

8 DECEMBER 2021

REPORT OF WEST AREA VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR NETWORK**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The report provides an update with regards 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 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 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, 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 a virtual network and feed into and receives weekly 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 December 2021. At the meeting the network welcomed presentations on the Crowd Fund Sunderland and the VCS reps. Groups also shared details on activities being delivered in centres across the West.
- 3.2 At the December meeting groups fed in their views on frequency of VCS network meetings and agenda items for 2022, those unable to attend have been sent a survey so all members participate.
- 3.3 The collaboration of West Area VCS groups to support the Extended Targeted Covid Community Champions project is working well and groups have had an opportunity to apply for the Winter COVID support. Many groups have been successful and delivery has begun.
- 3.4 Local West VCS organisations delivering the COVID Targeted Community Champion Programme have received funding from Sunderland City Council to provide support to vulnerable households in most need this winter with Food and Fuel Support and Other Essential Needs. Support may include, but is not limited to, supporting people with bills, clothing, and care and keep warm packs.
- 3.5 Working to complement the Neighbourhood funded holiday activities, Together for Children are supporting local Community organisations across the ward, this funding will support over 500 children/young people and their families with activity days and/or Christmas hampers.
- 3.6 Our Network representative Joanne Laverick has attended various Strategic and operational meetings with the VCS Alliance. The VCS Alliance are working with the BIC on becoming an independent organisation. They are working to develop a service offer which meets the needs of the sector without duplicating what is already there. The VCS Alliance manager and temporary Community Support Worker continue to support groups within the West.

4. Recommendation

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

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