

## **Bi-annual Ministerial Meetings with the Third Sector**

**Meeting between the Deputy Minister for Regeneration (on behalf of the Minister for Social Justice & Local Government) and the Third Sector, Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2007, Conference Room 20, Cardiff Bay**

### **MINUTES**

#### **Present:**

Leighton Andrews AM, Deputy Minister for Regeneration

#### **Attendees:**

##### **Welsh Assembly Government officials**

Anthony Pugh	Voluntary Sector Unit
Chris Gittins	Communities First Policy Unit
Lynne Schofield	Financial Inclusion Unit
Peter Owen	Voluntary Sector Unit
Fiona Middleton (minutes)	Social Justice & Local Government Business Unit

##### **Third Sector representatives**

Alun Gruffudd	Advice Network, Cymru
Anna Nicholl	Welsh Refugee Council
Cerys Thomas	Communities Network
Jenny Render	WACVC
Lynne Hughes	Oxfam Cymru
Maggi Dawson	Workers' Educational Association, South Wales
Maria Mesa	Black Voluntary Sector Network Wales (BVSNW)
Peter Williams	Development Trusts Association Wales
Sean O'Neill	Children in Wales
Simon Harris	Wales Co-operative Centre
Tim Day	Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

#### **Introduction**

Third Sector representatives at the meeting wished to express their condolences to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on his recent bereavement. The Deputy Minister for Regeneration would be Chairing the meeting in his place.

- 1. Minutes of the last meetings:**
  - Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (8 November 2006)**
  - Minister for Finance and Local Government (22<sup>nd</sup> March 2007)**

*SJR meeting held 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006*

- 1.1** The minutes were agreed and the following progress on actions noted:

- *Action 3.1* – officials to consider funding of travel and subsistence for Anti Poverty Network Cymru (APNC). Assembly Government officials had met with APNC and WCVA. At this time members were not ready for formal funding from Assembly Government. It was agreed that this situation would be kept under review;
- *Action 3.2/4* – Identify opportunities for the voluntary sector to be more engaged in the policy gateway tool. The Gateway had been amended and now emphasised the need to involve external stakeholders including the third sector.

**Action:** Assembly Government officials to monitor input from the Sector to the revised ‘policy gateway’ process, in conjunction with Strategic Policy Unit.

*FLGPS meeting held 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2007*

1.2 The minutes were agreed.

## **2. The Third Dimension: The Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme**

2.1 The Deputy Minister confirmed that the new strategy would be launched at the end of November. He emphasised the importance of the commitment in the action plan for every Assembly Department to work with the sector to identify supporting actions relating to their portfolio.

2.2 The sector’s involvement at all stages of the Plan’s development was noted and members welcomed the fact that comments had been taken on board. All agreed that the challenge would be to move to a genuine ‘Third Sector Scheme’, as some organisations did not see themselves as being part of the voluntary sector.

### *Social Enterprise*

2.3 Sector representatives also welcomed the news that the Social Enterprise Strategy would be updated to take forward the items identified in this Plan, in order to strengthen social engagement across Wales.

### **Actions:**

- a) Voluntary Sector Unit to feed into Assembly Government officials work to update the Social Enterprise Strategy;
- b) Sector to propose what needs to be part of the revised Strategy on social enterprise and social justice at the next Social Enterprise Joint Working Group meeting.

### *Action Plan Monitoring*

2.4 The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council would be responsible for keeping an overview of progress on actions. The role of this bi-lateral meeting would be to consider progress relating to specific SJLG departmental actions.

2.5 Cross-cutting matters were discussed. Since the election, the Deputy Minister had created, and Chaired, the Regeneration Board, which included economic and

community regeneration. He invited members to liaise with him directly over sectoral work which would have links with this Board.

**Action:** Sector to liaise with the Deputy Minister on any cross-cutting issues which they would wish to be raised at the Regeneration Board.

### 3. Communities Next

3.1 The Deputy Minister stated that the move to the 'Communities Next' phase would not mean the end of Communities First (CF). The emphasis of this new phase would be on positive regeneration outcomes. The consultation document, currently in preparation, would address what this would mean in detail.

3.2 The newly formed Assembly Government task and finish group of specialist advisers had met once.

**Action:** Assembly Government officials to send out the Communities First Task and Finish Group membership for information.

#### *The Consultation document*

3.3 The Sector asked Assembly Government officials to consider the following when developing the consultation document:

- The need to involve the sector in the drafting of the consultation paper;
- The need for the Task and Finish group to talk to third sector organisations involved in the Communities First Support Network (CFSN) and in running the current CF programme;
- The need for the 'draft' consultation to be sent to all CF Partnerships and those involved on the ground.

