

14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## REPORT OF WASHINGTON AREA VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR NETWORK

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update with regard to the Washington Area Voluntary and Community Sector Network

### 2. Background

- 2.1 To develop the capacity and influence of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) across the City, Area Networks have been established and delegates represent each Area Network at Area Committee taking forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in the area, reporting on area priority delivery by the VCS, and reporting back, providing a two-way flow of communication.
- 2.2 Washington Area Network delegates will present a report to each Area Committee meeting informing Members of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.
- 2.3 The Washington VCS Network is made up of over 70 local groups and strategic local/national/regional partners. The network meets on a regular basis to share good practice, support one another and receives regularly updates as part of an information share e bulletin distributed via the Sunderland VS Alliance.

### 3. Washington Voluntary and Community Sector Network (VCSN) Progress Report

- 3.1 The Washington VCS Network met in person in September, October and December 2023
- 3.2 The September meeting included the following agenda items:

- Summer holiday recap and learning opportunities
- Washington VCS Rep Vacancy
- Network and Information Share Opportunities

The October meeting included the following agenda items:

- Washington VCS Rep Vacancy
- Go Online Sunderland
- Real Living Wage
- Mackem Money
- Network and Information Share Opportunities

The December meeting included the following agenda items:

- Digital Update - Good Things Foundation
- Network and Information Share Opportunities

- 3.3 At the October meeting the network were reminded of the vacant role for a Washington VCS Network Rep and a member organisation expressed an interest in the role.

- 3.4 Members of the network who signed the pledge for Links for Life were thanked for applying for the new call for projects. The programme follows on the learning from the warm and welcoming spaces, ensuring we are able to offer services and support within our communities – support and activities which bring residents together, enable active engagement and improve health, wellbeing and financial resilience. Successful projects will deliver Links for Life from January 2024.
- 3.5 Members of the Network received information on the free membership scheme with Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance (SVSA) and were also invited to attend 'Let's Communicate' online event with SVSA in November 2023.
- 3.6 The Network received an update on progress made on the staff recruitment for SVSA, they also received information on the support offered to the sector. Information was also received on the Social Value and volunteering opportunities support offered.
- 3.7 The Network representatives regularly consult with the Network to ensure that the agenda items reflect their requirements.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 Members are requested
- To note the contents of the report and consider the opportunities and issues raised by the Washington VCSN.

#### **5. VCS Rep Contact**

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