

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **VCS LIAISON GROUP**

NOTES of the meeting of the **VCS Liaison Group** held at Age UK, The Roundhouse, Ashington, on 8 October 2015 at 10:00 am.

#### **DRAFT**

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor E Burt (Chair) In the Chair

#### **COUNCILLORS**

J Lang  
J Reid  
A Sambrook

G Sanderson  
V Tyler

#### **VCS REPRESENTATIVES**

S Ashmore  
J Dodson  
A Evans  
R Firth

C George  
J Jackson  
A Lyall  
G Scott

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

H Bowers  
K Francis  
T Kirsop

Democratic Services  
Principal Inclusion Policy Officer  
Social Enterprise Manager

Also in attendance

A Atkinson – Northumberland CVA

A Murray – Chief Executive, Age UK

Ch.'s Initials.....

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## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors V Jones, A Wallace and J Watson.

## **2. NOTES**

The notes of the meeting of the VCS Liaison Working Group, held on 4 March 2015, were agreed.

## **3. SERVICE PROVISION – AGE UK NORTHUMBERLAND**

Angela Murray, Chief Executive, Age UK Northumberland provided an in depth verbal update on the Service Provision of Age UK Northumberland.

Age UK were an independent charity which raised money locally on service delivery and employment and employed just over 300 care staff in Ashington and Blyth in domiciliary care.

The mission statement of Age UK was to promote the well-being of people in and around the county helping to make life enjoyable and fulfilling.

The charity offered a range of products and services and campaigned on issues affecting older people, working in partnership with other agencies to improve older people's lives and consulted with older people and organisations to ensure that needs were met.

The Third Sector was facing some very challenging times in maintaining services which provided home care for over 800 people and 8,000 hours per week delivering personal care, running day centres, clubs and respite for carers.

The network of support provided 183 volunteers on a day to day basis and over 300 staff; information and advice services which provided telephone advice and last year delivered £1.6 million back into the community in unpaid welfare benefits; advocacy and Macmillan care for cancer sufferers.

The Roundhouse held over 38 exercise classes per week provided by volunteers and staff which required training and support.

In response to a question about minimum wage, it was advised that the future was very uncertain at present with a change in the contract process and domiciliary care. Age UK paid above the annual living wage but contracts did not include payment for travel. Finances were very stretched and formal consultation was taking place with the Trustees within Homecare to re-structure the process.

Age UK Northumberland was one of the largest in the country which sub-contracted to other agencies.

The issue of payment for travel was raised, which was essential, especially in the rural areas.

Discussion took place about county wide services and how it differed in areas, especially in the west of Northumberland where services were run by volunteers.

The Chair thanked Ms Murray for providing the group with the information.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### **4. QUESTIONS FROM REPORT ON WORK UNDERTAKEN BY VCS SUPPORT SERVICES YEAR 1**

Anne Lyall, Northumberland CVA highlighted the salient points in the report and referred to the heat map of location of groups supported by agencies.

It was commented that it would be helpful if activities were broken up into areas, e.g., surgeries; it was advised that this could be done.

Kirsten Francis, Principal Inclusion Policy Officer queried whether Councillors received feedback from organisations in the areas for support offered and if there was any interaction with local groups. A Member stated that he had not been attending his local community centre as much as he should have done but would do so.

The issue of Councillors being signposted to different organisations, the promotion of services and information being available was raised. It was suggested that any printed information should be informative but brief.

Engagement with parish and town councils was an important means of communication and it was suggested that information could be forwarded to Parish Clerks for transmission to other networks and links could be provided to other websites.

The Chair congratulated the hard work of Northumberland CVA.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### **5. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE NCC/VCS LIAISON GROUP**

Anne Atkinson, Development Officer, VCS Assembly advised that specific topics to be considered had been discussed at the last meeting.

It was suggested that the focus for the next meeting in December should be on Investment in the Voluntary and Community Sector which would involve looking at where resources had been spent. Other suggested items included the Impact of Welfare Reforms.

Standard items on the agenda should include:

- Where the Liaison Group meeting was being held. These would be held at different organisations and the next meeting in December would be held at Adapt (North East) in Hexham
- European Funding Bid
- VCS issues arising from network meetings/events
- NCC issues that may impact on the VCS or where the CVS could provide support

Other themes suggested were the living wage and the impact on services across the county; pensions; continuity of contracts and the impact on personal care; the role of volunteers in the sector and quality to the service user; case studies for the turnover and retention of staff; the value of volunteering in Northumberland.

Some discussion took place on the different elements of people wanting to volunteer and the demand on time.

It was suggested that a more strategic view was taken in relation to the voluntary sector rather than focusing on individual organisations.

The Chair was happy with the standard agenda items suggested and it was agreed that the thematic agenda items would be:

- Investment in the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Volunteering
- Impact on Welfare Reform

A lead from the VCS and NCC would be required to develop each agenda item to ensure the work was completed in readiness for discussion.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The themed areas for future meetings and means of delivery be agreed;
2. The standard items for inclusion in the agenda be agreed.

Ch.'s Initials.....

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## 6. VCS ISSUES ARISING FROM NETWORK MEETINGS/EVENTS

Ann Atkinson, Development Officer, VCS Assembly raised the issue about the search for a premises in Alnwick for North East Equality and Diversity (NEED Ltd).

It was advised that premises had been found and negotiations were taking place. For future meetings, it was agreed that it would be strategic issues that were brought to the Liaison Group as there were other mechanisms available for resolving individual organisations issues through the Social Enterprise or Policy team officers.

Discussion took place regarding name contacts and it was advised that Northumberland Knowledge on the Council's website contained lots of information. In addition, the Policy Team would be able to assist.

In response to a comment regarding information being shared in the public domain, Tony Kirsop, Social Enterprise Manager advised that the Council had developed a more user friendly website and would find out if there were links to the CVA on the Council's website.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 7. EUROPEAN FUNDING

Kirsten Francis, Principal Inclusion Policy Officer gave an update on European Funding.

Big Lottery – some joint work had been carried out between NCC and the voluntary sector and a bid had been submitted for just over £3 million which would be spread over the next 3 – 4 years. Five bids had been submitted and it was expected that applications 1 - 3 could be taken forward and the outcome of the first phase was awaited.

LEADER funding – a significant amount of match funding needed to be found for the South East area and discussions would be taking place shortly to look at the possibilities. Funding would probably be approximately £1-2 million.

In response to a query regarding the bids, the lottery bid decision was imminent and the LEADER funding was currently open with a timescale of 8 weeks for a proposal to be submitted. A lot of preparatory work was required for a draft strategy and if Members were interested a hard copy could be circulated with the papers for the next agenda.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The dates of future meeting in 2015 were noted. It was suggested that the next meeting of the VCS Liaison Working Group take place at Adapt (North East), Hexham.

**COUNCILLOR E BURT  
CHAIR**