

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

VCS CABINET ADVISORY GROUP

NOTES of the meeting of the **VCS Cabinet Advisory Group** held at Bell View, 33 West Road, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7QB on Thursday 1 September 2016 at 2:00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs. E Burt (Chair) In the Chair

COUNCILLORS

J. A. Lang

A. G. Sambrook

Mrs. A. Wallace

J. C. Woodman

VCS REPRESENTATIVES

S. M. Ashmore

L. Atkinson

R. Firth

J. Jackson

A. Lyall

G. Scott

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

K Francis

T. Kirsop

D. Olive

L. Sim

Mrs. L. Papaioannou

Principal Inclusion Policy Officer

Community Regeneration Manager

Shared Procurement Service

Shared Procurement Service

Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance:

A Atkinson – Northumberland CVA

J. Field, Service Development Manager, Bell View, Belford

1. MEMBERSHIP

The Chair welcomed Lewis Atkinson from Community IT Academy as the new representative for Infrastructure Organisations to his first meeting of this Group.

Ch.'s Initials.....

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors V. Jones, J. Reid and V. Tyler, and also from VCS representatives - C. George, A. Gibson and S. Spurling.

3. NOTES

RESOLVED – that the notes of the meeting of the VCS Cabinet Advisory Group held on 2 June 2016 be received and noted.

4. SERVICE PROVISION – BELL VIEW, BELFORD

Jane Field, Service Development Manager provided a Powerpoint presentation on the service provision at Bell View, Belford (a copy of which is filed with the notes) and referred to:

- Bell View aims
- Bell View history
- Services and support provided
- The geographical area covered
- Statistics on the Over 65s population in North Northumberland; and
- The Need for Care grid.

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

- With an impressive number of around 60 volunteers, they provide regular support to help with the cafe, drivers for transport, the Lunch Club, coffee mornings at Seahouses and Cornhill.
- The service benefitted from a high inward migration of early retirees to the area who volunteer as they settle into the village. All volunteers are welcomed. This is not typical, but it has been found that people volunteer as they move into the village and embed themselves into the long-standing community. Similarly, identification of the needs of the service generated more people in the village to volunteer their help.
- Members were interested to quantify how much the volunteers are worth as a value. The potential value of these volunteers should be quantified, and multiply their hours by the minimum wage to give a

Ch.'s Initials.....

value. What was less quantifiable was their worth to the community as a whole.

- The number of hours volunteers give to the charity has been quantified and its huge, although the range of services offered could not function without the level of volunteers, who are greatly valued and appreciated.
- It was noted that the charity itself at Bell View received no funding. The Service Development Manager post was funded by a Care Foundation. Income was generated from the rental of rooms and a range of fundraising activities. A fresh and frozen meals service also provided a little income, as a subsidiary to the main charity. Day Care and Home Care are the trading arms of the charity. People in Home Care buy the services either through (a) direct private funding, or (b) NCC personal care budgets.
- Bell View was a community based organisation, and was constantly recruiting volunteers to cover sickness, leavers, etc.
- Members wondered if the model at Bell View could be replicated elsewhere. The notion of Bell View as the hub of the community generated people volunteering and a level of commitment - the like of which is not witnessed in market towns.
- There needed to be a Council of commissioners who are sympathetic to local, small organisations.
- Bell View had been a learning curve to both the people of Belford and the County Council in terms of the development of these types of projects for social enterprise.

The Chair thanked Ms Field for her fascinating and interesting presentation of a well loved, community service that was very much appreciated.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

5. CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair reported that she had received a letter from Mr. Joe Jackson of VCS Assembly expressing concern about the recent referendum result, Britain leaving the European Union and the effects of Brexit on community groups.

In response, the Community Regeneration Manager, said that a report had been prepared for the Town and Parish Councils Liaison Group which, in turn, would go to the Council's Scrutiny Committee on 15 September 2016. In summary the report referred to early intelligence and was intrinsically linked to the regional level of funding at the North East Combined Authority (NECA) up to 2020. To date, £89m of funding had been agreed. However, in the absence of any clear plans following Brexit, LEADER funds had ceased being paid until

Ch.'s Initials.....

the implications of Brexit was understood by DEFRA. However, the DCLG and DWP had felt it should be “business as usual”.

