

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

VCS CABINET ADVISORY GROUP

NOTES of the meeting of the **VCS Cabinet Advisory Group** held at The Spetchells Community Centre, 58 Front Street, Prudhoe, Northumberland, NE42 5AA on Thursday 23 February 2017 at 2:00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor E Burt (Chair)

COUNCILLORS

J A Lang

J Woodman

VCS REPRESENTATIVES

S M Ashmore
R Firth

A Lyall

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

H Bowers
K Francis

Democratic Services Officer
Principal Inclusion Policy Officer

Also in attendance:

A Atkinson – Northumberland CVA
G Hepburn - Chair, Prudhoe Community Partnership

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Wallace. T Kirsop, Community Regeneration Manager and VCS representatives - C George, J Jackson and G Scott.

Ch.'s Initials.....

24. NOTES

RESOLVED – that the notes of the meeting of the VCS Cabinet Advisory Group held on 1 December 2016 be received and noted.

A representative stated that she had not received the information requested regarding equality. It was advised that would be taken back to the relevant officer for a response.

25. SERVICE PROVISION –THE SPETCHELLS CENTRE, PRUDHOE

George Hepburn, Chairman of Prudhoe Community Partnership informed the group that he had taken over as Chairman in June of last year.

The building had previously been a library which was demolished to rebuild the new centre. The Partnership was set up in 1991 and the Spetchells Centre opened in 2012.

The centre had assisted with many community projects and was currently a 'One Stop Shop'.

Covenants on the building allowed for 35% of non-community use and current tenants in the centre consisted of Active Northumberland, Prudhoe Town Council, ISOS Housing, Citizens Advice, Employability, Estate Agents and the library.

Members of the community would visit the centre for advice from staff however, the current 2 members of staff at the Centre were to be replaced by one part time member of staff and access to on-line help and advice.

Following the presentation questions/comments and responses were as follows:

- Involvement with younger people - some people found difficulty navigating their way around computers or finding answers on their own and preferred information from face to face services
- The relationship need - the feeling of isolation and loneliness. People felt the need to trust a person
- The frequency of coffee shops and areas becoming 'cafe societies'
- Projects to assist older people, e.g., taking them out for shopping to reduce social isolation
- Further funding for IT training
- Learning to use Skype and mobile phones
- Holding weekly meetings at community based centres
- Employability and one to one face meetings

Ch.'s Initials.....

- Various groups for the elderly
- A 'drop-in' session
- Information of meetings and sharing of activity
- Safe places and special rooms for privacy
- Various schemes and models to assist the elderly
- Retaining Trustees
- The reluctance of people getting involved
- The image of community centres and people's perception
- Many people were retiring younger and childminding for family
- A website to promote Trustee opportunities

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

26. SAFE PLACES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Following a request at the last meeting, Ann Atkinson, Development Officer, VCS Assembly provided a report on the Safe Places Scheme.

The Safe Place scheme was a national scheme aimed at vulnerable people to lead independent lives.

The scheme worked by placing a sticker in a prominent position in a window or door of a 'Safe Place' identifying that help was available for vulnerable people.

Schemes had been sent up by Police Authorities and people would carry a card which showed their name and the name and telephone number of their trusted person.

If a vulnerable person sought help, members of staff would be expected to make a telephone call where necessary to the trusted person on the card and reassure and keep the vulnerable person safe until the situation was resolved.

A meeting had been held with Better Days in Jesmond who had developed the scheme in Newcastle, focusing on people with learning disabilities. Their view was that if the scheme was opened up to a wider range of groups, it would become difficult to manage.

The purpose of the scheme was to give confidence and independence to people with learning disabilities to go out and about.

Whilst some schemes were led by an individual contacting key places to request if they would take part and provide training to staff, Better Days had found it particularly successful if people with learning disabilities were involved in providing the training using role play.

Better Days had recently been to visit and provided training to the Splinter Group in Blyth who were keen to be involved, and which could be a way

Ch.'s Initials.....

forward in developing the scheme in Blyth. Further details regarding funding were awaited.

In developing the scheme there was a need to inform and get support from the County Council, the Police, the VCS and businesses. A lot of materials were already available, e.g., stickers, cards, leaflets etc. Funding for that could possibly be obtained from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Some discussion took place and clarification was sought about the Spetchells Centre being identified as a safe reporting place by Northumbria Police. A report would be brought back to the Group in the future with more information.

Following the presentation of the report, Members raised the following questions/comments:-

- The possibility of the Splinter Group working young people with learning difficulties and autism and older people with dementia
- Clarification from the PCC regarding what they did in the area - the Principal Inclusion Policy Officer advised that she would contact the Community Safety Hub
- Clarification which reporting centres were active

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

27. VCS ISSUES ARISING FROM NETWORK MEETINGS/EVENTS

Ann Atkinson, Northumberland CVA informed Members on the Outcomes of the Commission 2016/17.

Information was circulated to the Group which listed their achievements from April to December 2016.

The network offered a website with a regularly updated library of over 400 links to resources and monthly ebulletins.

A new database gave more detailed information which allowed to track customer enquiries, support cross team working and add in new projects.

As a result of the Assembly and partnership with NCC, this had helped the settlement of Syrian refugees in Cramlington with generous donations from the public.

Following presentation of the report, Members comments and questions included:-

- Funding for Prudhoe walled garden

Ch.'s Initials.....

- The community allotments
- The good work of the VCS in Northumberland
- The review of services delivered. Surgeries were now in place which could promote information on courses etc

A list of groups which had been supported was also circulated to the Group.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

28. NCC ISSUES THAT MAY IMPACT ON THE VCS

- (1) The Group was informed of a recent meeting which looked at Social Value.

A number of areas would be piloted in different parts of the country to compare how Social Value would work and whether it could be introduced to the community chest as a way of demonstrating value.

Currently, there were 3 different projects with Glendale, the Big Lottery project and the Blyth Tall Ship project. Collaboration took place between Rothesay Regeneration and East Riding of Yorkshire, developed jointly with Bradford University.

Members question/comments included the following:-

- The generation of revenue through support
 - A link to be sent to the Democratic Services Officer for onward transmittal to group members
 - Benchmarking
 - A report/practical demonstration to be brought back to a future meeting
- (2) Members were updated of the outcomes from the group. From 1 March, Skillshare would be working with Northumberland CVA and various skills would be advertised through the Council to encourage support within Northumberland.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the information be noted
- (ii) A report/practical demonstration on Social Value be brought back to a future meeting.

Ch.'s Initials.....

REPORT OF THE SERVICE MANAGER - DEMOCRACY

29. VCS Cabinet Advisory Group Work Programme

Members were asked to note the VCS Cabinet Advisory Group Work Programme for 2016-17 which was enclosed with the notes as Appendix A.

Items suggested for inclusion were:

- Safe Reporting Centres - to update the Group
- Social Value - to update the Group

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

30. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the proposed next meeting would be Thursday 22 June 2017 at 2:00 pm and subject to approval by Council on 5 April.

COUNCILLOR E BURT

CHAIR

Ch.'s Initials.....