3.4 The Deputy Minister confirmed that:

- Assembly Government officials were currently finalising the policy gateway process for the consultation document.
- The Assembly Government would be looking to run some consultation events;
- He had a meeting scheduled with the CFSN; most of the task and finish group members were well acquainted with the Network;
- All the CF Partnerships would be engaged and consulted with as would members of the community.

**Action:** Assembly Government officials to feed back to officials leading on the policy gateway on the Communities Next Consultation document.

3.5 Third sector representatives raised the issue of appropriate consultation with minority groups. The Deputy Minister said that some internal analysis had been undertaken with communities of interest and geographic communities' and that this would be an important aspect of taking Communities Next forward.

3.6 The Deputy Minister noted that Citizens Advice Cymru had corresponded with the Minister raising their concerns over aspects of the consultation document.

3.7 In response to a question on Communities First continuing to fund specific posts, such as Youth Workers and Sports workers, the Deputy Minister said that he

felt Communities First did seem to be funding posts that should be picked up by the statutory (or other) sectors..

#### **4. The Compact Report, The WCVA 2007 Annual Report into local government and voluntary sector relationships**

4.1 The annual report had been produced since 2002 and was originally meant to be jointly produced by the WCVA and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). In reality the report has been produced by the WCVA, with survey responses through and from the County Voluntary Councils, so tended to reflect the relationship from their viewpoint. As some of the survey would be about perception it was noted that it would be useful for local government to give its perspective. In order to achieve this, it would be necessary for local government to go through the same or a similar survey process. Informal discussions had taken place between the WCVA and the WLGA with no specific outcomes.

**Actions:**

- a) Third Sector to formally request the WLGA's engagement with the annual local Compact survey;
- b) If the WLGA are unable to engage with the annual Compact survey process, the Third Sector to involve the Minister in future discussions.

#### **5. Third Sector priorities for local government**

5.1 A number of key issues raised in the Compact Report had been picked up in the paper produced for this item. The Third Sector wished to use this paper as a framework for Assembly Government Departmental priorities to do with local government.

**Action:** Assembly Government officials to meet with the SJLG Director to establish current Departmental proposals before meeting with the WCVA to discuss their proposals.

*Third Sector representation at the bi-annual meetings*

5.2 The Third Sector explained the current arrangements for representation across all Ministerial bi-annual meetings with the Sector. Representation is identified mainly from networks and occasionally from organisations which have expressed an interest in participating. Earlier sight of the agenda and supporting papers would allow the Third Sector to field the right people to contribute to discussions.

**Action:** Assembly Government officials and the WCVA to review the current protocol and timetable for these meetings.

#### **6. Role of the Third Sector in financial inclusion and income maximisation**

6.1 The Deputy Minister informed those present that the Minister had asked officials to develop a Financial Inclusion Strategy to bring together a number of commitments in the One Wales programme.

6.2 They would also like to see emphasis on community involvement within this Strategy to help people be more engaged in their own financial literacy. All agreed that some aspects of the implementation of the Strategy would be dependent on

external factors such as policies and programmes being taken forward by Whitehall Departments.

6.3 Assembly Government officials were currently consulting with key contacts, seeking their input into the public consultation document and would be expecting responses by mid-December. The final public consultation would also include best practice examples.

**Action:** When minutes are issued, include list of contacts who have been asked to comment on the Financial Inclusion Strategy.

## 7. Any Other Business

7.1 The Voluntary Sector raised concerns over some funding contained the recently published Welsh Assembly Government budget:

- *Community Facilities Programme*. For 2008-09, revenue funding had been set aside to cover existing projects running into the next financial year. Apart from this allocation, it had been agreed that this should be a capital budget, not revenue, which was why no figures were showing for years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011;
- *Safer Communities Fund* – within the current draft 3-year budget, this would be losing £490,000 annually for the following 3 years. The Third Sector asked if the money had been moved to another budget line.

**Action:** Assembly Government Officials to research budgeting for Safer Communities Fund and provide an update to the Third Sector members.

7.2 The Sector representatives noted that since the election there had been a break in its regular dialogue with Ministers and officials regarding the Refugee Inclusion Strategy.

**Action:** Assembly Government officials leading on Refugee Inclusion to contact the Welsh Refugee Council, with a view to reconvening the All-Wales Refugee Policy Forum.

Fiona Middleton  
21<sup>st</sup> November 2007