Northumberland County Council’s perspective was that ESF money had been allocated for the Building Better Opportunities Project, although LEADER was unsure what impacts there may be in the future. NECA was tied up with the Devolution bid regarding (a) the 2020 argument and (b) the North East generally.

The Government had announced that it would honour the funding committed for any projects already approved. The Chancellor’s Autumn Statement in November 2016 would inform us about the second tranche of such funding for the longer term beyond 2020.

The wider European funding delivery covered four main areas:

- Markets and economy
- Investment generally
- The effects on the European market
- A myriad of things generally.

It was understood that Britain exported more than it imported.

A lot of activity was taking place behind the scenes, and Heather Smith (Corporate Programmes and External Funding Manager) was in constant touch with the DCLG. At present, it was business as usual and applications were still being encouraged and accepted.

The Principal Policy Inclusion Officer commented on the economic focus of ESF on community groups and organisations and the wider implications. It was noted that a European Funding Update was a standing agenda item.

Mr Joe Jackson of the VCS Assembly said that he was reassured that the County Council and the Regional body were looking out for the VCS interests and suggested that the Scrutiny Committee be informed of the appreciation of the VCS groups that their best interests were being taken into account. Councillor A. Sambrook, as a Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Care and Wellbeing said that he would convey this to the appropriate Committee.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

5. COMMUNITY CHEST

Arising from a request at the last meeting regarding a review of the Community Chest, the Community Regeneration Manager provided a verbal report. He said that the Deputy Leader had given permission to look at the parameters of the four areas of the County and their differences, and how best to make use of the Community Chest funding. He was well aware of the need to be

Ch.’s Initials.....

imaginative about finding matched funding in order to double the impact. A consistency of approach was needed across the County, and some areas included some elements of revenue funding. It was understood that there were differences between the North and the West areas compared with the South-East and Central areas. It was noted that there would be County Council elections taking place in May 2017

The Chair referred to the need for a wider knowledge of how to apply for Community Chest. The Community Regeneration Manager reported that there were three rounds per year of Community Chest funding. It was interesting to note that at the end of Round 1, the funds were under-budget.

Anne Lyall of VCS said that if the Community Chest funding deadlines were made known, they could be more widely circulated in the VCS Bulletins.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

6. VOLUNTEERING AND SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

Following a request at the last meeting, the Principal Inclusion Policy Officer provided a verbal update on the support to the VCS by advertising volunteering opportunities on the staff Intranet. This was to be a practical exercise to tap into the expertise available at the Council. If there were known groups needing a particular area of expertise, or on a particular theme, then she could create an icon on the Staff Advertiser on the Intranet, which was very popular, on which groups looking for a particular area of expertise could find staff who were willing to come forward. The progress of this would be monitored. Discussions with regard to its progress and appropriate links were ongoing with Anne Lyall. It was hoped to go “live” with the appeal for volunteers in the next month or so.

The Principal Inclusion Policy Officer also proposed to make contact with the organisational team about linking with the Northumberland CVA team to promote the appeal for volunteers at the time of staff moving into retirement. Opportunities for staff volunteering would be linked to the CVA team on the Staff Advertiser. It was highlighted that there could be a breadth of skills and opportunities, although members were cognisant of potential conflicts of interest or prejudice.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

7. EUROPEAN FUNDING

The Community Regeneration Manager provided verbal update on the future of European Funding following the referendum vote.

It was noted that the Community Led Local Development Strategy for £2.1m had recently been submitted for progress in 20 of the most deprived wards in South East Northumberland over the next three years. It was hoped that a decision would be received in early 2017. LEADER was now up and running again after a period of uncertainty, as was the Fishing Community funding.

Approval had recently been secured for the Building Better Opportunities Programme, a £3.14m bid for the whole County, with the involvement of six partner organisations. Recruitment was being sought for 12 jobs locally. This would be a 3-year programme and could be extended to a 6-year programme. It was Lottery funded and involved a very collaborative process. It would provide support to those individuals most vulnerable in accessing the jobs market and would target support to 800 people over the time period.

Members of the Liaison Group welcomed this positive and very innovative bid and hoped it would be successful in turning the lives around for 800 people and their families.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

8. E-TENDERING PORTAL UPDATE

Duncan Olive, Shared Procurement Business Intelligence Manager, and Louise Sim of NCC Procurement Services, were in attendance at the meeting and gave a presentation on Commissioning Services and the VCS, and provided an update on the E-Tendering Portal. (A copy of the presentation slides are filed with the notes).

