

WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE

17th December 2020

REPORT OF WASHINGTON AREA COMMUNITY VOLUNTARY SECTOR NETWORK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report provides an update with regard to the Washington Area Community and Voluntary 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 and reporting back, providing a two-way flow of communication.
- 2.2 Washington Area Network delegates will present a report to each Area Committee meeting informing Members of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.

3. Washington Network

- 3.1 In Washington, the VCS is made up of a wide range of organisations ranging from independent local branches of national charities through to small, totally voluntary, community groups. Collectively these organisations provide Washington residents with a wide range of local services, activities and opportunities and have a significant role within community life here.
- 3.2 As well as partner updates re what is happening across the area, events, opportunities etc. partners regularly attended the Network meetings to present information.
- 3.3 The Area Network partners have 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 emerging Neighbourhood Investment Plan

4. Washington Network (AVCSN) Progress Report

- 4.1 The Washington VCS Network has continued to meet via Microsoft Teams and has kept in regular contact sharing information and ideas.
- 4.2 The Area Network became galvanised within days after the lock down was declared and transformed their services to ensure they continued to support those in need from across the area. Whilst many centres had to close, services continued to be delivered but in a different way.
- 4.3 SNCBC have worked with the Council, CCG, Gentoo and volunteers to provide support for shopping, prescriptions befriending, dog walking and many more services. Together hundreds of residents across Washington have been supported and many new and lasting friendships have been made. This pandemic has strengthened the network and has shown what strong communities we have.

- 4.4 More recently the network organisations were invited to apply for SCC funding to support children and families throughout the school holiday periods re holiday hunger. As well as VCS organisations, both residents and local businesses joined forces resulting in an incredible offer for food, packed lunches and hot meals being available for those families needing help.

Network members were also invited to apply for SCC 'Winter COVID' funding – funds to support local vulnerable residents at Christmas and over the coming winter months. 5 organisations received funding for Christmas Activities and funding to deliver further support January to March will be awarded in December

- 4.5 The last virtual Network meeting was held 2nd November where 13 organisations were represented.
- The network welcomed presentations from the WEEE project. The presentation was engaging and the network was provided with information on how to work together.
 - The meeting heard from Council Officers on a proposal to support the Voluntary Community Sector, the presentation was well received and further information will be discussed in the coming months.
 - The meeting was also updated on progress re the Washington Area Committee Neighbourhood Investment Plan
 - Next Washington Area VCS meeting rescheduled for January 2021

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are requested
To note the contents of the report and consider the opportunities and issues raised by the Washington ACVSN

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