

VOLUNTARY SECTOR JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 7th October, 2019.

Present: Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Chairman); Councillor Mrs. J.M. Norman (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Mrs. C.A. Cave, Ms. A.M. Collins, R. Crowley, K.F. McCaffer and L.O. Rowlands.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: Ms. H. Smith (Barnardos), Ms. L. Newton (Cardiff and the Vale Action for Mental Health), Ms. R. Connor (Glamorgan Voluntary Services) and Mrs. A. Barnaby (Town and Community Council Representative).

349 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor L. Burnett.

350 MINUTES –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 8th July, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

351 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

352 PRESENTATION – RESHAPING SERVICES – STAFF AND SERVICE VOLUNTEERS –

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation provided a presentation in relation to volunteering opportunities across the Vale of Glamorgan, outlining what had been done so far by the Local Authority to promote volunteering in the community and amongst Council staff, and invited discussion and suggestions from Committee Members to inform further progress.

The Officer highlighted the well-established benefits of volunteering and how discussion was timely given the increased activity, through multiple mediums, around volunteering at both a regional and national level.

The Officer outlined voluntary activity already taking place, including a Public Services Board Timebanking Workshop that had been held and a Task and Finish Group established to develop a strategy to expand the current Timebanking Scheme to wider residents across the Vale. The WLGA Local Authority Volunteering Network had also met and was currently carrying out a mapping process on all local volunteering opportunities.

The Officer continued by advising that the Council's Insight Board had conducted a volunteering workshop in September 2019, following which it had been agreed that he should discuss with Committee how to better to present the opportunities and benefits of volunteering to support council services as well as Local Authority staff to take part in volunteering work. In relation to community volunteering, the Officer outlined what had been agreed as next steps by the Insight Board as follows:

- Promote benefits and opportunities via a programme of communication;
- Develop principles to provide a framework e.g training and role descriptions when necessary;
- Need to scope/define what is meant by volunteering;
- Meet with the University Health Board's (UHB) volunteer co-ordinator to establish working links; and
- Complete a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) mapping exercise.

The Vice-Chairman then took the opportunity to ask after the take up of the Timebanking scheme to date, to which the Officer responded that whilst the initial tranche was small, it had significantly grown. He did not have the statistics immediately available but agreed to subsequently email the Committee with the figures following the meeting.

The Representative for Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) (Ms Connor) then stated that, in particular, she would be interested in knowing the costs of the Timebanking Scheme. She added that such a scheme would need to be carefully managed due to there being a discrepancy wherein non-Council tenants were involved but not receiving credits. A Member agreed that the scenario could provide disparity between volunteers and queried whether the scheme could be taken to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee to facilitate a more informed discussion, and to ensure that a level playing field was being provided for all volunteers. The Member continued by suggesting that it would be beneficial for volunteering to be linked with all Scrutiny Committees and not isolated to a singular Committee and perhaps the presence of a volunteering representative on all Scrutiny Committees would aid a more joined up approach, and emphasise the integral part that volunteering work played in the Council's business as a whole. The Member also noted that there had been a great celebration of volunteering within the Vale at the Mayoral Civic Sunday Service.

A Member highlighted that voluntary opportunities often enabled volunteers to boost their CV skills and suggested that Volunteer Awareness Week should be utilised as an appreciation event for volunteers in the Vale.

A Member then asked after the best way to let people across the Vale of Glamorgan know about voluntary opportunities, to which the Officer replied that that was an important question moving forward and the reason that the Committee had been approached for suggestions.

The Representative for Town & Community Councils (Ms Barnaby) then queried whether it would be possible to establish an electronic register for organisations or

individuals wishing to recruit volunteers and/or list voluntary opportunities. She also queried what was being done to encourage school children to volunteer in terms of presentations and educational engagement activities. In support, The GVS Representative advised that there was currently a volunteer centre run by GVS which offered more than 500 opportunities, and was accessible via a face to face service at the libraries or at offices across the Vale. The Representative also noted that there was an online portal advertising an enormous range of opportunities and that in relation to staff volunteering, it would be worth highlighting to Local Authority staff that volunteering could provide an opportunity for them to develop skills in some areas that they might find it difficult to gain experience in within their current job role., Therefore, from the Local Authority's perspective, it could enhance service delivery skills. She also highlighted the importance of the Authority's Volunteering Policy being consistent across all services to ensure that all volunteering individuals were treated equally.

The Representative for Barnardos (Ms Smith) advised that Barnardos "role descriptions" were developed to encourage a range of people within a range of services to take up voluntary roles with particular emphasis on motivation and rewards within the roles, for instance time credits per hour and career progression. She also noted the importance of there being a balance in volunteering support and service delivery, adding that whilst consistency in relation to voluntary policies was good, flexibility within organisations was also important, as complying with policy could take away from delivery for organisations.

The Representative for Town and Community Councils then noted that it would be beneficial to get the message out to people that employees of wider businesses in the Vale of Glamorgan were involved in voluntary work. A Member agreed that in terms of getting businesses more involved, the Vale of Glamorgan Council could certainly set an example.

In reference to encouraging school children to become involved in voluntary work, the Vice-Chairman noted that whilst volunteering was a compulsory element of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, it was sometimes difficult for organisations to accommodate those under the age of 16 because of health and safety compliance. She therefore suggested that the difficulty be looked at.

The Representative for GVS advised that there were different ways of accessing volunteering, usually via word of mouth, working for a particular organisation or via online resources such as Social Media or the National Volunteering Portal. She noted, however, that there was a proportion of the population that would like to be involved in voluntary work, and would arguably benefit the most from volunteering, but that did not have the wherewithal or confidence to become involved due to factors such as disability or social isolation (arising, for instance, from retirement), and that additional support would be needed for these individuals to get over the first few hurdles in order to access a full range of voluntary opportunities. In turn, this provided a challenge for Third Sector organisations in terms of providing the right support to ensure the best possible experience for volunteers, as the amount of investment required usually came with a cost. Factors such as health and safety and safeguarding were particularly prevalent in the voluntary sector and therefore proper management and resourcing was required.

A Member agreed that for individuals who were not 'tech savvy', accessing voluntary opportunities could be a challenge, and queried how, apart from word of mouth, were people being reached to inform them of opportunities. A Member advised that he was aware that GVS ran a volunteers day at the Memorial Hall which had proven very popular. Furthermore, he noted that some smaller organisations, such as the Rotary Club and Barry Round Table had started to work together to pool resources. He asked whether it would be possible to get them to come to a future meeting of the Committee to share their experiences and best practice in terms of recruitment and the challenges faced within that area.

A Member then added that both Barry Round Table and the Rotary Club had expressed an interest in being more connected with the Council, and she asked whether the Committee would be an appropriate avenue for including these smaller organisations further. She referred back to Ms. Connor's comment regarding quality of experience for volunteers and queried whether there was a benchmark set for this purpose within the Voluntary Sector. Also, in terms of there being a link between cost and quality of experience, the Member queried whether it was possible for there to be a voluntary fund to support the efforts of organisations in training volunteers. Ms. Connor noted that the turn-out for GVS' volunteer day at the Memorial Hall had been good and, furthermore, smaller fairs were held in other areas throughout the Vale to promote voluntary opportunities that were on local residents' doorsteps. She noted that there were already a variety of networks and fora which brought organisations together, but there needed to be improvement in terms of consolidation of skills. A Member then noted that Welsh Government was considering reducing the Third Sector budget and asked whether the Committee could formally note and raise their concerns in relation to this, to which the Committee agreed.

The Officer advised that he would arrange to meet with The Representative for GVS in order to look further at the practicalities and necessary steps for increasing volunteering within the Vale.

The Officer then moved on to discuss voluntary activity amongst staff within the Local Authority, with a possible suggestion being that staff could be given time to volunteer within their normal working hours. However, the fact that staff would be given tax payer time in order to volunteer posed a reputational issue for the Local Authority, and the practicalities of how to offer the opportunity fairly needed to be discussed.

The Representative for GVS advised that Welsh Government currently offered 5 volunteering days per year to its staff, so suggested that the Vale of Glamorgan Council start by looking at how WG delivered their scheme as an example of helping to demonstrate the economic value of volunteering.

A Member then advised that within her place of work paid voluntary days were also offered and the voluntary work did not necessarily need to be within the area in which the individual worked but alternatively where they live. She advised that there was independent guidance available online and that she would be happy to obtain advice from her employer and report back to the Officer.

The Officer thanked the Committee for their contributions, adding that the discussions had been very useful. He advised that he would bring an update to the next meeting as part of a Compact Action Plan, and advised that the presentation slides delivered would be made available electronically following the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his time.

It was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the Committee's concerns in relation to the reduction of funding to the Third Sector by Welsh Government be raised with Welsh Government.

Reason for decision

To make Welsh Government aware of the Committee's concerns in relation to third sector funding.

353 GLAMORGAN VOLUNTARY SERVICES (GVS) ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19 (GVS) –

The Representative for Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) presented the report to provide the Committee with information relating to the work of GVS throughout the year 2018/19.

The Representative advised that the report was a rolling item on the Forward Work Programme for the Committee as it was a statutory requirement of GVS to inform the Local Authority of its progress as a result of funding received by the Local Authority. The report set out the activities undertaken by GVS for the period April 2018 to March 2019, and was supplemented by a number of quotes and testimonials provided by GVS service users which the Representative advised would be available in the organisation's Impact Report which would be published following their conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) later in the month.

The Representative reported that GVS had had a very successful year and highlighted the achievements of GVS throughout several service areas, demonstrating the range of ways in which the organisation allowed individuals to gain skills and become less socially isolated through volunteering activities. At this point, a Member thanked Ms. Connor for her comprehensive and delightful report, and asked whether in the spirit of promoting networking and joint working, requested that the Committee be provided with the date for the next GVS' AGM and conference. The Member also asked whether the e-bulletins and newsletters as outlined in the report could be circulated to the Councillors on the Committee, if not all Councillors. The Representative advised that the electronic communications in question already come to the Council, and asked whether the Democratic Services team could ensure going forward that the correspondence

reach Councillors. The Assistant Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the Members request would be actioned.

In conclusion, The Representative for GVS advised that GVS' AGM and conference would be taking place on Thursday, 24th October, 2019 at the CF61 Centre in Llantwit Major, and added that they would very much welcome the attendance of any Councillors who were available to attend.

The Chairman thanked the Representative for her time and for presenting such a comprehensive report to the Committee.

It was subsequently

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the information regarding the work of the Glamorgan Voluntary Services from April 2018 to March 2019 be noted.
- (2) T H A T future electronic correspondence from GVS to the Local Authority be circulated to Councillors by the Democratic Services team.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) As required by the terms of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's/Glamorgan Voluntary Services Deed of Grant.
- (2) So that Councillors are provided with updates in relation to the work of Glamorgan Voluntary Services going forward.