

Note to the NCC Executive Meeting on January 11 2010 from the Northumberland VCS Consortium

We wish to draw your attention to the item on the agenda of your Executive meeting on Monday 11 January headed Report on the Voluntary and Community Sector Review.

While you have been invited to review the recommendations in the report, we draw your attention to the following.

- The recommendations are currently subject to a consultation process and it is likely that there will be opposition by the VCS to some of them. It will be important on January 11th not to do anything which pre-empts the conclusions of the consultation.
- The implementation of the recommendations cannot be disentangled from the proposal to reduce the Council's grant spending on the VCS by £300,000. This is a massive disappointment to the sector which believes this 20% cut is disproportionate to the overall savings required by the Council, and is a second year of cuts in overall local government spending on the VCS in Northumberland.
- If the level of the proposed cuts is agreed by the Council, the extent of the changes required will be difficult to implement by April 1 2010, so we shall be seeking a delay in their introduction and a consequent reduction in the "savings" planned in order to allow for a sensible and planned implementation.
- Recommendation 4 lists 3 priorities for investing. It is difficult to reconcile these priorities with the proposed reductions in spend e.g. a 19% cut in Community Hub support.
- The third investing priority bullet point about frontline services being "entrepreneurial" does not feature in the Review and has taken us by surprise. If "demonstrating a social enterprise approach" is to be a condition of future Council investment, this needs to be discussed.

We are pleased that the first of the two key objectives of the Review - Improving the relationship with the VCS – is to be progressed. It is particularly important for all the Council's service departments to be aware of the common commissioning framework and to implement the final recommendations.

Regards

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