

Minutes

Northumberland VCS Consortium

10.00am, Thursday 12 March 2009
The Council Chamber, County Hall, Morpeth

Present:-

Rodney James (Chair)	Chair of VCS Consortium
George Courtice	Sector Development Officer
Thom Bradley	CVA Blyth Valley
Susi Goncu	Northumberland County Council
Lynda Fakir	Northumberland County Council
Jill Robson	Jobcentre Plus
Paul Taylor	Blyth Valley Borough Council
Ann Dobson	Blyth Valley Borough Council
David Francis	Community Action Northumberland
Charles Tremeer	Volunteering Northumberland
Vanessa Proudlock	FONDT
Janice Rose	NSP
Lynda Watson	Compact & Contracts Officer
Liz Prudhoe	Adapt (North East)
Christine Bone	GONE
Sheila McGuckin	Wansbeck CVS

Apologies:-

Julia Lyford	Northumberland Community Development Network (NCDN)
Cath Carnaby	Women's Health Advice Centre
Peter Robinson	Church of England
Fay Cooper	Northumberland Strategic Partnership
John Maude	North Country Leisure
Janice Gerard	LSC
Maria Stella	NMMEG
Melanie Eve	National Trust
Carol Southam	VoiCeS
Aileen Alexander	Age Concern Northumberland
Sandi Downing	Carers Northumberland
Moira Macfarlane	Northumberland CABx
Kathryn Roper	LINKS
Bob Baker	NCC

1. Welcome

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

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

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

Action

Matters arising Item 8

Since the Pentagon Partnership's presentation, efforts had been taken to meet up with its officers to determine how the Consortium could feed in to the process. We were reminded that City Regions were an attempt to unblock barriers for development but that no new money was attached to them. Our priority then might not be to place people at a strategic level. The NCC is keen for all the county to be included within the Tyne & Wear City Region

Performance reward Grant

There was an enquiry about the present position of the allocation of the Performance Reward Grant arising from the 2006-09 LAA and the need to ensure that it remained under the management of the NSP and for the benefit of partnership working rather than disappear into NCC's general coffers. This grant was unlikely to arrive before the autumn, but the VCS had a strong call on any allocation and it was probably important not to distribute it too soon – the CAA findings could well have an influence.

Community Forums Support

The NCC has confirmed that £100k has been allocated to support the hosts and secretariat for the Community Forums

3. Proposed arrangements for Consortium's engagement in NSP

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Steering Group were distributed (green). This made a series of recommendations and the following were agreed:

1. NSP Board: nominations be sought from the body of the VCS on the basis of one person per organisation. A selection panel would be appointed by the Consortium and three candidates would be selected on the basis of best match to job description. Successful candidates would be invited to join the Consortium if not already members of it.
2. NSP Executive: As above but the selection panel would shortlist candidates on the basis of best match to job description. These shortlisted candidates would then be put up for a vote for VCS members of the Consortium. This would be done through a preferential voting system.
3. Selection Panel: This would be made up from those VCS members not standing as candidates for either NSP's Board or Executive. It was important to find a cross section who understood the range and wide geography of the sector.
4. The Performance Improvement Forum: This technical group was planned to evolve from the present CIG and it was suggested that VCS membership of this body might not require an election. A final decision would be taken when more information as to its role etc was available.
5. Thematic Partnerships: It was agreed that these partnerships needed a range of VCO engagement - some on the partnerships, some on the specialist sub-groups feeding into them. Some would be members of the Consortium, others would not. The Consortium would however have guaranteed places.
6. Area Partnerships: JR indicated that whereas the Thematic Partnerships would hopefully be functioning by the summer, the Area Partnerships might not be fully fledged till the autumn. A period of "moderation" was required over the next few months to ensure a common approach was taken in all three areas to engage key players (VCS, NALC, NCC).

All to note

4. Compact Volunteering Code

Lynda Watson explained that the Compact Reference Group was seeking endorsement for the above code. The only change was an amendment to para 6.2 emphasising that volunteers should complement the role of paid staff not substitute them and that they should always be valued and supported. The Consortium agreed to endorse the Code.

5. LINK's wider remit

Liz Prudhoe described how Adapt (NE) and NCDN successfully won the contract to host the LINK in Northumberland. LINK is a network of individuals and organisations wanting to improve the way their local NHS and social care services are delivered. There are 150 Local Involvement Networks throughout the country. At the turn of the year this remit was extended in four pilot areas including Northumberland. Although still under discussion it seems likely that the role will extend to include Children's Services – particularly for improving the troubled transitional arrangements from child to adult services.

6. Business Plan Update

GC reported that the time was ripe to consider updating the Business Plan. The review by the NCC of the relationship with the sector was imminent and we should have a clear understanding of our priorities and how they should best be funded. GC to liaise with the Steering Grp to decide on how best to move this forward.

All to note

7. Report Backs

Infrastructure Support Programme: Fay Cooper reported that all the money of this programme had been allocated and that, with a fortnight to go before the end of the financial year, there were no forecasts of any underspends. The final report will be made at the April meeting when the final returns have been made.

NSP: David Francis and Sheila McGuckin reported back from the Executive that much of the recent business related to the restructuring with the NSP having to establish a different position with the new authority. Staff changes and new appointments added to uncertainties as did the recession.

JCP: Jill Robson outlined the response of Jobcentre Plus to the massive increase in demand from claimants. Concern was expressed that the longer term unemployed and lower skilled workers might lose out with the influx of the recently unemployed. As a consequence the role of the VCS in seeking out those furthest from the job market was even more important.

LGR: DF summarised the final funding arrangements to the sector as a whole which eventually emerged from the budget consultations: £1.2 million of "year-on-year" support for 150 VCS organisations, £150k Community Chest, £340k infrastructure support to 4 organisations (CVABV, CAN, NCDN, WCVS). Letters would shortly be sent out to recipients as to what will be expected of them. It was important for the Consortium to be closely involved in the NCC review.

12. Meetings in 2009

The next meeting will be held in the afternoon of April 23 at St James's Church Centre, Alnwick. This will be after a morning's conference at the same venue on the subject of thematic partnerships. Future meetings during the year are: June 26, Hexham; September 24 Ashington; December 18, Alnwick.

All to note