

Minutes

Northumberland VCS Consortium

10 a.m., Friday 26 June 2009
Tynedale Function Rooms, Hexham Mart

Present:

Rodney James (Chair)	Chair of VCS Consortium
Bob Langley	Community Action Northumberland/NSP Board
Carol Southam	VoiCeS
Charles Tremeer	Volunteering Northumberland
Christine Bone	GONE
George Courtice	Sector Development Officer
Janice Rose	Northumberland Strategic Partnership
John Maude	North Country Leisure
John McGough	NCDN
Julie Davenport	ENRgl
Lesley Hill	Northumbria Youth
Lynda Fakir	Northumberland County Council
Lynda Watson	Compact Contracts Officer
Mike Dungworth	Community and Voluntary Action Blyth Valley
Neil Bradbury	Northumberland County Council
Peter Robinson	Church of England
Sandi Downing	Carers Northumberland
Sheila McGuckin	Wansbeck CVS
Susi Goncu	Northumberland County Council
Thom Bradley	CVA Blyth Valley

Apologies:

Aileen Alexander	Age Concern
Moir Macfarlane	CABx
Cath Carnaby	Women's Health Advice Centre
David Francis	Community Action Northumberland
Janice Gerrard	LSC
Julia Lyford	Northumberland Community Development Network (NCDN)
Julie Dodson	Action for Children
Kathryn Roper	Link
Liz Prudhoe	Adapt (North East)
Maria Stella	NMMEG
Georgie Cruddas	SixtyEightyThirty
Andrew Gooding	FONDT

1. **Welcome**

Those present, especially the new members, Julie Davenport, John McGough, Mike Dungworth and Bob Langley, were welcomed by the Chair. Apologies were noted as above and introductions were offered round the table.

2. **Election of chair, deputy chair and steering group**

Rodney James stood down from the chair

CHAIR: Rodney James – Proposed by Thom Bradley

Seconded by Sandi Downing (carried)

Rodney James resumed the chair

VICE CHAIR: Moira Macfarlane – Proposed by Sheila McGuckin

Seconded by Lynda Watson (carried)

STEERING GROUP: Chair, Vice Chair and 6 - 8 others:

Charles Tremeer, David Francis, Julia Lyford, Lynda Fakir, Lynda Watson, Sheila McGuckin, Thom Bradley and Andrew Gooding or Vanessa Proudlock

3. **Minutes and actions from last meeting (23 April 2009)**

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

Matters arising:

Pentagon Partnership

G Courtice attended a meeting with the Partnership's officers and partners on the City Region initiative. He confirmed that it was concentrating on two main themes - employability and transport. Pentagon Partnership was set up to promote third sector regeneration interests in the five local authorities of Tyne & Wear and are additionally responsible for ensuring VCS representation on the City Region structures – which included parts of Co Durham and Northumberland.

The Northumberland VCS Consortium has been invited to join two focus groups. Interested members to get in touch with Pentagon. GC to report back on future progress

Local Area Agreement

There was some concern at the April meeting that any Performance Reward Grant should benefit the partnership as a whole rather than any individual member of the partnership. Notwithstanding the commitment to support partnership working, it now seems that NCC will be absorbing the predicted £4.5million PRG into its general budget. The situation will be monitored.

Capacitybuilders Capital Fund

It was noted that Prudhoe Comm Dev Trust had been unsuccessful in its application to refurbish the library and that we had yet to hear the outcome of the applications from Seahouses and Berwick Dev Trust and the group in Berwick.

Susi Goncu reported that applications for the Community Chest Grant Scheme were now invited for eligible projects. Previously agreed grants had now been paid by NCC.

Charles Tremeer reported that the Volunteer Roadshows had been relatively quiet but that contacts are being built. It was also reported that these had been very positive in promoting safety issues.

4. Report on selection and election of NSP representatives

Three Board and three Executive members have now been identified through selection and election respectively and the initial joint meeting of the Executive and Board had been held. The Board's Chair and 3 Vice-Chairs, one from each of the three independent sectors, will be elected at a meeting scheduled for 16 July.

The Consortium have already committed to regular meetings of members on outside bodies, in order to share experiences.

5. Volunteer Management Programme invitation

The Consortium had been invited by Capacitybuilders to apply for £60k over 18 months, beginning in October 2009. Volunteering Northumberland had been the Consortium's choice, for the last two years, as the agreed body for supporting volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. It was agreed that a task group be formed to redefine the needs of the sector, in relation to the programme, and agree on a Local Delivery Agency. Capacitybuilders needs to be notified of the LDA by 17 August and the full proposal submitted by the beginning of September.

It was agreed that the Task Group should decide on a way forward and nominate the delivery agent.

