

Report to Voluntary Sector Liaison Group

20th February 2009

Title of Report: Update on progress towards third sector interface

1. Purpose of Report

The Scottish Government have asked Community Planning Partnerships, Volunteer Centres, Councils for Voluntary Service and Local Social Economy Partnerships to provide an update on their progress towards a single interface for the third sector.

This report is critical to the future of the volunteer centres, councils for voluntary service and local social economy partnerships and has implications for the community planning partnerships.

For this reason it is requested that this report be considered by the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group before being remitted to The Aberdeen City Alliance for endorsement.

Recommendation: That the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group agree the timetable set out in the report.

Report Author: Rhonda Kelly, Chief Executive, Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations.

**UPDATE ON PROGRESS TOWARDS THIRD SECTOR INTERFACE
ABERDEEN CITY
18TH FEBRUARY 2009**

We have been asked to provide a short report, updating the Scottish Government on the current state of play in moving towards a single interface for the third sector, particularly in our dealings with Community Planning Partnerships.

It was agreed that Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO) / VSA (formerly Voluntary Services Aberdeen) would write the report on behalf of our partners in Aberdeen.

I have detailed our progress to date below.

BACKGROUND

Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Service has been in existence independently since 2005. Before this it was a standing committee of VSA, a major local charity who after a strategic review, decided that the Aberdeen CVS should be an independent body, although VSA continues to have a representative on its board.

The Volunteer Centre in Aberdeen is managed by VSA on behalf of the local voluntary sector and functions effectively to support volunteering in the local community.

The Local Social Economy Partnership in Aberdeen was not terribly successful in its early days, with a lack of focus leading to difficulty in moving forward. However, this is now changing.

There is a successful Social Enterprise Network in the City.

ACVO has been the main conduit for community planning in the City and has fairly extensive involvement at all levels. The development worker for the Civic Forum is hosted by ACVO. (see diagram of CP structure – App 1.)

CURRENT STATUS

Last year ACVO created a group to look at a vision for the future of the Third Sector in Aberdeen and ways to progress these visions. The group involved ACVO Board members and other interested individuals.

They agreed to focus in the first instance on representation, and primarily how we represent the sector on the Community Planning Partnership.

A huge amount of work has been done to formalise the structures for representation of the sector (Appendix 2) and this has included formalising

our links with the Social Enterprise Network, bringing them closer to ACVO so that we can work together better.

The Volunteer Centre has been engaging with its key stakeholders through the Volunteer Coordinators forum (106 members to include local and national voluntary / charitable orgs operating within the city), to inform the process towards the single interface and to ensure their views are represented.

All of the above will be very helpful in pulling together a single interface.

ACVO and VSA have had initial discussions towards planning a single interface for the city. We are due to begin moving this forward in the near future. However, we are working closely together on a variety of projects and will continue to do so.

A meeting is scheduled between VSA and ACVO to develop a single planning process and this is scheduled for the end of February.

The ACVO Chief Executive has taken over the role of Chair of the Local Social Economy Partnership and work is being carried out to develop its function, with the assistance of Social Resources Trust.

Social Resources Trust are a group of social entrepreneurs who have created a company which will support the development of new social enterprises in the city. ACVO and VSA are part of Social Resources Trust. In partnership with the Social Enterprise Network this seems to be the natural way forward to develop the Local Social Economy Partnership function.

ACVO already has good relations with the Community planning partnership and its staff and these new developments will ensure that we are more efficient in our representation of the sector.

NEXT STEPS

ACVO is already working very closely with the Local Social Economy Partnership and Social Enterprise Network. We believe that ultimately the Local Social Economy Partnership will become a partnership through Social Resources Trust, involving all social enterprises in the city. ACVO and VSA are board members of Social Resources Trust so will have close involvement in these developments.

Both ACVO and VSA are hopeful that we can create a new single body /interface, and will seek to progress the work already done in this area.

We propose to arrange a cluster meeting in March to move things forward. Following talks between ACVO and VSA we will decide who should be at this meeting, but it is likely that an initial meeting will be held with representation from the council for voluntary service, VSA, the Volunteer Centre, Local Social

Economy Partnership and Social Enterprise Network and the Strategist responsible for Community Planning.

We would hope that following this meeting we can begin to identify how the interface will look and to clarify how we will engage and involve our partners and service users at every stage of these deliberations.

We would envisage that as a result of this meeting we will roll out consultation meetings using the networks set up through ACVO and the VSA Volunteer Centre.

CONCLUSION

The work that has been carried out over the past year to formalise how we interact with the Community Planning Partnership will be valuable in moving towards a single interface. This and the work done to revitalise the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group means that we already have a strong relationship and are an integral part of the Community Planning Partnership.

As ACVO's plans for a voluntary sector hub move forward, it has been mooted that the Community Planning Team could be based within this hub. This would have the added benefit of distancing the Community Planning Partnership from Aberdeen City Council, which has caused confusion in the past, as well as positioning the Community Planning Partnership very obviously within the community it serves.

We feel confident that by the end of March 2009 we will have a plan for how we can engage with our stakeholders in the development of a single interface and progress to a wider discussion with a view to getting 'buy in' from all parties to make this become a reality.

TIMETABLE

23 th February 09	Meeting with VSA and ACVO Chief Executive
Mid March 09	Meet with all Interface partners
End March 09	Consultation carried out (4 week period)
End April 09	Decision taken as to structure of Interface New structure implemented

App 1

