

VOLUNTARY SECTOR JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 23rd January, 2019.

Present: Councillor Mrs. C.A. Cave (Chairman); Councillors L. Burnett, G.C. Kemp and N. Moore.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: Ms. L. Newton (Cardiff and the Vale Action for Mental Health), Ms. R. Connor (Glamorgan Voluntary Services) and Councillor Mrs. A. Barnaby (Town and Community Councils).

677 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Ms. A.M. Collins and Mrs. J.M. Norman; Ms. H. Thomas (Voluntary Sector Representative for Barnardos).

678 MINUTES –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

679 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

680 VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMPACT – ANNUAL WORK PLAN UPDATE (MD) –

The Head of Performance and Development presented the report to provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider the Annual Work Plan and associated Action Points in line with the Voluntary Sector Compact, and began by advising that the report was a standing item on the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

In February 2017, the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee considered and endorsed a revised Compact between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Voluntary Sector. A copy of the Compact could be found at Appendix A to the report and accompanying the Compact was an Annual Work Plan which contained a series of actions that, when progressed, would enable the objectives of the Compact to be delivered.

The Officer advised that the aim of the Compact was to provide a local framework within which the Voluntary Sector and Council could work together in ways which were mutually beneficial; enabling each to contribute fully and effectively to delivering wellbeing for communities within the Vale of Glamorgan. The Compact was structured around four themes:

- communication, consultation and participation;

- partnership working;
- funding and resources; and
- volunteering.

The Officer added that the Annual Work Plan enabled a series of actions to be undertaken by both the Voluntary Sector and the Council to progress the above themes and that the latest version of the Plan was attached at Appendix B to the report, which provided an update on activities since the last update in October 2018.

The Work Plan was structured under various headings of the Compact and was the key document used by the Voluntary Sector and the Local Authority to state what it would be looking to achieve going forward and what it had achieved to date.

The Officer highlighted the involvement of GVS in the Public Services Board, Reshaping Services Board and the Strong Communities Grant Fund Panel. The Council was also looking to progress ways in which it used social media channels for advertising the work of the 3rd sector and how funding could be accessed.

The Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) Representative echoed the summary provided by the Officer and added that the Work Plan was an invaluable tool sharing information between the Voluntary Sector and the Local Authority. As the work of the Voluntary Sector organisations was always ongoing, the Work Plan document would be updated regularly.

On a final point, the GVS Representative wished to add that the Voluntary Sector being part of all three monitoring streams as highlighted by the Officer was extremely helpful and allowed Voluntary Sector Representatives to bring a different perspective to the matters considered by the Services Boards and Panel.

The Chairman thanked all parties for their comments and recommended that the note included on page 4 of the Compact, which implied that the GVS Representative needed to review the section regularly, be removed as this wrongly gave the impression that the document was in draft form.

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the content of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee continues to monitor progress against the actions contained in the Work Plan and advise of any additional actions required to progress the objectives of the Compact.
- (3) T H A T a review of the Work Plan be approved for consideration at the next Committee meeting on 29th April, 2019.
- (4) T H A T the amendment be made to page 4 of the Voluntary Sector Compact as requested by the Chairman in the minutes above.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To provide the Committee with an update on the work underway in relation to the Voluntary Sector Compact.
- (2) To ensure the appropriate activity is undertaken to progress the themes contained in the Compact.
- (3) To ensure the Committee is afforded the opportunity to put into the review of the arrangements covered by the Compact.
- (4) To ensure that the contents of the Compact document reflect the fact that the document is a final version.

681 LOCAL AUTHORITY FUNDING OF THIRD SECTOR SERVICES – WALES AUDIT OFFICE REPORT (MD) –

The Head of Performance and Development presented the report to provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report relating to Local Authority Funding of Third Sector Services and the proposed approach to progressing the national recommendations.

In January 2017, the WAO published a national report on the funding of Third Sector services and the Officer advised that the Council reviewed all national reports published by the WAO and, where applicable, progressed the recommendations contained within the reports.

The Officer added that the WAO report (Local Authority Funding of Third Sector Services) could be found at Appendix A to the report and said it concluded that, nationally, Welsh Local Authorities were “not always making the best use of the third sector nor doing enough to ensure they are securing value for money”. The report was structured in four parts based on the conclusions of the WAO’s all-Wales review:

- (i) Local Authorities mostly did not have an effective strategic approach to working with the Third Sector;
- (ii) Inconsistencies in Local Authorities’ arrangements for funding the Third Sector made it difficult to demonstrate value for money;
- (iii) Local Authorities were unable to consistently evidence the impact of their work with the Third Sector; and
- (iv) Changing expectations of the Third Sector presented both opportunities and risks which needed to be carefully managed if the anticipated benefits were to be realised.

