

CABINET MEETING – 16 FEBRUARY 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

Sunderland Partnership Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan

Author(s):

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Executive Director of City Services

Purpose of Report:

The report seeks Cabinet approval and adoption of the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet are requested to:

- i) Approve and adopt the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and support implementation of the associated Action Plan
- ii) Refer the Strategy and Action Plan to the Sunderland Partnership Board for adoption

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?

Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

Opportunity exists to maximise the contribution that volunteering makes to the City. The Sunderland Volunteering Strategy will provide a valuable basis for VCS organisations and organisations of the Sunderland Partnership to work together to increase volunteering activity for the benefit of residents, their communities and the City. It is an ambitious strategy which establishes a long-term commitment and approach to ensuring that volunteering activity is well supported using a collaborative approach, and Sunderland City Council has a pivotal role to play in its implementation

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

There are no alternative options proposed.

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution?

Yes

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Sustainable Communities

Is it included in the Forward Plan?

Yes

SUNDERLAND PARTNERSHIP VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval and adoption of the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE DECISION

- 2.1 Cabinet are requested to:
- (i) Approve and adopt the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and support implementation of the associated Action Plan
 - (ii) Refer the Strategy and Action Plan to the Sunderland Partnership Board for adoption

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Sunderland Community Development Plan (agreed by the Sunderland Partnership and Cabinet in April 2008) highlighted the importance of volunteering in Sunderland and its role in supporting the successful delivery of the five strategic aims of the Sunderland Strategy.
- 3.2 Volunteering is also a key element in the recently developed Local Area Plans. Volunteering supports the empowerment of individuals; contributes to strong communities; and adds value in the delivery of public services.
- 3.3 The Sunderland Compact Volunteering Code of Practice was agreed by Cabinet and organisations of the Sunderland Partnership in June 2009. The Code of Practice sets out the key principles and undertakings for both the organisations of the Sunderland Partnership and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations in Sunderland on how to work together to improve and increase volunteering.

- 3.4 Many organisations in Sunderland support volunteering but much of the good practice is not fully shared between organisations and approaches to supporting volunteers remain inconsistent across the city. To begin to address these inconsistencies, the City Council in partnership with Sunderland Volunteer Centre led the development of a 'Volunteering Toolkit' and associated training programme in 2009 to provide organisations with information on quality procedures that can be used when supporting volunteers. The Toolkit has recently been updated and re-launched to over 400 volunteer-involving organisations in Sunderland.
- 3.5 On 12 May 2010 the Sunderland Partnership Delivery and Improvement Board agreed to support and engage in the development of a Sunderland Partnership Volunteering Strategy to ensure existing good practice can be shared and new ways of working developed. The development period for the Strategy and associated action plan commenced on 12 May 2010 and a first draft was produced in August 2010.

4.0 SUNDERLAND VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY

- 4.1 The final draft of the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy establishes a set of agreed commitments for the organisations of the Sunderland Partnership to ensure adequate and effective support for volunteering activity in Sunderland, which is key to achieving a prosperous and inclusive city.
- 4.2 The Volunteering Strategy will impact upon volunteering in Sunderland through achievement of the following outcomes:
- Increasing the number of people volunteering in the city (whether through formal or informal volunteering) by working with partners to identify opportunities for volunteer involvement
 - Recognising and celebrating volunteers for their role in delivering services and improving the lives of people in the city
 - Developing ways of supporting volunteers to increase their confidence, learning, skills and employability prospects
 - Increasing the number of organisations with Employer-Supported Volunteering schemes
 - Improving the management of volunteers and the delivery of volunteering programmes in the city

4.3 Delivery of the Volunteering Strategy Action Plan will ensure that a greater number and range of organisations register or update volunteering opportunities with the Sunderland Volunteer Centre and that more organisations make the best use of volunteers, which will have a positive impact on the services and activities they provide within communities. A media campaign and a range of development activities will promote and encourage volunteering, supporting an increase the number of people taking up volunteering opportunities across Sunderland.

4.4 By supporting volunteering in Sunderland, the Strategy seeks to :

- Contribute to building inclusive and cohesive communities
 - Volunteering increases social interaction, builds respect, and helps residents develop a sense of belonging and ownership over local services.
- Support residents to take a more active role in their communities
 - for example, via work with Area Committees in delivering their local Area Plan priorities
- Strengthen democracy and support active citizenship
 - Volunteering provides residents with an opportunity to influence decision making at a local level – e.g. school governors, management committees, Area VCS Networks.
- Support delivery of invaluable local services
 - Volunteers are involved in the delivery of a wide range of services, including victim and witness support schemes, support services within hospitals, youth work, community cafes etc.
- Support the VCS in Sunderland
 - via signposting and targeted help to build their capacity
- Bring benefits to individual volunteers
 - Volunteering provides a route into employment, education or training; provides a chance to make friends and reduce isolation; increases self esteem and confidence
- Bring benefits to service users
 - Volunteers can contribute to personalising services, provide peer support and social interaction.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CITY COUNCIL

