

SUNDERLAND WEST AREA COMMITTEE

14th March 2012

REPORT OF WEST VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR (VCS) NETWORK REPRESENTATIVES

WEST VCS NETWORK

1.0 Why has it come to Committee?

1.1 Committee Members requested West VCS Network members provide an update on the West VCS Network, which contributes to delivery of Local Area Plan priorities.

2.0 Background

2.1 The West VCS Network was established in December 2009 to ensure a coordinated approach to representing the local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) at Area Committee and to work together to develop and share good local VCS practice.

2.2 The Network is Co Chaired by the Area Committee Vice Chair Councillor Michael Essl and a Network Representative (to be decided).

2.3 There are three VCS Representatives who represent the Sector as a partner at Area Committee:

- Bill Leach (Pennywell Community Centre)
- Edna Rochester (The Tansy Centre)
- Anita Heskett-Saddington (Fiscus) (newly nominated)

2.4 The secretariat for the Network is provided by the Area Community Coordinator, Community Development, City Services. Support includes arranging Network meetings, engaging with the Sector to deliver on actions from Area Committee and Task & Finish groups and facilitating VCS and Council priorities such as local community events, campaigns and activities. Further support from the Community Development Team includes work on capacity building, VCS governance, Community First Panels, implementation of Surplus Building Policy and the Sunderland in 2012 programme.

2.5 There are currently 49 organisations on the West VCS Network mailing list who receive the minutes of meetings and weekly information sharing. More than half of these organisations have attended a Network meeting over the last two years. All organisations are encouraged to sign up to and operate in accordance with the Sunderland Compact.

2.6 Membership is open to all VCS Organisations (VCSOs) that operate in Sunderland West, however, any organisation that operates across Sunderland is welcome to attend any Area VCS Network.

3.0 VCS Contribution to Local Area Plan (LAP)

LAP Priority	Area Committee Action	VCS Contribution	Outcome
Health & Wellbeing	Task & Finish Group to establish 'Health Champions' Project	VCS reps invited to attend Task & Finish Group to ensure the project is promoted to the VCS to train their staff and volunteers	<p>VCSOs commissioned to deliver the project by PCT (Bridge, NECA, MIND, CAB, Continuum)</p> <p>64 Qualified Health Champions from the West Area including 38 from the VCS</p> <p>2nd Health Champion Celebration Event planned to take place on 13th March 2012</p>
Youth & Play	Task & Finish Group to address lack of holiday provision and out of school activity for 8-12 year olds	VCS Youth Projects in the area invited to attend Task & Finish Group. 2 VCS reps also attended.	<p>Holiday programme devised with Youth projects from each ward working in partnership and sharing funding.</p> <p>Summer Holiday brochure produced, Christmas and half term activities offered.</p> <p>DVD produced and shared with the West VCS Network to show good practice and effective collaborative working.</p>
Environment and Street Scene Improvements	'Love Where You Live' Campaign 21 st September 2011	Through the Network VCS Projects asked to participate in area clean ups, litter picks etc	<p>13 VCSOs volunteered to take part in events in each ward and worked in partnership with the RLS Manager and Area Community Coordinator</p> <p>Over 100 volunteers engaged in the campaign</p> <p>Regular monthly litter picks now taking place in some areas such as Ford Quarry</p>

			and Farrington
	Walk & Talk programme	VCSOs will be invited to take part	VCS having direct contact with their local Councillors and RLS team to raise issues.
	Greenspace audit and green infrastructure	VCS invited to Greenspace local workshops in 2011 held at Pennywell Community Centre	VCS had a direct input into the green space audit to improve the local environment.
	Eden Vale/Thornhill	VCS invited to events planning sub group (Youth Almighty, Friends of Barnes Park, Eden Vale Residents group, Richard Avenue School)	Community event for local residents planned to take place in Barnes Park on 12 th April 2012

4.0 VCS Contribution to Community Development in the Area

4.1 Sunderland Volunteering Strategy

The West VCS Network is working to implement the Sunderland Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan (agreed by the Council's Cabinet in February 2011) which aims to support Volunteering in Sunderland by:

- Increasing the number and diversity of people volunteering in Sunderland
- Recognising and rewarding volunteers
- Supporting volunteer confidence, learning, skills and employability
- Increasing the number of Employer-Supported Volunteering Schemes
- Improving volunteer management and volunteering programmes

As such the West VCS Network has looked to recognise the valuable contribution of volunteers through holding volunteer celebration events.

4.2 Volunteer Celebration Events

The West VCS Network has held three Volunteer Celebration events since its inception where volunteers are recognised and presented with a certificate by the Area Committee Chair and Vice Chair. The events held include:

- A coffee morning held at the Sandhill Centre in January 2010 with 25 volunteers attending
- A Christmas Celebration meal held at Thorney Close Action & Enterprise Centre in December 2011 with 60 volunteers attending
- A Valuing Volunteer Event including a 3 course meal held at the Tansy Centre in January 2012 with 80 volunteers attending from 17 organisations.

A total of 165 volunteers were involved in these events.

4.3 VCS Partnership Working

There is some joint working between VCSOs in the West such as the joint working between the Tansy Centre and Pennywell Community Centre, who share resources, volunteers and a development worker.

4.4 The Youth & Play Task & Finish group has been a good example of collaboration and dividing up funding between organisations in each ward to deliver activities.

4.5 A Collaborative Working workshop was held for the VCSOs in the West last year and was well attended. There is a desire to work together, however the lack of capacity in some organisations can prevent this from getting off the ground. Some cannot take on any extra responsibility as staffing is low.

5.0 Other Local Events Currently Planned

5.1 The following local events are currently planned (subject to funding):

5.2 Diamond Jubilee

- Unity are planning a Diamond Jubilee Mela – 3rd June 2012, 12-6pm at Lambton St Playing Fields.
- The Tansy Centre are planning a Songs of Praise Festival event on 9th June 2012 at the Boat House, South Hylton.
- The Launch Pad are working with a group of young people to do a Jubilee plant display in Farrington (to tie in Love Where You Live and Britain In Bloom) starting on 15th March 2012
- The Friends of Barnes Park are planning an event in the Park to incorporate a Mini proms in the bandstand (TBC).
- Richard Avenue School is planning a Jubilee celebration on 31st May 2012
- There are also numerous Diamond Jubilee community celebrations planned in community centres.

5.3 Sunderland in 2012

The VCS Network has welcomed the allocation of funding from the Area Committee to support the Sunderland in 2012 programme delivery in the community.

5.4 A toolkit has been devised to assist organisations to apply for the funding and to affiliate their activity to the programme of events. The closing date for applications is March 30th 2012. The following events are in the planning stages:

- Silksworth Independent Methodist Church are planning a Silksworth Festival on 4th August 2012 in Silksworth Junior School grounds
- Pennywell Community Centre are planning an Area Trampolining competition for local young people (TBC)
- The Friends of Barnes Park are planning a celebration event in the park incorporating games in the Park (TBC)

- Richard Avenue School is planning a Summer Fair in June 2012 (TBC) with an Olympic theme

6.0 Funding to the West Area

- 6.1 There are opportunities for funding and greater VCS partnership working at a neighbourhood level within the West Area, for example the development of the Community First panels in Pallion and Silksworth will provide an opportunity for more grass roots work.
- 6.2 Many find the application and monitoring procedures of funding bids time consuming and challenging and time away from the 'day job' is difficult particularly where projects are dependant on volunteers.
- 6.3 Funding through the Task & Finish groups has also been welcomed and has engaged the VCS in delivering at grass roots level.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

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