

Notes of VCS Assembly Executive Committee

Wednesday 14th February 2018 12.00 noon – 2.00 pm

Northumberland CVA

Present: Joe Jackson (Chair) , Ralph Firth, Jim Wyness, Anne Lyall, Sharon Spurling, Sue Ashmore, Avril Gibson, Ann Atkinson. Kirsten Francis (up until the end of item 2)

Apologies Julie Dodson, George Scott, John McGough

1. Notes of last meeting and matter arising

Notes of last meeting agreed.

AA reported that she had not had any contact from JD in relation to working together on successes of the sector in influencing change.

AA had been sending out HWB agenda to Executive members for them to inform RF if there were issues they wanted raising. RF thanked members for responses received.

2. VCS Support Services Commission

KF informed that arising from concerns regarding cuts to the budget, further consultation was required to shape the next commission. There were strong views on how important the VCS was but clearly some things would have to go. The Corporate Plan needs investment in the sector and empowering communities is not possible without the support of the VCS. KF reported that 66 responses had been received to date and were positive on the whole although it was questioned in relation to having an effective voice whether it was being listened to. It was felt we need to consider what the levers are for us to be able to influence and have the mechanisms in place to deliver and focus on where we can have impact. There were potential opportunities through Sport Northumberland in relation to health and well-being and in relation to anti-poverty. SA asked KF who would be taking over responsibility for her job. Tony Kirsop would be picking up most of the work although it was felt important to engage with key members of staff across the Council. It was suggested once the Corporate Plan was finalised that a discussion takes place with key portfolio holders about how we can work together to support delivery.

JJ thanked KF for coming along to the meeting to discuss the Commission

AL informed everyone that she had sent out to elected members the document of achievements of Support Services during the time of the Commission.

In relation to the notes from VCS Advisory Group AG asked who they got fed up to. AA to check what happens to the notes from meetings .In relation to agenda items on Advisory Group it was also raised who decides and where does it come from. AA stated that the agenda did arise from issues discussed at the previous meeting but it was felt

that it was sometimes sorted out at the last minute. It was stated that this did not necessarily lead to presenters being adequately informed of what was required of them and this did not aid discussion. AA raised that there was a need for the Assembly to discuss and finalise with the Council agenda items a few weeks prior to the meeting.

Actions: AA to check with NCC what happens to the minutes of Advisory Group meetings and the need to discuss and agree content and format of meetings well in advance.

3. Feedback from Executive members on activities

AG, RF, AL and SA gave feedback on their activities since the last meeting and information provided by JM was noted too. Issues raised in relation to these were the impact of Universal Credit, impact of inequality on health and well-being, engagement of the VCS in relation to changes to the footprint of the STP, the impact of food banks and availability of monitoring information, concerns about funeral poverty and engagement of the sector in Devolution. It was suggested that infrastructure organisations in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland get together to discuss how they can best represent the sector

It was suggested that advice groups are brought together as a means of facilitating discussion and gathering evidence in relation to issues and concerns e.g. universal credit. It was felt important that issues gathered link to the Corporate Plan and are fed up to the Council.

It was suggested that more work is undertaken in relation to the issues of funeral poverty and the impact of food banks.

Actions: AA to consider bringing advice groups together to discuss key issues and undertake further research in relation to funeral poverty and food banks.

AL to contact and get together with colleagues in Newcastle and North Tyneside to discuss representation in relation to Devolution.

SA to send AA a report on women in rural businesses to distribute to Executive members and details of the Emily Davison Exhibition.

4. NCC/VCS Cabinet Advisory Group feedback

Arising from the last meeting there was a need to have more influence over the content and format of the meetings. Speakers need to have clearer guidance on why they are being invited and what is expected from them. The last agenda included too many presentations and there was not enough time for discussion. AL raised that all Executive members are listed to attend but it was agreed that only up to eight members are to attend.

It was also suggested that a debate was needed about procurement and how it can be made more accessible to VCS organisations.

Action: See action at point 2

5. Progress Report and Priorities for 2018/2019

AA reported on activities since the last meeting including meeting with Poverty lead at NCC and meeting with volunteer led community groups, network meetings in Central, West and North and attending Social Prescribing Conference. In terms of priorities for 2018/19 AA would incorporate issues arising from this meeting into the work plan

6. Executive Membership Review

JJ informed that George Scott had tendered his resignation for health reasons and read out a letter he had written to George on behalf of the Executive to thank him for his valued service to the group. All present were happy with the letter to be sent and sentiments expressed. AG also announced that she would be retiring at the end of March and offered that her colleague at Northern Learning Trust could take her place in the interim if needed. AG expressed that she might be interested in getting involved in specific issues for example social value. JJ thanked AG for her significant contribution to the group and hoped that she would continue to support the Assembly.

AA stated that as the majority had been on the Committee for three years excluding JM and JW there was a need for elections to take place with the opportunity for members to stand again. It was suggested that a working group of interested members meet and review the current membership and role of members.

Actions: AG to ask her colleague if she would be willing to attend Executive Committee in the interim

Executive members to get in touch with AA to let her know if they want to be part of the working group reviewing Executive membership.

7. Change to day of future meetings

AA informed the group that NCVA had received a request for a block booking over a long period which covered Wednesday lunchtimes and would therefore need to move the day of the Executive meeting and was suggesting a Tuesday for future meetings. There were no objections for the change to a Tuesday.

Action; AA to arrange for future quarterly meetings to take place on a Tuesday. (Dates of future meetings below)

8. AOB

AA informed the group that the County Council was holding a State of the Area Debate on the current challenges and opportunities for the county on Tuesday 20th Feb from 3pm – 4.30pm. Questions need to be sent to Democratic Services by 5pm on Friday 16th Feb. JJ indicated that he would attend the meeting.

Dates of future meetings :-

Tuesday 15th May 2018

Tuesday 21st August 2018

Tuesday 20th November 2018

Tuesday 12th February 2019