The WAO made three recommendations within the report and recommendations (i) and (ii) were the responsibility of the Council to progress, however recommendation (iii) was for the Welsh Government to consider:

- (i) To get the best from funding decisions, Local Authorities and Third Sector bodies needed to ensure they had the right arrangements and systems in place to support their work with the Third Sector. To assist Local Authorities

and Third Sector bodies in developing their working practices, we recommend that Local Authority and Third Sector officers use the checklist in Appendix 3 to:

- self-evaluate current Third Sector engagement, management, performance and practice;
 - identify where improvements in joint working was required; and
 - jointly draft and implement an action plan to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self-evaluation.
- (ii) Poor performance management arrangements were weakening accountability and limiting effective scrutiny of Third Sector activity and performance. To strengthen oversight of the Third Sector, we recommend that Elected Members scrutinise the review checklist completed by officers, and regularly challenge performance by officers and the Local Authority in addressing gaps and weaknesses.
- (iii) To support Local Authorities and the Third Sector in delivering the expectations of recent policy and legislative changes such as the Social Services and Well-being Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act, we recommend that the Welsh Government provides commissioning and co-ordinating guidance and support clarifying its expectations of Local Authorities. This could be delivered jointly with the Wales Co-operative Centre and / or WCVA.

The Officer said that in order to ensure the recommendations were appropriately considered, the Reshaping Services Voluntary Sector and Town and Community Councils Project Team, which comprised of Council Officers and Representatives from the Third Sector and Town and Community Councils, had met to discuss the WAO report and specifically the checklist at Appendix 3, page 71 to the WAO report. Following this, an initial draft of the Strategic Arrangements and Funding Processes sections of the checklist had been completed and were attached at Appendix B to the report under consideration, with the recommendation that the Committee consider the draft and discuss any follow up activity that may be required. Any follow up actions that were agreed could be incorporated into the Work Programme associated with the Compact between the Third Sector and the Council which was monitored by the Committee. The overall progress against the two recommendations for the Council would be overseen by the Audit Committee and Cabinet, with regular updates provided to the Insight Board.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that officers were confident that the Local Authority was dealing with the Voluntary Sector checklist in a confident manner given that many of the strategic points of the checklist were already covered by the Voluntary Sector Compact and many of the funding points were covered by the already established Strong Communities Grant Fund.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his presentation of the report report and stated that the checklist was an extremely useful tool to address areas for improvement.

A Member noted that the partnership between the Voluntary Sector and the Local Authority was essential, as was the need to measure the value of the Third Sector services much more accurately. Third Sector funding was dropping but there was no additional funding being provided to the Third Sector and therefore the Third Sector was having to be extremely flexible and creative with the funds currently available and it was important to highlight that that type of financial environment would not be a successful way of conducting business within the private sector. If the Local Authority wished to be true partners with the Voluntary Sector then it needed to discuss Service Level Agreements and Grants, which were very different entities and the checklist was an excellent catalyst for this.

The Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) Representative welcomed the Member's comments and added that the Voluntary Sector required recognition from the Local Authority as its partner as to the costs of running its basic services. The Voluntary Sector had always welcomed a mix of Service Level Agreements and grants, however historically, grants had been the most effective way to deliver services. The Representative then drew the Committee's attention to page 3 of Appendix B which set out the points for partnership arrangements and advised that more consideration needed to be given to the key area as it would be an excellent way of assessing the current levels of partnership working between the Local Authority and the Voluntary Sector. In response, the Head of Performance and Development advised that officers were happy to meet with representatives from the Voluntary Sector to add more detail into the remaining two sections ahead of the next meeting on 29th April. To which, the GVS Representative advised that the Voluntary Sector Services would arrange a meeting to collate their views and suggestions which they would subsequently share with the Local Authority.

The Chairman then wished to echo the point of valuing the Voluntary Sector and that more emphasis needed to be made within the checklist document to raise the profile of the Voluntary Sector organisations and the work they achieved. The Head of Performance and Development advised that the other two sections of the Voluntary Sector checklist did have a greater emphasis on that very point.

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the content of the report and appendices be noted.
- (2) T H A T the initial draft of the checklist relating to the strategic arrangements and funding processes be noted.
- (3) T H A T the Voluntary Sector consider any follow up actions associated with the working areas of the checklist, in particular the section relating to partnership arrangements, and that the Voluntary Sector input be included in the Work Plan associated with the Compact between the Voluntary Sector and Council.
- (4) T H A T the Committee receives an opportunity to consider the remaining elements of the checklist in due course.

Reasons for decisions

(1) To provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider the WAO report on the funding of Third Sector services.

(2&4) To enable the Committee to input into the completion of the checklist as part of the Council's Reshaping Services programme.

(3) To provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider the outputs from the work to complete the checklist and ensure any further work is undertaken and monitored by the Committee.

