

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

VOLUNTARY SECTOR GATEWAY WEST LOTHIAN UPDATE

**REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the panel on key issues affecting the Third Sector in West Lothian and the work by Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian in providing an effective single point of access for support and advice and representing the interests of voluntary and community groups within West Lothian.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel:

1. Considers and notes the overview provided by Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian in Appendix 1 and their work in supporting and representing the interests of voluntary and community groups within West Lothian.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live in resilient, cohesive and sae communities.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	£48,770 has been awarded to VSGWL from the Voluntary Organisations budget for 2022/23.

VII Consideration at PDSP

The Voluntary Organisations PDSP is updated on a quarterly basis.

VIII Other consultations

None.

D. TERMS OF THE REPORT**D.1 Background**

The role of the third sector interface (TSI) is to provide an effective single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within a local area. It is expected that the TSI will provide a strong cohesive conduit between the third sector and the local authority and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and that it is well managed, governed and effective.

The TSI operating in West Lothian is the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL). The VSGWL is a member of the West Lothian CPP. VSGWL receives a grant from the Scottish Government Third Sector Unit and received £48,770 from West Lothian Council in 2022/23.

D.2 Current update

An update from the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian is attached as Appendix 1.

E CONCLUSION

The panel is asked to consider and note the report by the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian and that the PDSP will receive regular updates going forward.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1

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16 June 2022

Appendix 1

THE GATEWAY

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

Introduction

The joint Third Sector Annual report 2021-2022, presented separately to the PDSP, provides a snapshot into the role, scope, and value of the Third Sector and voluntary landscape across West Lothian. The sector is highly diverse. It ranges from tiny volunteer-run community groups like village halls and play groups to major public service providers in social care and housing.

Voluntary organisations are charities, community organisations and social enterprises. Across West Lothian and indeed Scotland, the voluntary sector is a major employer, a partner in delivering public services, and a vital contributor to society and the economy. Voluntary organisations provide the essential services that people and communities in rely on.

The Annual report includes a number of case studies provided by third sector partners to showcase their work and their contribution to providing much needed help and support to those in need. The report also provides high level information about the size and value of the sector from a national perspective as well as in the local context.

The Third Sector has been recognised for its outstanding role through the Covid pandemic, collectively working to meet need in communities and adapting new approaches with statutory partners to tackle issues as they arose.

The sector continues to play a key role by working in partnership with key stakeholders like West Lothian Council and other Community Planning Partners to deliver help and support to individuals and communities across the local area.

Key facts

Scotland

- 46,500 active voluntary organisations, including 23,800 charities
- 82% of voluntary orgs are local
- £8.5 Billion income
- £7.9 Billion expenditure
- Volunteers contribute £5.5 Billion to Scotland's economy
- 118,644 staff

West Lothian

- 1,456 active voluntary organisations with 536 charities operating
- 84% of voluntary orgs are local
- £109m income
- £89m expenditure
- Volunteers provide 4.1 million hours of help

- Volunteering contribute £62.1m to the local economy
- 1083 paid staff
- 2,855 trustees

Third Sector Manifesto and Hustings event

In advance of the 2022 May local elections, the Third Sector developed a Manifesto for Change - [West Lothian third sector Manifesto](#) - that called on candidates from each of the main Political Parties to a commitment to work with the sector.

Our Manifesto set out calls for

- **Vision** – A Council-wide strategic vision for engaging with and investing in, West Lothian's third sector.
- **Partnership** – Build true partnerships based on equality, trust and mutual respect.
- **Investment** – Increase investment in the sector through multi-year funding.
- **Prevention** – increase expenditure on early intervention and preventative approaches.
- **Empowerment** – Invest further in local initiatives that empower people, communities, and organisations to build their capacity to create solution.

Revised Council PDSP structure

Following the local elections, West Lothian Council revised its PDSP arrangements. The Third Sector is actively exploring how we best support and be represented in the new structure.

Funding landscape

Even before COVID, the voluntary sector was fragile, and it is more so now. The cost-of-living crisis is impacting on everyone - individuals, communities, and businesses. The impact is greatest on those who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged – the crisis will only worsen already entrenched inequalities.

In 2021/22, VSGWL distributed £570K from the Scottish Government's Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund to 32 organisations in West Lothian. The funding supported and encouraged initiatives that promote and benefit the mental health and wellbeing of people at a small scale, grassroots, community level. In October 2022, VSGWL launched a further £469K round of funding to support community-based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing.

Soaring energy bills, the cost-of-living crisis and the social care crisis are also having a significant impact on the Third Sector and creating huge uncertainty about the sustainability of many organisations. There are real concerns that the critical support and services provided by the sector to those most disadvantaged in local communities will be cut back or simply not be there in the future.

Sustainability needs to be vastly improved, including a greater degree of financial security, such as multi-year investment. Many voluntary organisations delivering public services struggle with short term funding arrangements that make it challenging to plan.

As a result, leaders in the sector frequently raise concerns about the amount of time they spend trying to raise money rather than delivering vital services. Short-term funding also creates stress for staff and beneficiaries and diverts organisations away from focussing on helping individuals and local communities. This creates precarious working conditions for

individuals in the third sector and contributes to high staff turnover and ongoing loss of knowledge and expertise.

Research conducted by SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) also paints a bleak picture of the challenges facing the sector arising from spiralling costs and falling income, with 61% of voluntary organisations experiencing financial challenges while continuing to see an increased demand for services

<https://scvo.scot/policy/campaigns/running-costs-crisis>

Volunteering

According to the latest (2020) Scottish Household Survey (SHS), 64% of adults had taken part in formal or informal volunteering in the last year. 56% of adults took part in informal volunteering, and 26% took part in formal volunteering.

In West Lothian, 32% of adults in West Lothian, an estimated 46,270 people, volunteered formally through an organisation or group. This equates to around **4.1 Million hours** of help providing **£62.1 Million** to West Lothian's economy.

Research **published by Volunteer Scotland** has warned that targeted support must be offered to communities in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) lowest quartiles, where the demand for volunteering support will be highest.

These areas - among the poorest in Scotland - are likely to see a "major increase" in the need for support, with Volunteer Scotland stating that offering "health and wellbeing support will be critical". Volunteer Scotland added that as the cost-of-living crisis grows the work of volunteers will be affected. The poorest areas in Scotland could be worst hit if the ongoing cost of living crisis engulfing households leads to a reduction in volunteers across the sector.

There were also concerns raised that the increased cost of heating, and higher operating costs for buildings generally, are likely to affect the places where people volunteer.

Volunteer-involving organisations may be forced to reduce their opening hours or in extreme cases close altogether, the report warned, with a direct impact on their ability to engage volunteers.

Conclusion

There needs to be targeted support and effective support to Third Sector organisations addressing the financial and societal challenges associated with the cost-of-living crisis and the social care crisis. The sector is critical to West Lothian's wellbeing, prosperity, and success.

The sector is agile, vibrant, and uniquely placed to support those in most need in our communities. Organisations are totally committed to working in partnership with statutory partners to improve health and wellbeing, relieve pressures on statutory services and in ensuing West Lothian is a great place to live, work and prosper.

Presented by Alan McCloskey
Chief Executive Officer
VSGWL
November 2022