

No.

VOLUNTARY SECTOR JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 25th July, 2023.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor R.M. Birch (Chair), Councillor S.C. Lloyd-Selby (Vice-Chair);
Councillors G. Bruce, A.M. Collins, C. Iannucci and J.M. Norman.

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: R. Connor (GVS), H. Smith (Barnardo's)
and L. Newton (Cardiff and Vale Action for Mental Health).

Also Present: Councillor M. Wilson

267 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

268 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor I.R. Buckley and Councillor C. Hawkins (Town and Community Councils Representative).

269 MINUTES –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

270 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby declared a personal but not prejudicial interest as she was a Trustee of Coastlands which was a local charity which ran the Vale food bank. There was no specific item on the agenda but Councillor Lloyd-Selby had dispensation to speak and vote on related matters.

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271 PEOPLE STRATEGY AND SUPPORT DOCUMENTS (VOLUNTEERING POLICY – APPENDIX 4) (REF) –

Cabinet had referred the report to the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee at its meeting on 20th July, 2023, for information and to discuss the potential opportunities to work collaboratively on the scheme.

The report highlighted that the previous HR Strategy had expired in 2020 during the course of the Covid pandemic. The revised People Strategy was a key strategic enabler setting the vision and direction for all people related activity across the Council. The Director of Corporate Resources in presenting the report advised that underpinning the Strategy was a drive to improve the Council's digital capability and communication with staff across all Directorates on all people matters and engaging ongoing and meaningful dialogue with staff, trade unions and partner organisations and how it could work together to achieve the best outcomes for all.

The People's Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report focussed on three key themes:

- Redesigning for responsiveness
- Driving employee experience
- Striving for high performance.

Also attached to the report at Appendix 2 was a well-focused implementation plan which set out a series of actions and outputs, aligned with the work required to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives.

Appendix 3 to the report provided details of the Hybrid Working Strategy. Appendix 4 the Council's Volunteering Policy and Appendix 5 the Organisation Development and Learning Framework.

The Director of Corporate Resources summarised the content and approach to employee volunteering as the specific subject of the referral to the Committee.

R. Connor (Executive Director) Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) stated that her organisation welcomed the Volunteering Policy stating it was a big step forward in providing staff with opportunities to volunteer their services. Ms Connor stated that during the pandemic the number of volunteers had slightly dwindled with it now being opportune to reach out for further support and she thanked the local authority for their work in this regard.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby also echoed Ms. Connor's comments and, enquired whether there was any distribution list available to assist staff in order to find out what organisations required volunteer services. In response, Ms. Connor advised that there were a number of ways that information could be obtained e.g. staff could make an appointment to speak to with an officer on a 1-1 basis for an informal discussion. There was an online portal which Third Sector organisations were registered with which was kept up to date and there was also GVS's own website.

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The officer from the Organisation and Development Team within the Vale of Glamorgan further advised that the Council was looking to prepare a calendar of events which would highlight volunteering opportunities. Further information was available on the Council's intranet as to and how staff could undertake volunteering duties within their working day whereas for Chief Officers they would be required to take annual leave.

Councillor Wilson, (not a member of the Committee) with permission to speak requested that further awareness raising opportunities be pursued for example with the Public Services Board in order that the work can be spread across as many organisations as possible. It was important, he said, to try to encourage more of the working population within the Vale of Glamorgan to undertake volunteering opportunities and also consider further opportunities such as Time Banking which could be an incentive to people who may be thinking of volunteering.

Councillor Norman referred to the scheme that had been run by the Housing Department for Council tenants where Council tenants could gain points towards for example cinema tickets. This was known as Value in the Vale. It was a scheme that had been established with the Public Services Board partners and focused initially around Council housing tenants but was also more recently available to the wider population.

The Chair, in conclusion, stated that it was important to ensure that the Policy was widely known amongst staff and that all Members of the Council should be provided with a copy of the information so that they too were aware of the proposals and the need to promote volunteering more widely and that it would also be important for all Group Leaders to promote the policy within their Political Groups with it subsequently being

AGREED – T H A T the report be noted and that further work be undertaken to ensure that the Volunteering Policy reaches as wide an audience as possible.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the content of the report and discussions at the meeting.

272 STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES – THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE (CX) –

The Director of Corporate Resources, in conjunction with the Strategy and Partnership Manager provided a presentation of the report for the Committee's consideration. By way of background the Director referred to a number of areas as highlighted in the report as below:

- “How we are building our current strong relationships
- Future work programme of the Committee
- Ensuring that the work of the Committee helped shape the way the Council worked and strengthened the relationship between the Council and the Third Sector

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- Responding to Audit Wales reports
- Review of the Voluntary Sector Compact
- Voluntary Sector representation on the Committee.”

Furthermore the Director stated that the Council now needed to take stock of the work of the Committee and that it wanted to better understand the value and contribution of the Third Sector and to understand more about the mechanism for referrals and what the outcomes were, in particular, are the right referrals being made and are people getting the services they need. The Council also wished to consider the current challenges and opportunities that were being faced, to ensure sustainability in the Sector and to consider what contributions the Committee could make and how it could work together with the third sector to provide the opportunity to review, re-focus and take a new approach to the work of the Committee.

A number of Audit Wales reports as outlined within the report had been published and in particular the Strategy and Partnership Manager drew attention to the recent Audit Wales report entitled Vale of Glamorgan Council Third Sector Partnership Working the following proposals for improvement had been identified:

- “The Council should reconsider the checklist set out in Appendix 1 of the Audit Wales report, in particular the following sections, vision, corporate strategy, Compact, understanding engagement with the third sector, designing services, training and performance review.
- As part of the review of the compact, the Council should reflect how it wants to work with the third sector to help deliver its strategic recovery priorities, how it can build on the positive work during the pandemic and consider how it can strengthen its application of the sustainable development principle.
- The Council should consider the level of resources and investment required to achieve a more collaborative way of working with the third sector and reflect this in its Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- The Council should consider what actions it can take to help the third sector adjust to a more collaborative way of working.”

