

26th June 2024

REPORT OF WEST AREA VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR NETWORK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update with regard to the West 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 West 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 West 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. West Voluntary and Community Sector Network (VCSN) Progress Report

- 3.1 The West VCS Network met in person at St Marys and St Peters in April
- 3.2 The April meeting included the following agenda items:
- Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance (SVS Alliance) – a presentation was presented around the Alliance, what they do and the development in the past year. Information was shared around how organisations can become a member of the SVS Alliance.
 - Music Hub – an update was given on Sunderland Music Hub and what their out of school and community provision is. A presentation was shared and information on how groups can get involved.
 - Stronger Shores – A presentation was given on the Stronger Shores Project. Stronger Shores shared information on how to get involved as they are keen to work with community groups, schools and organisations that would like to be involved in the project.
 - Network and Information Share – VCS organisations were able to share updates, projects and upcoming events that were taking place.

The meeting was very well attended and provided a really good networking opportunity and information share around activities and events happening in different organisations.

- 3.3 Organisations throughout the West Area continue to deliver Links for Life Sunderland. The programme is learning from the warm and welcoming spaces. Links for Life offers services and support to communities - support and activities which bring residents together, enable active engagement and improve health, wellbeing, and financial resilience.
- 3.4 Organisations have been invited to deliver at the West Area Event 2024 which will be taking place on Thursday 27th June and Friday 28th June for the West Area Schools and Saturday 29th June for the Free Family Fun Day.
- 3.5 Organisations were invited to apply for the Community Assets Call for Projects through West Area Committee.
- 3.6 Digital Health Hubs have been set up across the West Area through Sunderland City Council and are working closely with the Digital Inclusion Lead. Training opportunities have been provided. Investment has been made to improve the buildings digital infrastructure. West Area organisations have attended their first Digital Health Hub Catch Up.
- 3.7 Opportunities have been shared through Community Resilience team to the network including training, funding and workshops.
- 3.8 Members of the network continue to welcome funding opportunities and social value opportunities along with training opportunities from Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance (SVSA)
- 3.12 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 West VCSN.

5. Contact

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