

VOLUNTARY SECTOR JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 19th October, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Chairman); Councillor Mrs. J.M. Norman (Vice-Chairman); Councillors L. Burnett and L.O. Rowlands.

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

133 APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY VICE-CHAIRMAN FROM THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Committee were advised that due to current circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic there were no nominations for the roll at this time, and it was therefore

AGREED – T H A T that the item be deferred until the next Committee meeting.

134 APPOINTMENT OF STRONG COMMUNITIES GRANT FUND EVALUATION PANEL REPRESENTATIVE

AGREED - T H A T Ms. R. Connor be appointed the Strong Communities Grant Fund Evaluation Panel Representative for the current municipal year.

135 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Mrs. C.A. Cave, R. Crowley, K.F. McCaffer

136 MINUTES –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

137 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

138 PRESENTATION – COVID 19 : THE IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING (CAVAMH) –

The Representative for Cardiff and Vale Action for Mental Health (CAVAMH) provided a presentation which gave a summary of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic from those in the Third Sector with an interest in mental health.

The presentation highlighted the impact the pandemic had had on service users in terms of increased uncertainty, fear and loss which had, in many instances, been triggered by changes to people's circumstances for instance unemployment, income loss or a change of working patterns. There had also been an increase in isolation and loneliness due to a lack of human contact for many during lockdown restrictions. Moreover, these effects had hit those who were disadvantaged prior to the pandemic doubly hard. The Representative continued by noting the ways in which people across all age groups had been impacted by the pandemic and provided quotes and testimonials from individuals which attested to the struggles they had faced over recent months.

In terms of the specific impact on Voluntary Sector services, the Representative advised that all agencies had seen an increase in the number of contacts and referrals coming to them, with Beat (a charity supporting people with eating disorders), for instance, having seen a 96% increase in the number of individuals contacting them, and waiting lists for Counselling services having grown to three times their length pre-COVID. The Representative added that the way in which services were being delivered had also undergone much adaptation to the circumstances, with far less face-to-face provision being possible and therefore a move to online and digital provision where there had not been previously. This had all taken place, the Representative advised, at a time when many agencies had seen a loss in funding and had therefore been required to fundraise in addition to adapting their services. There had, however, been some additional funding received from various public bodies including the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS), Welsh Government and fundraising via various Trusts.

Committee were advised that access to IT and virtual communication had been particularly challenging to the delivery of services across all age groups, and there remained a significant desire for face-to-face communication as some felt less able to express themselves remotely. In turn, however, it was noted that the move to delivering services remotely had proven beneficial in some respects and had enabled an increase in support as it had provided service users with new ways to engage that had not been available to them previously, and many agencies had identified solutions in the form of supplying tablets and mobile data in order to support service users getting online.

Members were advised that CAVAMH was continuing to feed back to the Mental Health Partnership Board, the next meeting of which was due to take place remotely in November and Councillors would be more than welcome to attend if they wished.

The Representative concluded the presentation by providing further testimonials both from service providers and users and highlighted various aspects of the essential work agencies had been carrying out and would continue to deliver for those who were in need.

At this time the Representative for Barnardos wished to provide an update and advised the presentation had reflected many of the issues that the agency had also faced during the pandemic. The Representative advised that there had in fact been a decline in the take up of the Counselling services offered by Barnardos for younger service users, which had resulted in waiting lists for face-to-face sessions being carried over. It was intended for normal delivery of services to resume as soon as possible, and all schools had been accommodating of the agency staff attending on-site. There had, however, been an increase in the number of adults accessing the family wellbeing service in Cardiff which provided Counselling services and other support for mental health. In addition, the Representative wished to highlight the impact on staff who were delivering these services, who understandably might have their own level of anxiety and it had been a priority for the agency to manage this while ensuring that services were still delivered. The Representative for CAVAMH echoed these concerns relating to the impact of the pandemic of staff, and subsequently invited any comments and questions from Members.

The Chairman thanked the Representatives for their input and asked that the link to the Mental Health Partnership Board event mentioned previously be circulated to Members. A Committee Member subsequently raised a query relating to the befriending support which had been offered during lockdown, noting that volunteers were likely to have become less available with restrictions lifting, and asked what level of need remained for this service. The Representative for CAVAMH advised that she did not have the information to hand but would find out and report back. The Member noted that in one instance regarding a voluntary group she was aware of, the benefits had been reciprocal with not only service users being befriended, but those volunteers who were delivering the service becoming aware of the fantastic community which existed around them.

There being no further comment from Members it was subsequently

AGREED–

- (1) T H A T the contents of the presentation be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Representative from CAVAMH share information regarding the upcoming Mental Health Partnership Board Event and obtain further information regarding befriending services to be circulated to Committee Members.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) So that Committee be made aware of the response of Third Sector agencies with an interest in mental health to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on service users.

(2) So that Committee Members receive more information regarding these matters as requested.

139 VALE OF GLAMORGAN PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20 UPDATE

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation presented the report, the purpose of which was to present an overview of the second year of progress in delivering the Wellbeing Objectives and actions set by the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board (PSB) in its Well-being Plan, following consideration by Cabinet on 13th July, 2020.

The Officer advised that the PSB had a duty to produce an annual report which demonstrated the challenges and statistics that underpinned the work of the PSB to improve the health and well-being of Vale of Glamorgan residents, and was therefore of interest to the work of Elected Members and representatives of the Voluntary Sector.

