

COMMITTEE	Corporate Policy and Performance
DATE	4 th March 2010
DIRECTOR	Fred McBride
TITLE OF REPORT	Corporate Framework for Engagement with the Voluntary Sector
REPORT NUMBER:	SCW/09/029

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides members with further detail on proposed arrangements for engagement with the Voluntary Sector in the City; seeks the Committee's approval to stand down the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group and to implement the new engagement arrangements. The report also provides an overview of the current situation with regard to the Voluntary Sector Compact and National Guidance on the development of a single 3rd sector interface.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is asked to:

- A) Consider and agree that quarterly meetings between the Council and Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations, will replace the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group as the primary method of engagement with the Voluntary Sector.
- B) Approve that the Director for Social Care and Wellbeing is the corporate lead officer who will convene the meetings and be responsible as the council's strategic advisor to the sector;
- C) Ask the Director to ensure that issues raised in this context will be referred as appropriate to the relevant Council Committee for consideration.
- D) Note the priority task for the Third Sector in Partnership with the local authority will be the revision and implementation of the Aberdeen Voluntary Sector Compact.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council currently funds ACVO to be the lead mechanism for consultation with the range of small and large voluntary organizations and social enterprises on key council service and community planning matters. This is seen to be the more cost effective mechanism as opposed to multiple arrangements being supported separately for individual and specific service dialogue.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Voluntary sector organizations provide services to some of the most vulnerable people in the City and as such have a valuable role in adding value and in delivering better outcomes for our communities. It is estimated for every £1 invested in the voluntary sector that it can draw down an equivalent £4 from sources unavailable to local government.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications.

6. REPORT

Voluntary Sector Liaison Group

The Voluntary Sector Liaison Group (VSLG) was established in 2005 as a formal mechanism for engagement and consultation between Aberdeen City Council and the voluntary sector in the City. The membership of the VSLG comprises representatives from the voluntary sector, a representative from NHS Grampian and elected members from Aberdeen City Council with officer support.

The remit of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group is as follows:

- To monitor the impact of changing national and local priorities
- To monitor failures in compliance with the Voluntary Sector Compact.
- To identify and remove barriers to improvement/ effectiveness
- To inform policy (in relation to the development of the Voluntary Sector e.g. Volunteer Strategy)

Members will be aware from the outstanding business statement that an earlier decision requested of the Committee was to determine the future of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group. The Director of Social Care and Wellbeing was asked to enter into discussions with Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations (ACVO) to determine their view on the effectiveness of this arrangement from the perspective of the wider voluntary sector.

The consensus view of the sector, following a consultation exercise by ACVO, was that the VSLG had initially been purposeful and effective, but that over the last three years the Group had lost focus and direction, and was as a consequence now failing to make the necessary impact.

Proposed Alternative Model for Engaging with the Voluntary Sector

It is anticipated that by April 2010 a single interface for the third sector will be established in Aberdeen .i.e. coming together of the councils for voluntary service, volunteer centres and social enterprises. This role will be undertaken by Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations. The purpose of the single interface is to provide a visible connection and communication channel between the third sector and the public sector at a local and national level.

Within this context, it is proposed to restructure the current model for local authority engagement with the voluntary sector.

It is proposed that the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing, and a small group of relevant officers, meet quarterly with Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations and relevant representatives of the third sector on matters of shared interest including strategic planning. It is anticipated that the Chief Executive of Aberdeen City Council will attend one meeting per annum.

The Director will ensure that matters raised in the meeting are referred where necessary to either the relevant committee of the Council or individual elected member. Members will have the opportunity to engage in voluntary sector issues through the Council Committee process.

Voluntary Sector Compact

In November 2005, the Community Planning Partnership's Joint Public, Voluntary and Community Sector Compact was published.

This document was produced by the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group on behalf of The Aberdeen City Alliance (TACA), sets out the shared principles, values and commitments and the nature of the relationship between the public, voluntary and community sector organizations in the City.

The aims of the compact are:

- Improving joint planning and delivery of services in the City.
- Increasing mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of all sectors and the contribution they individually and jointly make to the City.
- Informing the commissioning, contracting and funding processes between the public, voluntary and community sectors.
- Increasing the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to contribute to the community planning processes.
- Sustaining, developing and making effective use of the resources available to the voluntary and community sector.
- Supporting the role of volunteering and active citizenship
- Increasing the levels of and improving the quality of community involvement.

In 2008, Aberdeen Council for Voluntary was commissioned to undertake a review of the Compact and update the document accordingly. This review remains outstanding as a consequence of senior staff changes and other recent more pressing challenges at ACVO.

In 2009 the Scottish Government published a joint statement on the relationship at a local level between Government and the third sector. The statement emphasizes that this interaction should be built upon mutual respect and a joint understanding of the roles played and challenges faced by each partner in delivering better outcomes for the public. It will be a supportive and sustainable relationship which reinforces our interdependence.

It is proposed that a priority task for the new group, led by the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing, will be the development of a revised Compact

between the public, voluntary and community sector in Aberdeen. The new Compact will build on the 2005 document and seek to incorporate the principles outlined in the joint statement on the relationship at a local level between Government and the Third Sector.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

David Rodger Strategist Davrodger@aberdeencity.gov.uk 01224 523046
--

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

n/a

Glossary

VSLG - Voluntary Sector Liaison Group

ACVO - Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations

TACA - The Aberdeen City Alliance

Voluntary Sector Compact - was and continues to be a Scottish Government requirement following 1996 local government reorganization to unitary councils, as a formal agreement on terms of engagement between the councils and the sector.