting chair), Rodney James, Ann Lyall, Ann Atkinson, Liz Chadwick, Ralph Firth,

**Apologies:** Julie Dodson, Chris Orrick, Liz Prudhoe, Joe Jackson, Cath George, Sue Patience, Mike Gowland, Sue Ashmore.

Ralph Firth was welcomed to the meeting.

## **1. Notes of last meeting and matters arising**

Notes of the last meeting were agreed.

AA stated that an Assembly member had commented on the election process and felt that nominations should not have been allowed for more than one category. Steering Group members felt that if nominees were eligible for more than one category then they should be able to nominate themselves for more than one category as stated.

AL raised that as a result of the Linden Hall event , advice had been provided to a voluntary organisation in relation to developing a volunteering strategy.

## **2. Elections to the Assembly Executive Committee**

AA stated that 10 of the 12 places on the Assembly Executive Committee had been filled. Nominations had been requested again for North and West Northumberland with a deadline of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

## **3. Transition to Assembly Executive Committee**

AA stated that the first meeting of the Executive Committee would be Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 12.00 noon – 2.00 pm. At that meeting there would be a need to select a chair, decide which members would stand for 2 and 3 years respectively, representation on the NCC/VCS Liaison Group, timing and location of meeting and to consider the structure for the next 5 years. AL stated that there would be a need to monitor attendance and how members were communicating to members in relation to their theme. She suggested that a template be produced for members to report back on information gathered at working groups which could take the form of bullet points. Standardised information could then be provided on the website quarterly. It was stated that Healthwatch had a standard template for feedback that was worth looking at.

**Action- AA to produce a draft template for feedback from themes and working groups**

SS as chair wished to convey thanks to all members of the Steering Group for their contribution to the Assembly.

AL indicated that she was sitting on too many working groups, and that it would be helpful if a member of the Executive Committee represented the Assembly on CCG Planning Group and Health and Well-Being Board Comms Group. This could be discussed at the next meeting. It was also raised that papers from meetings led by NCC were not easily accessible e.g. CCG/NCC social prescribing project and that this should be raised with the Chair of the NCC/VCS Liaison Group at the meeting later this month. Structures need to be in place to enable information and feedback to be provided on the Assembly website.

**Action – Access to notes of meetings to be discussed with the Chair of NCC/VCS Liaison Group at meeting in late July**

#### **4. VCS Assembly Event**

AA provided details of information from the event and Assembly response that would be sent to attendees at the event. There was no clear identified priorities for the Assembly to consider from the information gathered but it was felt that there needed to be a focus on a theme for the NCC/VCS Liaison Group to focus attention e.g. welfare reform. There was a lot of issues raised around volunteering and it was felt that an event in the autumn on this topic would be of benefit to members. AL raised that demand for a volunteer brokerage service was evident from organisations who appreciate the 1:1 contact but was not part of the commission. This service is badly lacking in the Council and volunteering/befriending is particularly important for sustainability of care and support services.

RF indicated that Northumberland Gazette website had useful information on volunteering.

AL indicated that a meeting with David Foster (local area rep) of the Big Lottery would take place quarterly to discuss issues in relation to the voluntary sector which will be useful for the sector.

SS indicated that there was a new Lottery Fund available that seemed to be focus on vulnerable people similar to ESF Funding, the Help through Crisis Fund.

**Actions - AA to consider content for volunteering event in the autumn.**

**AL to raise with Chair of NCC/VCS Liaison Group about what the commission on volunteering is delivering and demand for a brokerage service**

**5. VCS Liaison Group meeting feedback and programme of future meetings**

SS stated that the VCS Liaison Group now involved a new set of council members as portfolio groups had changed and this group was now a part of Economic Strategy. This group of councillors were more aware of the VCS which was helpful. The future programme would need to identify priorities for the sector to include provision of a county wide service, Big Lottery and Community Chest in relation to targeting priority areas.

**6. Progress Report,**

AA reported on the network meeting held across the county in the north, west, central and south east which were well attended and enabled issues of concern to be raised e.g. domestic violence service provision in the county and role of the group where it was the first meeting e.g. West Northumberland. Attendees valued the opportunity to network and share information.

RJ raised the importance of networks being two – way involving providing information as well as receiving information. AA stated that a new website for the Assembly was being developed and would provide more information and be easily navigable and accessible. AL reported that there had been very positive feedback about the e-bulletins. There was a need to ensure that e-bulletins are getting to the right people including. all council members, parish and town council affiliated members and for example that parish clerks are forwarding information on to their members.

**Action – AA to check circulation list of e-bulletins**

**7. Thanks to Steering Group members**

SS conveyed thanks to everyone who had been involved in the Steering Group and that there had been a lot of progress. LC stated that the Assembly had increased in leaps and bounds over the last six months. SS also thanked Joe for steering the group. AA stated that Joe as chair of the group would be sending out a formal letter of thanks to Steering Group members.

**Action – JJ to send formal letter of thanks to the Steering Group**

## 8. AOB

AA stated that she had booked 3 places on an Introduction to Campaigning training session run by the Sheila McKechnie Foundation which would be useful for organisations wanting to consider how to influence decision makers to effect change. If any members of the Steering Group were interested could they let her know. The provisional date is the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

AA had travel forms for Steering Group members to claim expenses for attendance at meetings. It was decided that AA should include a travel form with the notes sent out to all members.

**Action - AA to include travel form with the notes of meetings**

Date of next meeting      **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015 at 12.00 noon.**