

REPORT OF WASHINGTON AREA COMMUNITY VOLUNTARY SECTOR NETWORK

- **Purpose of the Report**

The report provides an update with regards to the Washington Area Community & Voluntary Sector Network

- **Background**

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 sector in the area, and reporting back, providing a two-way flow of communication.

Washington Area Network delegates will present a report to each Area Committee informing Members of recent activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector. The delegates will also represent the Network at the VCS Alliance meetings.

- **Washington Network**

In Washington the VCS is made up of a wide range of organisations ranging from independent local branches of national charities through to small VCS groups and organisations. Collectively these organisations provide Washington residents with a wide range of local services, activities and opportunities and have a significant role within community life.

As well as partner updates re what is happening across the area, events, opportunities etc., partners regularly attend the networks to present information, consult and to offer numerous opportunities to develop partner approaches. The Area Network partners also contributed to and supported the SCC Let's Talk Resident Engagement Strategy, assisting with resident engagement, completing questionnaires and being involved in the Area Conversation Events to contribute to the Area Committee's Neighbourhood Investment Plans

The Area Network also provides a direct link between the Sunderland VC Alliance and the VCS Sector and continues to engage the sector in the

- **Washington Network (AVCSN) Progress Report**

The Washington Network has continued to meet with 'in person' meetings held every 6 – 8 weeks at the Washington Millennium Centre

The Sunderland VCS Alliance Community Support Worker continues to support organisations across the area and is currently supporting with funding applications, sustaining buildings, and providing governance advice. The VCS Alliance is now distributing the Sectors E bulletin, providing a range of training opportunities identified as needed by the sector, and organising workshops in all areas.

Washington Network has met twice since the last Committee meeting. At the meeting in September the Network received a presentation from Area Arrangements:

- Social Prescribing in Sunderland – creating a citywide community support programme. This outlined the vision for social prescribing and the new Outline Model/Framework phases involving a range of partners. Key aspects included the multi skilled referral process and a one message – one direction approach.

- Key message was that the VCSE are a key and intrinsic element of potentially supporting, delivering, and assisting residents to access their services and provision. This would enable the VCSE with other partners to inform and develop capacity and increase impact and funding opportunities. Within this there would be a mapping and assessment process and a link workers would work directly with the VCSE offering non-clinical support. It was recognised that different groups would be at different levels in terms of their standards of service.
- In practical terms the Warm Spaces- Cost of Living response currently rolling out across the City would be a pilot. The first phase will be place based, followed by a second phase to support individual to access employability opportunities with the third and final phase being the allocation of additional activities which promote and support the improvement of health and wellbeing.
- Washington MIND to provide 'Rays Corner' information to the Warm Spaces Provider Network Meeting 18.10.22
- Warm Spaces list and web page to be circulated

The VCS Alliance confirmed the VCS Alliance 'offer' re support for the local VCS groups and if any organisation had any training needs contact DG. A request to also complete Taking Stock sSurvey. Requirement if applying for any Council grant. Will provide list of VCS needs to match to Social Value contributions from developers and procured contractors.

Meeting held November 2022 welcomed a couple of new 'members' and received a presentation from the Illegal Money Lending Team, and a report from the VCSA Community Support Worker offering support. The Network also discussed plans and methodology for producing the Washington VCS Networks Annual Report 2022/23 which would be presented to the March 2023 Area Committee.

A well-attended meeting provided lots of partner updates and information sharing opportunities

Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and consider the opportunities and issues raised by the Washington AVCS.

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