Then following agreed to make up the task force: John McGough, Charles Tremeer, George Courtice, Carol Southern, John Maude, Julie Davenport and Lesley Hill. It was agreed that Yvonne Probert of FONDT should also be invited.

GC

6. Review of membership and role of Consortium

G Courtice presented a set of questions to be addressed. Circumstances had changed significantly since the Consortium was first established and it was time to revisit its role and purpose.

It was noted that the unitary authority and the NSP see the value of the Consortium in providing a means for engaging with the sector. It makes it more important that the Consortium ensures that the links are strong and effective and penetrate as deeply as possible. GONE too appreciate the usefulness of the link.

It was agreed that communications need to be enhanced, in particular to let VCS groups know the purposes of the Consortium, and in furthering links with other consortia in the region.

Comments were invited to be put to G Courtice by Friday 10 July. The Steering Group will take the lead on this Consortium review which would aim to clarify its purpose, role and membership so that it could serve the sector more effectively.

All note

7. Reports back and updates:

a) NCC review of relationship with VCS: It became clear at the beginning of this year that a review of the relationships between the UA and VCOs would be timely in view of the transfer of responsibilities from the 6 former Districts to the single authority. It would also allow organisations to have reasonable notice of any new commissioning arrangements as well as identify UA priorities. Multi-year funding post April 2010 would contribute to a more sustainable future particularly if we are to enter a period of severe public sector spending constraint. It was assumed that the remit of the review would, at a minimum, include a framework for acquiring services through grants or contracts. Members will be informed of the scope of the review as soon as it is available. This one of several elected member led reviews of UA policy.

GC

It was felt that the joint Review Group should feed into a wider dialogue. Funding needs to be seen to be allocated fairly on the basis of need and the sector should be able to influence the framing of UA policy.

b) Local Area Agreement: The Performance Improvement Forum (PIF) has taken over from the Coordination and Implementation Group (CIG). It was noted that the sub-regional, regional and national breakdowns of the Place Survey had been published. J Rose is to forward it to G Courtice to circulate.

JR/GC

It was further noted that the Northumberland results of the Third Sector Survey survey were sent out by G Courtice on 25 June and that the results would be useful to use in developing strategies and informing the NCC Review.

c) Compact Reference Group: It was noted that the proposed Action Plan was to be included as part of the Review of the Sector rather than be done separately - so the Compact was to be embedded in it.

The issue personal budgets was raised particularly in the light of the furore surrounding day care. It was noted that the sector needs to be prepared for opportunities which may arise to provide for sought after services. Lynda Watson, Sandi Downing, LINK, and the representatives on the Health and Care Thematic Partnership are to link up to improve awareness.

LW

d) VCS Learning Consortium: The application process was becoming clearer on bidding for funding from the Transformation Fund (informal adult learning). Applications were invited by the VCS Learning Consortium. It wasn't clear whether NCDN would be putting in a bid on behalf of the Learning Consortium or supporting individual bids. Information has been disseminated via email and replies received on potential partners.

e) Area and Thematic Partnerships update: The Consortium is to be invited to identify appropriate people to sit on the Thematic Partnerships. Ailsa Coverdale recently held a meeting with interim Area Partnerships interests to thrash out common ways of working, membership etc. We are awaiting the notes emerging from that meeting.

8. Any other business:

a) Susi Goncu reported that, although now a locality officer, she is still linked with the West Northumberland Community Development Network. It was noted that a different structure still needed to be worked out to

feed into the Area Partnership and that a representative from the new network should have a seat on the Consortium.

b) Community forums: It was reported that the first Ponteland Forum had been held, with 62 membership organisation in attendance to discuss issues.

The Mid-Tyne Forum had also been held with the Community Trust to host it, and the North Tyne and Redesdale Forum with North Tyne and Redesdale to host. Allendale and Haydon Bridge were still work in progress.

Prudhoe Civic Forum and Central Tynedale meetings were also to be held in the near future.

c) Networks: Noted that it was important that the Consortium was aware of Networks so any queries could be forwarded to the relevant one. Good communication was essential.

d) Funding: J McGough reported that the North East Community Grants Fund, run from Hartlepool, has extended the closing date for Northumberland, to the end of July. £89k is available and application forms are available via John. Applicants should have a turnover of less than £100k and the grants are limited to £12k.

e) Modernisation Project Mark II: G Courtice reported that this project is designed to help VCS organisations consider collaboration and merger. To date, four organisations in the county had received conditional acceptance for the £1000 bursaries for two days free professional advice.

9. The next meeting will be held on 24 September at Age Concern, Ashington, and the following one on 18 December at St James Centre, Alnwick.

All to note