

MINUTE of MEETING of the VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 19 MARCH 2015.

Present – Councillors Angela Moohan (Chair in Councillor Dixon's absence), William Boyle, Harry Cartmill (substitute for Jim Dixon), Tom Conn and Lawrence Fitzpatrick (substitute for David Dodds).

Apologies – Councillor Jim Dixon, Jim Dickson and David Dodds

In attendance

John Cochrane, Senior People's Forum Representative
Jim McGregor, Voluntary Sector Gateway, West Lothian
Fiona Pearson, West Lothian Social Enterprise Network
Kathleen Neilly, West Lothian Food Bank
Avis McDonald, Chair, Daisy Drop In
Jackie McKenna, Daisy Drop in Social Enterprise Consultant

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor William Boyle declared a general non-financial interest arising from him being the Chair of the Board of the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian.

2. MINUTES

- a) The Panel approved the Minute of its meeting held on 27 November 2014; and
- b) The Panel approved the Minute of its meeting held on 17 December 2014.

The Minutes were thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. FOOD POVERTY

The Panel noted a presentation carried out by the Community Regeneration Manager and Kathleen Neilly of West Lothian Foodbank providing details of the progress made to date by the Food Poverty Working Group.

The Food Poverty Working Group was established to tackle food poverty in West Lothian and consisted of organisations operating the food banks and others in the voluntary sector. Food poverty was linked to financial poverty and it was noted that there has been a dramatic increase in demand for the services available raising concerns that emergency measures such as food banks could become permanent fixtures, which was never the original intention. Members were then provided with details of the projects and initiatives which were being developed in West

Lothian, which included the possibility of establishing a community garden in which to grow fresh food.

Kathleen Neilly then informed the Panel that she had attended the “Beyond Food Banks” event which she found to be very interesting. Ms Neilly also confirmed that there had been a significant increase in the number of referrals received by West Lothian Food Bank over the last month.

In response to questions from members the Community Regeneration Manager advised that work was being carried out to develop a Food Poverty Working Group web page to share information and opportunities across the organisations and also to provide improved statistics on the extent of food poverty in West Lothian.

The Panel thanked Ms Neilly for attending the meeting and thanked everyone involved in the Food Poverty Working Group for the progress made in tackling food poverty in West Lothian.

Following the conclusion of the presentation the Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services which provided details of the joint proposals and initiatives being carried out to tackle food poverty.

The report included an update on the visit to the pilot “Community Shop” in Goldthorpe, Yorkshire, to see the model which was to be rolled out in twenty locations over the next three years. Updates in relation to the Community Shop and food donations would be submitted to a future meeting of the Voluntary Organisations PDSP.

The Panel was asked to note the progress by the Food Poverty working group.

Decision

Noted the presentation and contents of the report.

4. AN ENTERPRISING THIRD SECTOR

The Panel welcomed Avis McDonald and Jackie McKenna, who attended the meeting on behalf of the Daisy Drop In to provide an update on the plans that had been developed following participation in the ‘Partnering for Success’ programme.

Ms McDonald provided the Panel with details of the background of the Daisy Drop In centre, which began in 2005 and had successfully provided services and activities for parents and carers of pre-school children in the Craigshill community. Working in partnership with West Lothian Council plans were made to develop a more enterprising and co-ordinated children’s and family service. The Panel was advised that the Daisy Drop In participated in the ‘Partnering for Success’ programme using resources secured from the BIG Lottery ‘Investing in Ideas’ programme.

Ms McKenna then advised the Panel that she began working with the 'Daisy Drop In' centre in September 2014. A review of the organisational structure, governance and business plan were carried out with a series of workshops held and market research carried out within the community. The Panel was then given an update on the fundamental changes made to ensure the success of the Daisy Drop In as an enterprising third sector organisation working in partnership with the council and other organisations in Craigshill.

The Panel thanked Ms McDonald and Ms McKenna for attending the meeting and congratulated all members involved for their commitment to the success of the Daisy Drop In.

The Panel then considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services which provided details of activities to support the development of more enterprising third sector organisations in West Lothian. Appendix 1 to the report provided an update from West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSSEN) on their activities for the period November 2014 to March 2015.

The Senior Policy Officer advised that the Council Executive approved the 'Innovation, Potential and Fresh Thinking: A Framework to Support and Develop More Enterprising Third Sector Organisations' (the social economy strategy) at its meeting held on 16 December 2014. Regular reports in relation to the action plan for the framework would be provided to future meetings of the Panel.

