COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE   **Item 4a**

11 March 2015

REPORT OF COALFIELD AREA VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR NETWORK

1.   Purpose of the Report
1.1   The report provides an update with regard to the Coalfield 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   Coalfield Area Network delegates will present a report to each Area Committee meeting informing Members of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.

3.   Coalfield Voluntary and Community Sector Network (VCSN) Progress Report

The Coalfield VCSN has met once since the last Area Committee in December 2014.

3.1   January 2015
Community Event
The group discussed the two large community events delivered last year, the first by Gentoo at Rainton Meadows, and the second by the VCS Network and Sunderland City Council at the Hetton Centre. The group agreed that this year there should be a joint approach and one large event. The event will be jointly organised and co-ordinated and will take place on Friday 10 April at Rainton Meadows Arena. All organisations were invited to go along to promote what they offer within the community and to support local residents to access services.

The VCS Network would like to invite partners to attend and bring along a display and a fun activity, and also would like to invite elected members and officers to come along and see the variety of services and support available. It is an opportunity to speak directly to local VCS organisations and members of the public.

Nomination of VCS Representatives
The group discussed the VCS Rep vacancy, left by Ann Owen from HRCAP who have now ceased to operate as a charity. The role and commitment of the VCS Reps was discussed and nomination forms were circulated. The group agreed that nominations should be forwarded to Susan Brown or Pauline Hopper by Friday 27 February, for consideration by the VCS Network at the next meeting in March 2015.

Area Annual Report and Area Priorities
It was highlighted that a great amount of work has been delivered via the VCS Network and partner members in support of the Area priorities. The Network would welcome an opportunity to highlight some examples within the Annual Report.

Priorities for the coming year were discussed briefly and a number of issues were raised, including Community IT provision and support in locally accessible venues. The Network members feel this is an increasing pressure on local organisations and volunteers who are experiencing larger numbers of people seeking help with on line forms and applications.

The Network members agreed they would like to hold a workshop to discuss key priorities for next year in order to feed them in to the refresh of Area Committee plans.

Information Sharing
There were 34 people in attendance at the meeting and each was given the opportunity to share some information relating to activities or services they are delivering in the area. The Network value this informal part of the agenda to develop partnership working and share ideas.

4.   Recommendations
4.1   Members are requested
- To note the contents of the report
- To consider Network representation when discussing priorities for the coming year

Contact: Susan Brown, Area Network Representative
                Sam Galilee, Area Network Representative.