

Minutes

Northumberland VCS Consortium

10.00am, Thursday 18 December 2008

Age Concern, The Roundhouse, Lintonville Parkway, Ashington.

Present:-

Rodney James (Chair)	Chair of VCS Consortium
George Courtice	Sector Development Officer
Fay Cooper	Northumberland Strategic Partnership
Cath Carnaby	Women's Health Advice Centre
Thom Bradley	CVA Blyth Valley
Susi Goncu	Northumberland County Council
Lynda Fakir	Northumberland County Council
Jill Robson	Jobcentre Plus
Lorna Strassenburgh	N'land Multinational & Minority Ethnic Group (NMMEG)
Maria Stella	NMMEG
John Maude	North Country Leisure
Charles Tremeer	Volunteering Northumberland
Vanessa Proudlock	FONDT
Carol Southam	VoiCeS
Lynda Watson	Compact & Contracts Officer
Aileen Alexander	Age Concern Northumberland
Melanie Eve	National Trust
Sandi Downing	Carers Northumberland
David Francis	Community Action Northumberland
Moirra Macfarlane	Northumberland CABx
Peter Robinson	Church of England
Christine Bone	GONE
Kathryn Roper	LINKS

In Attendance:-

Tracy Peacock	Northumberland Strategic Partnership
Stuart Lawson	Northumberland County Council (item 10 only)
John Goodwin	Pentagon Partnership (item 8)
Jon McGough	Pentagon Partnership (item 8)

Apologies:-

Sarah Kidd	Northumberland County Council
Jason Gaskell	Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Julia Lyford	Northumberland Community Development Network (NCDN)
Liz Prudhoe	Adapt (North East)
Sheila McGuckin	Wansbeck CVS

1. Welcome

Those present were welcomed by the Chair. Apologies were noted as above.

2. Minutes and Actions from Last Meeting (26 Sept 2008)

Action

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

Item 4: Links to regional ICT projects (Sam) of VONNE – The delivery of this service is now part of a contractual arrangement between VONNE and NCDN

Item 8.ii: Joint Implementation Team – The VCS/ Community Development cluster group have met on 2 occasions since September with further planned.

3. Area Partnerships – the Consortium’s Role

The South East Area has agreed an interim board with representation from the 3 sectors – private, public and VCS.

It is expected that the Consortium will have a role in identifying VCS input into the eventual make-up of the three Area Partnerships. It was suggested this could be via area fora/consortia.

There are currently no places in the interim SE Area board for parish councils. There are likely to be changes if only to reduce its size. The Consortium discussed the need to contribute to North, West and South East debates on these new partnerships.

Next year there will be significant changes to the structure and role of the NSP. The NSP Board met last week to discuss future arrangements. A paper will be put out for consultation until the end of January 2009 and recognises that there should be significant dialogue with the VCS. It was clear that the Consortium would be invited to identify representatives to join the new NSP governance bodies.

It was agreed that the Consortium would await NSP’s new structure and then comment.

George Courtice

4. Report on Partnership Workshop

A workshop was held 17 November to explore partnership working in order to develop a clearer understanding of where partnership fits within the Consortium.

Feedback from this workshop was that attendees found the meeting to be disappointing as it was too focused on ‘partnership’ in general and not in ways of working together and creating a partnership.

It was agreed that there was a need to develop a more focused meeting on partnership working. GC to circulate a spreadsheet for partnership interest. It was agreed that this spreadsheet could be circulated outside of the consortium.

George Courtice

5. Children and Young People/VoiCeS and the New Structures – Invitation from Extended Services Advisory Group

Carol Southam explained that she had been invited to attend the FACT Board. It was noted that representation on the board is currently limited to one person.

The VCS Consortium delegated responsibility for reflecting children and young people’s VCOs interests to the specialist VoiCeS network. The question was asked if one VCS representative was enough. It was agreed that there needs to be better understanding and knowledge to bring in other individuals for their expertise. Carol Southam to provide update of FACT engagement to the Consortium.

Carol Southam

An invitation has been received to join the Extended Services Advisory Group. George Courtice to join the group as an interim arrangement.

George Courtice

6. Community Buildings – a case for support

CAN are providing specialist advice and support to ensure the best use of community buildings. Two Community Buildings networks have emerged over the last 2 years -one in the North and another in the West of the county. Currently there is not one covering the SE. It is likely there will be increased demand for advice on asset transfer. The Consortium was asked if they could raise the status of this work. It was noted that the Development Trusts Association NE (Debbie Lamb) may also be able to advise on Asset Management functions.

The Consortium agreed that it would endeavour to ensure that the service is covered and provided.

All to note

7. Palace Green Pavilion Project – Berwick

A paper was tabled which summarised the Palace Green Pavilion project.

Expressions of interest are to be submitted by the end of January 2009. VCS Consortium could be approached to support other applications.

The Consortium needs to endorse the application prior to Capacitybuilders appraisal. It was stressed that the paper was asking for support and not approval. Members agreed to support the proposal.