- 5.1 By adopting the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy, the City Council agrees to work collaboratively with key statutory and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in the implementation of the Strategy and associated action plan.
- 5.2 Sunderland City Council has key and supporting roles to play in delivering the actions set out in the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy, including:
- Development of the Area and Citywide Volunteer Celebrations
 - Promotion of volunteering opportunities through grassroots Community Development activity and the continued development Volunteering opportunities across the Council
 - Maximising volunteering opportunities through Responsive Local Services

 - Introduction of volunteering roles such as events volunteers for and Sunderland International Air show
 - Development of an Employer-Supported Volunteering Scheme (ESV) and a Corporate Volunteering Policy
- 5.3 City Services will continue to represent Sunderland City Council on the Sunderland Volunteering Forum Steering Group, which facilitates the sharing of best practice and promotion of volunteering at a strategic level. The Steering Group comprises representatives of local VCS organisations and organisations of the Sunderland Partnership and will have responsibility for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy to ensure the agreed objectives are achieved.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Despite the numerous benefits, there are some risks associated with adoption of the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy; however, these can be managed and minimised as detailed below.
- Sunderland Volunteering Strategy Action Plan implementation issues; mitigating actions are as follows:
 - Use a partnership approach for delivery through the Sunderland Volunteering Forum Steering Group.
 - Encourage organisations of the Sunderland Partnership to commit to actions in areas where they have the expertise.

- Sunderland Compact compliancy issues; mitigating actions are as follows:
 - Promotion of the Compact, the Volunteering Code of Practice and the Funding and Procurement Code of Practice across Sunderland City Council and organisations of the Sunderland Partnership.
 - Embed the Compact across the working practices of Sunderland City Council
 - Work to eliminate financial barriers to volunteering
 - Commit to the principle of full cost recovery when funding the VCS.

- Barriers to volunteering; mitigating actions are as follows:
 - Minimise the barriers to volunteering by offering support to volunteers and providing a diverse range of volunteering opportunities, including flexible and short-term roles.
 - Provide training to volunteer managers to raise awareness of existing barriers and to support elimination

7.0 PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 Following approval and adoption by Cabinet, it is proposed to present the strategy for adoption by the Sunderland Partnership. Following this implementation of the Strategy and associated action plan will commence via work with the Sunderland Volunteering Forum and Steering Group and Compact Implementation Group.

8.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 8.1 Opportunity exists to maximise the contribution that volunteering makes to the City. The Sunderland Volunteering Strategy will provide a valuable basis for VCS organisations and organisations of the Sunderland Partnership to work together to increase volunteering activity for the benefit of residents, their communities and the City. It is an ambitious strategy which establishes a long-term commitment and approach to ensuring that volunteering activity is well supported using a collaborative approach, and Sunderland City Council has a pivotal role to play in its implementation.

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1 There are no alternative options proposed.

10.0 RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

10.1 Development Period

Development of the Volunteering Strategy commenced in May 2010 and a first draft was produced in August 2010. During this period presentations and developmental workshops on the Strategy were held with both VCS organisations and statutory sector partners at various events including:

- Sunderland Partnership Delivery and Improvement Board
- Sunderland Volunteering Forum
- Sunderland Community Network VCS Assembly
- Inclusive Communities Thematic Group
- Dissemination via infrastructure organisations' membership lists, requesting comments and suggestions

10.2 Formal Consultation Period

Formal consultation on the draft Sunderland Volunteering Strategy commenced on 9 August 2010 and closed on 17 September 2010. The need for a 12 week formal consultation period as detailed in the Sunderland Compact Involvement and Consultation Code of Practice was negated given the extensive involvement of the VCS in the initial development of the Strategy.

As part of the consultation process, the draft Sunderland Volunteering Strategy was presented to the following for comment:

- Sunderland Partnership Strategic Board
- Sunderland Partnership Delivery and Improvement Board
- Sunderland Partnership Inclusive Communities Thematic Group
- Sunderland Partnership Involvement and Consultation Group
- Compact Implementation Group
- Sunderland Community Network
- Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland (VCAS, formerly Sunderland CVS) e-group
- Sunderland Volunteer Centre and Forum members
- Sunderland City Council Corporate Communities Group
- Citizenship and Volunteering Group
- All five Area Committees

A final draft of the Strategy has been produced which incorporates amendments made in response to issues identified through the consultation process. For example:

- The Strategy has been considerably shortened. A number of sections have been removed and made available via updates to the Sunderland Volunteering Toolkit.

- A section on equality and diversity has now been included along with actions to improve monitoring arrangements around the take-up of volunteering opportunities.
- The cost of inducting, managing and supporting volunteers has been recognised, and the Strategy now includes information relating to the Sunderland Compact Funding and Procurement Code of Practice and the principle of Full Cost Recovery. Further research will be undertaken to identify the cost of involving volunteers.

10.3 The Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan has been presented at the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee for comment.

10.4 A Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) has been carried out for the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy; however, it had a less significant score and therefore no need for a full SIA.

11.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan

12.0 GLOSSARY

VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector

