

Notes of VCS Assembly Executive Committee

Wednesday 18th May 2016 12.00 noon – 2.00 pm

Northumberland CVA

Present: Sharon Spurling (Chair), Ralph Firth, Lewis Atkinson, Ann Lyall, Cath George, Avril Gibson, George Scott, Sue Ashmore, Maureen Shepherd, Ann Atkinson

Apologies: Joe Jackson, Julie Dodson, Andy Haddon

1. Notes of last meeting

Notes of last meeting agreed

2. Matters arising not covered on the agenda

AA indicated that she had not pursued drawing together a sub-group to develop a campaign strategy as further thought was needed on the scope, extent and what we want to achieve. Also to consider plans in relation to priorities and activities related to the Commission.

KF had been invited to the meeting but was unable to attend due to other commitments.

AA indicated that a mapping exercise of provision in each locality in relation to care close to home and local needs was a massive job and needed to be considered in terms of priorities and value. SS suggested as a first step looking at what had already been done.

SS stated that JD would send outstanding information about FACT to AA in the next week.

3. Northumberland CVA Commission

AL stated that the survey from the Council regarding the Commission received a good and positive response on the whole and the decision was made by NCC to extend the contract for 2 years. The Community Led Local Development element from the Commission was cut as awaiting European funding to deliver this. Currently using underspend to continue to develop activities in relation to CLLD. There has been a 26% cut in services overall. Guidelines are similar to last year with additions of support to trustees, corporate social responsibility – accessing support from local businesses but VCS needs to have an offer in place, relationship building with town and parish councils and developing supported volunteering which is linked to Building Better Opportunities targets.

There was some discussion about the Town and Parish Council relationship and the importance of parish councils engaging and cascading information to their communities. AL reported that a CLLD strategy plan called New Horizons had been produced from the Commission. Following discussions as far back as November with NCC officers, it was indicated that £40k would be available to all local authorities who were going for CLLD

funding for development work. Rocket Science had been given the contract from 3 applications from the private sector. It was apparent that no voluntary sector organisations were aware that the contract had been put out to tender and that it had become apparent that NCC were no longer using the NEPO portal for contracts and were now using Due North.

Concerns were raised about the lack of information sharing that was a key role of the Cabinet Advisory Group and about value for money and transparency. Concern was raised about the potential repetition of work and not assisting maintaining the sector.

Action: CLLD Commission to be raised at Cabinet Advisory Group under 'Issues of concern from the Sector'

A letter from the VCS Assembly in relation to procurement to be drafted and circulated to members for approval and sent to Eileen Burt, Chair of VCS Cabinet Advisory Group following outcome from the Cabinet Advisory Group meeting in June if appropriate.

Key Tasks and Progress Report

AA referred to the key tasks from the Commission in relation to the Assembly which were similar to last year but that the Commission was now combined for all areas so working across and supporting all areas. There was an increased reliance on electronic means of communication. However AA stated that we needed to maintain as much face to face contact as possible and piggy-back on other meeting and events where of benefit. AA reported on activities since the last meeting. In relation to work with the multi-agency Refugee and Asylum Seekers Working Group and agreement by NCC to take Syrian refugees, it had been raised that there had been some negative comments in the Northumberland Gazette. SA stated that the Soroptomists were very supportive of taking refugees and should be contacted in terms of support they could provide. AL stated that she had asked NCC to consider including a member of the VCS sector in the Engagement Officer role as part of the Support Team for Asylum Seekers and Refugees but had not had a response.

4. NCC/VCS Cabinet Advisory Group feedback and next meeting

The content of the last meeting was reported and AA asked if there were items that members wanted to include on next meeting's agenda. CG asked about the Community Chest criteria and was informed that this would be an item for the September agenda. It was felt important that the VCS were putting items on the agenda and that the membership should be emailed regularly on issues they want to raise with Executive. The CLLD commission it was felt should be included on the agenda

It was also raised whether purdah was an issue in relation to the next meeting. AA stated that she did not think so as the referendum did not directly involve councillors but would check. Members also indicated their availability for the Cabinet Advisory Meeting on 2nd June. GS, AG, SS, CG and AL available to attend. AA would ask other Executive members if available to attend.

5. VCS Assembly Event

AA reported that an Assembly Event on Employer Supported Volunteering was planned for the morning of Wednesday 22nd June at Kirkley Hall. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of the sector of employer supported volunteering and the opportunities and challenges of being volunteer ready to receive business support.

6. Representation on Health and Well-Being Board

SS reported that following emails for nominations for sitting on the Health and Well-Being Board, Ralph Firth would represent the VCS Assembly on the Board and Sharon Spurling would deputise.

Action: AA to write to Cllr. Scott Dickinson to inform him that RF would be the representative from the Assembly on the Healthwatch Board and that SS would deputise.

7. Feedback from Executive members

SS reported on Vanguard/PACS and informed members that CCG's were in considerable deficit. She asked that papers provided be distributed to members.

RF reported that there had been change at Age UK recently with a new Chief Officer Elspeth McPherson now in post.

GS reported that Seton Befriending Service had been stopped south of the border which was a service for elderly people but was continuing north of the border. It was run through Berwickshire Housing.

Action: The loss of befriending service to be raised at Cabinet Advisory Group under 'Issues of concern from the Sector' if strategic issue.

8. Discussion on engagement with the sector

AL stated that she did not feel that we were being used enough to channel information to the county on issues of concern of the sector and how best could we better engage with the sector. Suggestions including asking Assembly membership periodically so it was on their radar. Another suggestion was producing a biography of the two new members of the Executive and using that to encourage contact from members. All members considered that they did not have the networks that they used to have but that there was a need to inform people we come into contact with about the Assembly and support to the sector. It was also raised that it is sometimes difficult to know how important an issue is and whether appropriate to raise. It was felt important to inform Assembly when there were resolutions, success stories etc. and to show our value and worth. The key is getting issues on the agenda, making use of the Statement of Intent and changing mind set and attitudes.

Action: AA to send AG a list of Employability and Skills organisations that are members of the Assembly.

Date of next meeting Wednesday 24th August 2016 12.00 noon to 14.00 at Northumberland CVA.