8. City Regions and Northumberland – John Goodwin and John McGough

The Tyne and Wear City Region Multi Area Agreement (MAA) is overseen by the City Region Interim Executive Board, which brings together local authority leads and the private and third sectors. The MAA is a new contract between the City Region and central government that commits both parties to work together in order to deliver agreed priorities for the economic development of the area.

The MAA currently run a business club which meets the first Thursday of every month. Meetings are now held in Stannington

Thematic events will be in held in March. The Consortium agreed to assist and ensure representation. The transport theme will be held at Stannington Village Hall. Employment will be held in Tyne and Wear. Skills will be held in Chester le Street. Dates will be identified in January. The Consortium is encouraged to help shape events.

The MAA Steering Group is currently looking for representatives from Northumberland. The group meets every 6 weeks. If members of the VCS Consortium would like to join the Steering Group please contact George Courtice. It may be that members wish to attend the first meeting as an observer.

All to note

To enable members to contribute effectively to the Steering Group, John Goodwin will circulate papers which will include an induction pack. John Goodwin is able to give catch up briefings if required.

The question was asked if NSP should be approached to advise on MAA and the role of Northumberland in this. This may help enable the Consortium to understand if and how the Consortium should engage and determine how important the MAA is to the future.

John Goodwin to forward notes from this briefing to George Courtice for circulation to members of the consortium.

Further information can be downloaded from the MAA website at <http://www.pentagonpartnership.org.uk/documents/cityregion/maa.pdf>

9. Report backs:

Project update – Fay Cooper

A project update paper was tabled by Fay Cooper. Fay to email this paper to members.

All funding must be spent by 31 March 2009. Some projects have been asked to submit an updated budget position. If projects are unable to spend their full allocation it is possible that the money can be re-allocated. There are currently no major concerns with project spend, although Fay will contact projects again in January to ensure they are on track to defray their allocation.

NSP

From April 2009 onwards NSP will look quite different as they will be re-configured. The majority of the Programme Delivery Team will be moved into Regeneration although some of the staff will be moved into Finance. Strategy will be moved into Policy. DF raised concerns that this winning team will be split in different directions. It is a time of great uncertainty at NSP.

LGR

Currently preparing letters to over 150 voluntary organisations confirming funding. The final budget is expected to be agreed in February 2009 consultations on the draft budget have begun. Members are encouraged to respond to this consultation.

The overall policy for discretionary rate relief was agreed by the County Council (80% mandatory for charities but 20% subject to application). Other changes which impact on the sector are as yet unknown i.e. bin collection.

The process for sorting staffing is taking longer than anticipated. Draft structures have been sent to trade unions and staff who are directly affected.

GC to liaise with DF to address budget concerns over proposed budget allocations to the VCS.

Sector Boards & LAA

A paper (yellow) was tabled regarding the new NSP thematic partnerships. The Consortium has a representative on each of the current NSP Sector Boards.

The LAA 2006-09 has 12 stretch targets with a maximum of about £9m to be received as Reward Grant. Current performance indicates that only £5.5m will be achieved – and this figure might be less if the economic downturn starts to bite. How this Reward money is to be allocated is still to be decided. Targets for volunteering rates for the new LAA (2009-12) probably need to be renegotiated. GONE need baselines to fix targets by the middle of January.

Northumbria Healthcare Trust

An update paper was tabled by Cath Carnaby. No verbal update was given due to lack of time remaining.

10. Stuart Lawson – Head of Policy & Partnership

Stuart Lawson gave a briefing on the new authority which is currently preparing a new

Fay
Cooper

George
Courtice/
David
Francis

All to
note

structure.

Please find attached links to the briefing summary:

http://www.northumberlandtogether.org.uk/dms/docs/20_Partnership_Update_Dec08.pdf

http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/BB_News.asp?BB_Bulletin_ID=4111

Stuart informed members that the following document lists frequently asked questions and answers

<http://www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk/media/LGR/How%20the%20new%20council%20intends%20working.pdf>

Questions and Answers

Question: Will there be consultation on the medium term budget strategy and can the VCS consortium comment?

Response: Will be taking information to members in the new year. Consultation will be done via the website. There is the need to be more proactive and not just on the website.

Question: Will there be a commitment for the County to resource extra funding as the districts currently do now?

Response: Yes

Question: When will a decision be made on what extra money will become available and will it be ring fenced?

Response: The decisions should be made by February and it will not be ring fenced

Discussions are being made with ONE NorthEast regarding the credit crunch and how they can offer support.

Concerns over NSP being moved into County Hall and losing their independence and momentum.

Stuart stressed that it is not about the Partnership coming into the Council. It is about some of the functions coming into the Council. There will continue to be a NSP Board.

Question: Are there any provisions for support for Community Forums and a Community Chest type fund?

Response: No provision yet for the costs of hosting Community Forums or a community chest

12. Meetings in 2009

The next meeting will be held 10am, March 26 at St James's, Pottergate, Alnwick. Maps to be provided if required. **NB The next meeting of the Consortium will now be March 12th at 10.00am in the Council Chamber at County Hall. The Alnwick meeting has since been changed to Thursday 23 April, same location. In the morning we plan a conference on Thematic Partnerships and in the afternoon the Consortium meeting.**

All to note