Progress continued to be made in developing and moving forward the final strand of the Partnering for Success (PfS) programme Working Together Learning Together (WTLT) which comprised of four inter-related sessions which commenced on 19 November 2014 and was scheduled to end in April 2015. An evaluation of the other strands of the PfS programme was undertaken by the delivery partners co-ordinated by WLSSEN, details of which was attached as appendix 3 to the report. Details of the link officers participation in the PfS programme was attached as appendix 4 to the report.

It was noted that Strathclyde University was nearing completion of its co-commissioned research project into "Valuing Community Benefits as Social Investment Opportunities". An interim report was attached as appendix 2 to the report.

Business Gateway supported West Lothian social enterprises to secure external funding for a number of projects, details of which were highlighted in the report. Business Gateway staff were also actively involved in developing West Lothian Council's Enterprising Third Sector Framework and worked with WLSSEN to map out a range of business supports available to the sector. Work was also being carried out in a number of West Lothian schools to promote the model of social enterprise in schools enterprise projects.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, thanked everyone involved for their

commitment to the strategic approach in developing an enterprising third sector network in West Lothian.

Decision

Noted the update from the Daisy Drop In centre and contents of the report.

5. GALA GRANTS REVIEW AND ALLOCATIONS 2015/16

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services providing details of the outcome of a review of the Gala Grant budget which included funding criteria, the development of a new web page dedicated to galas and a satisfaction survey of recipients of gala grants. Details of the Gala Grant Procedure was attached as appendix 1 and the Gala Grant Application Form attached as appendix 2 to the report.

The report advised that a review of the process was undertaken by Area Services in September/October 2014 which resulted in a number of positive changes being made to the process for administering the budget, details of which were outlined within the report.

A list of the recipients of Gala Grant funding in 2014-15 was attached as appendix 3 to the report. The Panel was also advised that the council agreed a Gala Grant Budget for financial year 2015/16 of £52,069 at its meeting held on 29 January 2015.

The Panel was advised that a satisfaction survey was conducted with all recipients of gala grant funding, however, it was noted that responses to the survey was poor with only one response received.

During the course of the discussion the Panel noted their disappointment in the poor response to the survey and recommended that recipients of gala grant funding should be encouraged to provide feedback using the customer satisfaction survey.

The Panel was asked to note the outcome of the review of the gala grant budget, the satisfaction survey and the budget figure for gala groups in 2015/16.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

6. VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS HEALTH CHECKS AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services providing details of the 2014/15 round of health checks completed during February and March 2015. The report also provided an update on the position regarding potential joint work with

Quality Scotland (QS) in relation to a BIG Lottery funded project with Voluntary Action Scotland (VAS).

The report advised that work continued to support third sector organisations gain a recognised quality accreditation by developing a tailored quality framework aligned to the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM), together with a bespoke self-assessment tool that would revise, update and improve the current health check.

The Head of Area Services advised the Panel that a report was previously submitted on 25 September 2014 providing details of the health checks and quality improvement work carried out with third sector organisations. The update report provided details of the progress made relating to the joint work carried out with Quality Scotland to support them in delivering the West Lothian part of the BIG lottery funded quality improvement project being delivered with Voluntary Action Scotland. The Panel was then advised that the Voluntary Sector Gateway had confirmed that they had signed up to the Quality Scotland/Voluntary Action Scotland project which would enable work to progress to realign the health checks to incorporate quality and links to Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) outcomes. It was noted that a further update report would be submitted to the Panel at its meeting scheduled to be held in June 2015.

The Senior Policy Officer then provided members with an update on the health check process, which continued to highlight ongoing improvements by all organisations with both Link Officers and Chief Officers/Trustees reporting a better understanding of the process.

Finally, the Panel was advised that the joint work with Quality Scotland in reviewing, refreshing and updating the health checks was progressing well with agreement reached on short, medium and long term outcomes. The health checks continued to show improvements in average scores with improvement plans being prepared and implemented.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, acknowledged that West Lothian Third Sector Interface (TSI) had signed up to the Quality Scotland/Voluntary Action Scotland initiative and looked forward to a successful partnership in the future.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report; and
2. Noted that the Voluntary Sector Gateway had signed up to the QS/VAS project.

7. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2015/2016

A copy of the Voluntary Organisations timetable of meetings for 2015/2016 was circulated for information.

Decision

Noted the timetable of meetings for 2015/2016.

8. WORKPLAN

A copy of the workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

Noted the contents of the workplan.