He gave a brief recap of events from 2014 when Northumberland County Council combined with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust to establish a shared service for procurement to realise greater savings for third party spend, to March 2016 when NCC withdrew from full membership of NEPO. It was noted that the Due North ProContract was used by many organisations and the Council still highlighted e-tendering opportunities via that system.

From May 2016, ProContract was upgraded to ProContract V3 and if suppliers had an account with the Due North ProContract system they would be

Ch.'s Initials.....

migrated to the new ProContract V3 system to continue to have access to the e-tendering opportunities. All account holders were encouraged to regularly review and update their account details, to ensure contact details were up-to-date and accurate, and to ensure that they were configured for the correct geographic regions and procurement categories. Registration was free on a simple on-line process.

It was noted that the new features in ProContract V3 included:

- A unified system;
- An improved interface, with more self-help for suppliers; and
- A dedicated Supplier Support Desk.

It was noted that the Council was continuing to use the ProContract system and it was confirmed that all accounts registered with NEPO had been migrated to ProContract V3. Underpinning NEPO is the Due North organisation and those accounts on Due North would also be migrated to ProContract V3, to provide a unified portal for procurement opportunities.

Anne Lyall said it was important to get a clear message across to the Voluntary Sector to be registered and to regularly review and update their contact details. She proposed to include the information in the next Bulletin to VCS sector.

It was noted that the Due North ProContract had interchanged its name to ProActis.

Joe Jackson stated that in March 2016, the voluntary sector had not been notified of the changes, although he welcomed this helpful presentation about the new procurement system. However, the VCS remained disappointed that not enough information had been properly conveyed to voluntary organisations, who had invariably missed out on opportunities to tender, hence the upset recorded in the notes of the previous meeting.

It was accepted that there had been miscommunication in the migration process from NEPO to ProContract V3, and it was hoped that lessons would be learned.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received and the information be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

9. VCS ISSUES ARISING FROM NETWORK MEETINGS/EVENTS

(a) Employer Supported Volunteering

Ann Atkinson referred to a well supported event held in June 2016 on business organisations and the voluntary sector, however, the keynote speaker had been unable to attend. It was hoped to provide training to the voluntary sector and to progress this issue, although it was recognised that such developments would take time. Before talking to businesses, there needed to be a full assessment of the main interests from the voluntary sector, in order to provide an appropriate offer of the areas where volunteers could offer support.

Joe Jackson referred to the launch of the Trustee Network - on which it was hoped to present a substantial source of useful information, provide training and encourage more volunteers. A bulletin had been advertised on the Northumberland CVA website. 50 trustees had already signed up - and it was noted that it was free to register before the end of September.

Anne Atkinson referred to the issue around Community Safety Partnerships and Hubs and to be aware of things like COSHH and sector representation involvement.

Anne Lyall welcomed the fact that the CVS Sector now had a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board and expressed appreciation to the County Council for that. Members noted that this Board gave groups a forum to raise such issues in a constructive manner.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

10. NCC ISSUES THAT MAY IMPACT ON THE VCS

a) Community Regeneration Team

The Principal Inclusion Policy Officer reported that the locality team was now embedded within the Social Enterprise Team to become the Community Regeneration Team and would pick up work on the Community Chest and Parish/Town Councils. The team members were Ann Lawson, Iain Hedley and Tony Kirsop.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Ch.'s Initials.....

11. VCS CABINET ADVISORY GROUP WORK PROGRAMME

The Principal Inclusion Policy Officer referred to the VCS Cabinet Advisory Group Work Programme for 2016-17 which was enclosed with the notes as Appendix A. She requested that if members had any items they would like to add they contact herself or the Chair.

Items suggested for inclusion were:

- Community Safety and the role of the voluntary sector in that theme generally
- Information about the decision making process of Northumberland County Council
- Six month update report on the Building Better Opportunities Project and its progress in the County.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was Thursday 1 December 2016 at 2.00 p.m. at a venue to be confirmed..

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

COUNCILLOR E BURT

CHAIR

Ch.'s Initials.....