

28th June 2023

REPORT OF WEST AREA VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR NETWORK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update from 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 are in place and delegates represent each Area Network at Area Committee, taking forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in the area, reporting on area priorities delivered 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, as well as strategic local/national/regional partners. The network meets in the West on a regular basis to share good practice and support one another. The network feeds into Sunderland VCS Alliance and receives regular updates as part of an information share.

3. West Area Voluntary and Community Sector Network (AVCSN) Progress Report

- 3.1 The West VCS Network met in person in April and June 2023. At the April meeting, Cllr Gibson was thanked for all of his support over the years. At the meetings the network welcomed presentations on: Clean and Green/Rangers, Community Mini Bus, Screening Services, Financial wellbeing, and Royal Society for the Blind.
- 3.2 Many members of the network are part of Sunderland City Council's Warm Welcoming Spaces offer in Sunderland West and are providing a much-needed place for residents to have a safe, warm and supportive place to go to within their local community. Voluntary Sector organisations are raising the issues their local communities are facing due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, witnessing a rise in residents attending and needing intensive support.
- 3.3 The warm and welcoming spaces, who meet with the Area Arrangements team regularly are highlighting the issues that many residents are facing. The Area Arrangements are working closely with the Council's financial resilience team to ensure support is available within communities. This highlights the importance of, and positive outcomes achieved through partnership working with the Council and the VCS, noting how important grassroots local delivery is for our residents.
- 3.4 The Area Arrangements team are working in collaboration with the Sunderland VCS Alliance and wider Council services and partners to bring forward social value from investments and from businesses delivering in the city, to support the voluntary and community sector. The Area Arrangements team and the VCS Alliance are also working together to understand where local community services are currently being delivered within the area, to support resident community resilience and wellbeing.
- 3.5 Moving forward from the warm and welcoming spaces, we are continuing to work closely with the sector to extend and co-produce hubs for community activities – delivering support activities as part of the wider social prescribing offer – Links for Life. A detailed update will be shared in relation to 'Links for Life' and the need to continue to grow the capacity within the VCS, in a future area network report.

- 3.6 The West Area Event in Barnes Park funded by West Area Committee delivered by Youth Almighty Project, takes place Saturday 1st July, 10am – 4pm. There will be a range of activities from local groups and businesses. There will also be a range of performances and live entertainment at the bandstand. Everyone welcome and encouraged to come along.
- 3.7 Members of the Network were invited to join Sunderland Council alongside the Sunderland Integrated Care Board (Health) for breakfast on Thursday 15th June 2023, to discuss future opportunities to work together in the city, developing community hubs and our community support offer for residents.
- 3.8 West representative update Joanne Laverick has been Elected as Councillor of Silksworth Ward and therefore is stepping down as VCS Rep. Karen Noble has also decided to step down as VCS rep and explained to the West Area VCS due to the volume of work including a new building to develop, she cannot commit fully to the role. We wish both Joanne and Karen the best of luck in the next stages of their work. Elections will take place at the September meeting for 2 new reps.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are requested to note the content of this report.

Contact: Joanne Laverick, Area Network Representative
Kelly Brougham, Area Network Representative
Karen Noble, Area Network Representative

Tel No: 0191 5238000
Tel No: 07946269005
Tel No: 07534983971