In March 2022, the Cabinet had also considered a proposal to embark on a programme of engagement potentially facilitated by a third party. However, due to capacity issues this work had not been progressed as originally intended. However, the Council continued to work closely with the Third Sector across all Directorates e.g. in respect of food poverty, loneliness and isolation, warm spaces and Shared Prosperity.

Having regard to the Audit Wales reports, the Council wished to take forward its responses to all the reports as one programme of work as it recognised the importance of working across a variety of sectors and the benefits of collaboration.

In considering another aspect of work namely the Voluntary Sector Compact which had been signed with GVS and the Council in 2017 and which had had its foundation in an earlier Compact agreed in 2008, it had been recognised that the Compact was due for renewal but this had been delayed due to a number of factors including the Covid 19 pandemic. Both the Council and GVS were keen to build on the existing

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Compact but also wished to ensure that a new Compact reflected the many changes that had taken place since 2017. As part of the work to review the Compact, GVS were currently contacting all their members and asking for their views on the current Compact and what needed to change. Feedback on this exercise was expected to be available in October 2023 and would inform the draft with a revised Compact to be prepared in the Autumn. It was anticipated that the Compact and how the Council responded to relevant recommendations in the Audit Wales reports would form part of the work programme of the Committee.

During the presentation Ms. Connor commented that although over the last 30 years the relationship between GVS and the local authority had, on occasions, been challenging, the improvements that had been seen and the way the local authority had engaged with the Third Sector in the most recent years had been extremely well received by the third sector. The relationship also reached its peak during the pandemic with the support provided by both sides to the public. It was acknowledged by GVS that having had discussions with many counterparts in Wales, the support the Vale gave was more than other areas received. Funding had however always been an issue and would continue to be so, however, working together had been key. Ms Connor recognised that capacity issues in all organisations were an issue but she welcomed the Volunteering Policy that had been discussed in the previous agenda item.

H. Smith (Barnardo's) in echoing Ms. Connor's comments stated that Barnardo's were also struggling with capacity and funding issues in the backdrop of the Covid pandemic, cost of living crisis and issues affecting CAHMS. Barnardo's was also looking at ways to work together to save costs and in particular to pool resources.

In recognising capacity issues and the need to pool resources, Councillor Iannucci queried whether with regard to representation on the Committee further work could be undertaken to ensure that meetings were held as conveniently as possible to assist all interested parties and to encourage attendance to ensure that the information and discussions at meetings would add value.

Councillor Wilson advised that in a previous capacity as Chair of the Council's Scrutiny Committee Corporate Performance and Resources one of the comments that had been made at that time was that the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee was only advisory and that it needed to be seen as more of a critical friend. He further suggested that contact could be made with school PTAs amongst others to encourage attendance as he was aware of a significant amount of volunteer work that went uncredited and he also considered that discussions with local Town and Community Councils and Mayors could assist in raising awareness of the issues and when considering a new Terms of Reference for the Committee.

The Director of Corporate Resources concurred that further explanation in relation to the pooling of resources and consideration for the three critical challenges that all organisations were facing such as climate change, organisational resilience and the cost of living crisis was important work for the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee's to engage with.

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Councillor Lloyd-Selby stated that the three critical challenges were significant but she also questioned whether there was anything that was missing and how could the Committee be sure that the work programme was reflective of the issues and whether they were directly relevant to the Vale of Glamorgan.

L. Newton, Cardiff and Vale Action for Mental Health, commented that it was important for the Third Sector to engage in the processes as they had their ears to the ground and as such concurred it was important for the Council to ensure that those discussions took place. She stated that she was more than happy to work with the Council on areas such as equalities and access to services and to attend other Committees if required.

The Director of Corporate Resources stated that he would shortly be meeting with Ms. Connor and the Strategy and Partnership Manager to consider further work in respect of making the connections and the need to look at organisation resilience across all organisations, how they joined up with each other and that the referral pathways were working effectively. Councillor Lloyd-Selby suggested that a further opportunity would be to work consider the role of Member Champions and how they could play their part.

In acknowledging the number of observations and good suggestions had been put forward at the meeting the Director of Corporate Resources stated that all these would be taken into consideration when further discussions were being held.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank all present for their input with it subsequently being

AGREED –

(1) T H A T the work being undertaken to review the Voluntary Sector Compact, the potential to shape the Committee's future Work Programme and encourage more Voluntary Sector representation on the Committee be noted.

(2) T H A T the approach outlined in the report for engaging with a range of stakeholders to determine how the Council can work better with the Third Sector, social enterprises and increase community resilience and develop an integrated response to the four Audit Wales reports detailed in the report be endorsed.

(3) T H A T the approach outlined in the report to align the work of the Committee more closely with the critical challenges in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan, the work of the Public Services Board and the Council's transformation programme be supported.

(4) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet for their consideration with Cabinet being made aware that the observations and suggestions of the Committee during the meeting would be taken forward by the Director of Corporate Resources and considered further when future discussions were being held.

(5) T H A T the report and appendices be circulated to all Elected Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council for information.

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Reasons for decision

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order to develop an integrated response and approach to the recommendations in the four Audit Wales reports detailed within the report.
- (3) Having regard to the challenges outlined within the presentation and the report.
- (4) In order that Cabinet are aware of the Committee's endorsement of the approach outlined in the report and for Cabinet's consideration and that any comments / suggestions would be taken forward as appropriate.
- (5) To ensure all Members are aware of the direction being taken by the Committee.