682 BIG LOTTERY FUNDED CONSORTIUM PROJECT – "PAVE THE WAY" – END OF PROJECT REPORT (VS) –

The Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) Representative presented the report to provide the Committee with information on the work of the "Pave the Way" project, which was a consortium project developed during the life of the Vale Third Sector Consortia Development Project funded via the Vale Voluntary Action Scheme.

The Representative advised that the project was not funded by the Local Authority but through funds received from Big Lottery and GVS. Through funding a consortium project with Cardiff and the Vale Action on Mental Health (CAVAMH) and Voluntary Community Services (VCS), a two year pilot project called "Pave the Way" was embarked upon. The project had been developed in response to service user and partner feedback that it was becoming increasingly difficult for people with mental health to find suitable volunteering opportunities. The project aimed to:

- introduce 240 people with mental health issues to volunteering and provide them with the framework of support needed to succeed and progress;
- develop the appropriate framework of information and support available to Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) so that they were better prepared and more willing to support people with mental health issues to volunteer; and
- recruit and train 24 suitable buddies for the project.

The Representative added that the End of Project Report and Appendices provided a very complete picture of the success and impact of the project and was pleased to provide a copy of the excellent quotes received from participants that proved that the project had a very positive outcome on helping individuals come out of social isolation and back into the workplace and build on their general self-confidence.

Since the end of the project, GVS had been successful in gaining additional funding (£99,821) for a further two years to deliver a similar project in the Vale of Glamorgan with a focus on activities in the Western Vale. Unfortunately, the funding could not be obtained prior to the end of the last project, which meant that unfortunately, when the project came to a stop, the individuals already involved in the project immediately lost their support.

At this point, the Representative for Cardiff and Vale Action for Mental Health wished to add that despite the project coming to a close, a very useful toolkit had been designed during the lifetime of the project was now available on Voluntary Sector websites.

A Member drew the Committee's attention to page 7 of the End of Project Report and queried the 2019 date stated as the end of the project; to which, the GVS Representative advised that the document should state 2018 and that the 2019 date was an administrative error and would be updated immediately following the meeting.

The Chairman expressed the Committee's collective understanding as to the struggle that Voluntary Sector services continued to have regarding obtaining funding and noted that the previous project was in partnership with the Cardiff Authority and therefore asked how a future focused just in the Vale of Glamorgan would work differently. The GVS Representative advised that the project would be adapted slightly to remove emphasis on the voluntary buddy section of the scheme, as that was not as successful but, the project would continue to facilitate activities to draw individuals into a group setting. More focus would be given to how the Third Sector could be better prepared to welcome individuals with mental health issues. With GVS taking on a building in the Llantwit Major area, the organisation wished to focus for a time on the Western Vale.

A Member asked if the funding obtained for a continuation of the "Pave the Way" project was also the funding that was being used to fund the WVICC building in Llantwit Major and as a secondary point, what support would continue to be provided for individuals in the Barry and Penarth area if the project was to suddenly be based in the Western Vale. The GVS Representative advised that although the project would primarily target Western Vale areas, activities would also continue within Barry and Penarth and that the funds obtained for the project were not being used to contribute to the working buildings.

In response to the Member's supplementary question as to whether GVS would be staying in its Barry base, the GVS Representative advised that the service was a Vale wide organisation and it would continue to keep a small team of individuals in the Barry base, however its main base would be within the Llantwit Major area and the main motivation for this was that the service wished to be based in a building that it was financially responsible for.

A Member drew the Committee's attention to page 15 of the End of Project Report and in particular to the statistics collated with regards to 'location' and queried what the use of the term "unknown" implied and queried after the decision to be made to focus activities on the Western Vale when the location statistics showed that the Penarth area was only significantly higher than that of the Western Vale. The GVS Representative advised that she was unable to explain the statistics that were advertised as unknown at the time of the meeting, however, in response to the Chairman's request that the information be provided to Members after the Committee, agreed to do so.

With regards to the Member's secondary point as to the statistical differences between the Western Vale and Penarth area, the GVS Representative advised that due to the organisation's relocation to the Llantwit Major area and the success of the Pave the Way project within the Barry and Penarth areas, the organisation wished to expand the remit of the project and increase its focus onto the Western Vale.

In response to the Member's supplementary question as to the type of activities undertaken as part of the project in the Penarth area, the GVS Representative advised that individual as well as group activities in a social setting would continue, such as knitting groups, gardening club and walking groups which could all be undertaken individually as well as collectively.

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the report and appendices be noted.
- (2) T H A T the continued success of the Local Authority's initial investment of £71,820 be noted as a prime example of how pump priming Third Sector could have longer term financial and wellbeing benefits for the communities of the Vale of Glamorgan.
- (3) T H A T an explanation be provided to Members of the Committee with regards to the statistics labelled as "unknown" on page 15 of the End of Project Report in relation to location.

Reason for decisions

- (1-3) To share the success of the project with the Local Authority partner.