The comprehensive Annual Report was attached as an appendix to the report and could be accessed in Microsoft Sway format via a link which could be found by accessing the report through the meeting agenda on the Council's website, and was circulated to those present by the Democratic Officer during the meeting.

Following consideration by the Committee it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board's Annual Report for 2019-20 and the progress partners were making in implementing the priorities set out in the Well-being Plan be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

140 GLAMORGAN VOLUNTARY SERVICES (GVS) - RESPONSE TO COVID 19 (GVS) -

The Representative for GVS presented the report, the purpose of which was to inform the Committee of the actions taken by GVS in response to the COVID 19 crisis.

The Representative advised Committee that in early March 2020 GVS had started to prepare its response to the crisis, ensuring that staff had the necessary equipment and remote access to allow them to work from home as of 17th March. Consequently, when a national lockdown had been announced on 23rd March, GVS had been as prepared as was possible to operate remotely, and therefore the support services GVS offered had continued throughout the crisis, with most having seen increased demand.

The report noted the work carried out by GVS in terms of volunteer development while the pandemic had been ongoing and highlighted in particular the areas of activity which had supported the response to COVID 19 for the period up until the end of September 2020.

Following consideration by Committee it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted

Reason for decision

In order that Committee be informed of the actions taken by GVS during the COVID 19 crisis.

141 GLAMORGAN VOLUNTARY SERVICES (GVS) ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 (GVS) –

The Representative for GVS presented the report to provide the Committee with information relating to the work of GVS throughout the year 2019/20. The report was a rolling item on the Forward Work Programme for the Committee as it was a statutory requirement of GVS to inform the Local Authority of its progress as a result of funding received by the Local Authority. The report, in providing a review of the preceding year, also helped GVS to ensure that their aims, objectives and outcomes remained focused on their stated objectives.

The Representative set out GVS' activities and the outcomes of their work for the period April 2019 to March 2020 and highlighted their achievements in a number of areas. The report also provided information regarding GVS' future plans, highlighting in particular the challenges faced in light of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the Representative concluded her presentation of the report by reminding Members that the future of GVS and the wider Third Sector depended on the manner and level of support and funding gained from partners in the Local Authority.

A Member referred to the Connected Carers project outlined within the report, and asked what support was being given to young carers, particularly while they were not at school. In response, the Representative advised that Connected Carers had focused on older carers and therefore support for young carers had not been within its remit, and suggested that Barnardos or Action for Children may be able to provide more information in this regard, and that members of staff working for Social Services within the Council might be able to provide information regarding services provided. The Head of Service for Social Services advised subsequently, using the chat function of the remote meeting platform, that this would be followed up and further information circulated to Members.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the information regarding the work of the Glamorgan Voluntary Services from April 2019 to March 2020 be noted.

Reason for decision

As required by the terms of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's/Glamorgan Voluntary Services Deed of Grant.

142 ECONOMIC VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING 2019 (GVS) –

The Representative for GVS presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide information and analysis regarding the economic value of volunteering in the Vale of Glamorgan for 2019.

The Representative advised that at the end of 2019 an audit of volunteer contact with GVS had been carried out which provided the average number of active volunteers per organisation, and the average number of hours worked by those volunteers each week. GVS had then undertaken a calculation using the average hourly rate (as per the most recent Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) which had returned a total of £36,191,667. The Representative noted that this was a staggering return for a relatively small level of investment in the Voluntary Sector (approximately £500k) from the Local Authority.

Although the figure was lower in comparison to that of the previous year, which had been over £40m, the Representative provided an explanation as to why this was the case, advising that there had been some problems initially with the launch of the new Volunteering Wales website which had led to all areas of Wales starting from a zero position for volunteer statistics on the platform. The Representative also noted, however, that the number of people engaged in voluntary work had increased substantially due to the COVID 19 crisis, and as such it was likely that the figure was likely to increase upon the same calculation being undertaken for the current financial year.

Following the presentation of the report, the Chairman agreed with the Representative that the amount of voluntary work being carried out in the Vale of Glamorgan with no expectation of reward was staggering and invited further comments from Members. A Member commented that GVS worked with a diverse range of organisations, and noted that it would be interesting to see how the figure of £36m broke down in terms of the type of voluntary work being undertaken, for instance whether there was a greater amount of activity in the health and wellbeing sector. The Representative responded that the case could be made that all voluntary work carried out contributed to the wellbeing both of the volunteers and the recipients of the work, and added that it was difficult to get a comprehensive break down of the kind of work volunteers engaged in as although a survey was circulated each year, many were leading busy lives and did not always provide full responses. The Representative also drew Members' attention to the fact that it was likely GVS would see that the age of volunteers would have shifted during the current year as a result of the COVID pandemic, with many

people of retirement age having withdrawn from voluntary work due to health concerns, and younger people having stepped up to the plate instead.

There being no further comments or questions it was subsequently

AGREED –

(1) T H A T the report on the economic value of volunteering within the Vale of Glamorgan be noted in acknowledgement of the 71 fold return on the Council's investment to voluntary activity alone.

(2) T H A T the report be referred to the Cabinet and other members of the Council for information.

Reason for decisions

(1&2) To acknowledge the contribution that volunteers make to the Vale of Glamorgan and to provide an annual update on the Compact Action Plan.