

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**VCS CABINET ADVISORY GROUP**

NOTES of the meeting of the **VCS Liaison Group** held at Northumberland CVA, 107-109 Station Road, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 8RS on Thursday, 22 June 2017 at 2:00 pm.

**PRESENT**

Councillor W Pattison (Chair)

**COUNCILLORS**

K Parry  
B Pidcock

K Stow

**VCS REPRESENTATIVES**

S M Ashmore  
L Atkinson  
R Firth  
A Gibson

J Jackson  
G Scott  
S Spurling

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

K Francis  
K Norris

Principal Inclusion Policy Officer  
Democratic Services Officer

**Also in attendance:**

A Atkinson – Northumberland CVA

**01. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Membership and Terms of Reference for the VCS Liaison Group, as agreed by Council on 24 May 2017, were reported for information. Members were also asked to agree the Northumberland VCS Assembly Liaison Group – VCS Statement of Intent which had been circulated separately (a copy of which is attached to the official notes of the meeting).

Ch.'s Initials.....

**RESOLVED** that

- i) the VCS Liaison Group membership and terms of reference be noted;
- ii) the Northumberland VCS Assembly Liaison Group - VCS Statement of Intent be agreed.

## **02. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Hepple, A Sharp and C Homer and VCS representatives J Dodson and A Lyall. It was noted that J Jackson would be slightly late.

## **03. NOTES**

**RESOLVED** – that the notes of the meeting of the VCS Cabinet Advisory Group held on 23 February 2017 be received and noted subject to the following amendments:

Item 27 - should read Anne Lyall, Northumberland CVA (not Ann Atkinson).

Item 28 (1) paragraph 3 - should read Rose Regeneration (not Rothesay Regeneration).

## **04. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Joe Jackson declared that he was an Independent Chair of the Standards Committee for Northumberland County Council.

## **05. SERVICE PROVISION - CARERS NORTHUMBERLAND**

Sharon Spurling, Carers Northumberland, gave an overview of the service which supported those people who looked after and supported a loved one, relative, neighbour or friend. They provided an advice and information service on a wide range of issues including benefits, legal matters, respite care, housing and residential care. They also provided a key worker support service for more complex issues and for those carers who may have to give up work. Carers were also encouraged to look after their own health and wellbeing and a 'death, dying and bereavement' workshop was about to be launched to help those whose caring role had come to an end.

An effort was currently being made, and publicity undertaken, to identify carers as many people did not recognise themselves as such and were therefore unaware of the support available to them.

Ch.'s Initials.....

In response to questions, Sharon Spurling provided the following information:

- Carers Northumberland did support young carers through youth projects, however, they were keen to provide a dedicated key worker for young carers and when funding was in place they would receive the same support as adult carers.
- Officer hours were 9:00 am to 5:00 pm but an online forum would soon be in place for additional contact.
- There were links to other information points, for example there was a designated secure email for GP Practices to contact the service direct.
- The role of the service in Belford and Hexham replicated that in other areas.
- Carers Northumberland worked with the Carers Trust and regional network of Carers Centres doing a considerable amount of work around strategic decision making and highlighting where carers may have been forgotten. Locally they had a good relationship with Health and Social Care partners to ensure the correct care package was in place.
- 50% of funding came from Northumberland County Council (NCC) with other funding from the Big Lottery and Northumberland CCG.
- Part of the NCC funding was from the Mental Health Trust.
- Although economic difficulties were acknowledged, Carers Northumberland had a good working relationship with NCC and felt respected in what they achieved.
- Currently there was not a National Carers Strategy but NCC was in the process of developing one.

The Chair thanked Ms Spurling for the information she had provided.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **06. THE ROLE OF THE ASSEMBLY**

Ann Atkinson gave a slide presentation on the role of the Assembly which covered a whole raft of organisations and social enterprises and provided details of their achievements and plans (a copy of which is filed with the official notes).

The presentation included information about the NCC Commission and the purpose of the Northumberland Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Assembly which was to increase and strengthen the collective voice of the voluntary and community sector in influencing and shaping decisions that were important to the sector. Details were provided about the objectives of the Assembly; the Assembly Executive Committee; the Northumberland VCS Assembly Process Chart; networks; achievements; focus of work of VCS Assembly 2017/18 and outcomes.

Ch.'s Initials.....

Following the presentation, discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- A member expressed concern that the name of the Group had been changed from the VCS Cabinet Advisory Group to the VCS Liaison Group and said it was crucial that the relationship between the Group and Cabinet was clear to enable the Group to have a voice. In response another member said he believed the Group would be able to get its message across with the help of the elected member representatives. It was noted that the Portfolio Holder was also invited to attend meetings to observe and the Chair assured members that she would report back to her and emphasised the importance of the Group.
- It was confirmed that representatives of the Citizens' Advice Bureau did attend meetings of the Assembly.
- A member stated that it was important to have a supportive relationship with people who influenced policy as politics could be short term and the Group dealt with long terms issues which needed to be looked at as such.

The Chair thanked Mrs Atkinson for her presentation.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### **07. VCS ISSUES ARISING FROM NETWORK MEETINGS/EVENTS**

In response to a query regarding the Community Chest, the Principal Inclusion Policy Officer said an options paper was going before Cabinet. It was noted that revenue was difficult as it was tied to capital. Retention of funds for larger projects and how that would work with members' capital allowance was being explored.

With regard to correspondence, it was noted that on some occasions papers were sent to individuals rather than to the Assembly. The Principal Inclusion Policy Officer advised that she would follow this up and request that any useful/helpful information be forwarded to the Assembly.

In response to comments regarding devolution and the need to be kept abreast of the situation, it was noted that talks were still on-going.

**RESOLVED** That the information be noted.

#### **08. NCC ISSUES THAT MAY IMPACT ON THE VCS**

- The Principal Inclusion Policy Officer said she would circulate a list of the new Portfolio Holders for information.

Ch.'s Initials.....

- As and when key decisions were taken they would be fed back to Ann Atkinson to disseminate.
- Following on from a presentation made at a previous meeting about the Council's decision making process, as there had been a number of changes to that, it was suggested it would be beneficial to see the current process and be provided with updated contacts for information. The Principal Inclusion Policy Officer agreed to include that as a future agenda item.
- In response to queries about the Council's vision and what it stood for, the Chair stated it was very early days and things would become clearer in time.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **09. WORK PROGRAMME**

Social Value had been raised at the last meeting of the VCS Cabinet Advisory Group in Prudhoe and had been scheduled for June's meeting. However, it was noted that it was not an appropriate agenda item for this meeting and would therefore be placed on the next agenda.

It was suggested that:

- September's meeting take place in Berwick and that Berwick Development Trust and the North Northumberland Network be invited to give an overview of current activity in the North and if there were any issues regarding delivery in the area..
- December's meeting take place in Cramlington (Youth).
- March's meeting take place in Haltwhistle (Leisure Services).

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## **10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 7 September 2017 at 2:00 pm in the William Elder Building in Berwick.

**COUNCILLOR W PATTISON**

**CHAIR**

Ch.'s Initials.....