

Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC)
17 November 2021
Microsoft Teams Meeting
Meeting Note

Attendees:

Minister for Social Justice
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership
Menai Owen Jones – Ministers Mentee
Ruth Marks – Chief Executive, WCVA
Philip Fiander – Chair, TSPC Funding & Compliance sub-committee
Ben Lloyd – WCVA
Fiona Harris - WCVA
Carl Cooper - Intermediaries
Cath Hicks – Education and Training
Chris Johnes – Community
Derek Walker – Social Enterprise
Gethin Rhys - Religion
Jessica Laimann – Gender
Karen Whitfield – Environment
Kate Young – Health, Social Care and Wellbeing
Matthew Williams – Sport & Recreation
Rocio Cifuentes – Ethnic Minorities
Ruth Power – Housing
Sean O'Neill – Children & Families
Susie VentrisField - International
Victoria Lloyd – Older People
Paul Glaze – Youth
Richard Flowerdew – Volunteering
Gareth Coles – Arts, Culture & Heritage
David Bowles – Animal Welfare
Helene Hayes – Advice & Advocacy
Million Abesha – Asylum Seekers & Refugees
Lowri Jones – Welsh Language

Welsh Government Officials attending:

Ruth Meadows - Deputy Director, Communities Division
Chris Buchan – Head of Communities and Third Sector Branch
Paul Dear - Communities Impact of Brexit Project
Aaron Fortt – Policy Lead, Third Sector Team
Peter Kellem – Senior Private Secretary
Kate Bacon – Private Secretary
Lyndon Evans – Assistant Private Secretary
Janine Yearsley – Third Sector Team (Note Taker)

Apologies:

Andrea Cleaver – Asylum Seekers & Refugees
Davinia Green – Sexual Orientation

Agenda Item 1 – Open and Welcome

Minister for Social Justice

The Minister for Social Justice (MSJ) opened the meeting welcoming the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (DMSJ) and Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC) members to the second TSPC of the new Senedd term.

Agenda Item 2 – Progress update against the TSPC Covid Recovery Report ‘Support’ work stream

MSJ provided an update on the latest support by WG through the following funds and investment:

- Third phase of the Third Sector Resilience Fund that was well received by the sector during the crisis. The fund is being administered by WCA and is a £4million grant to help viable third sector organisations survive and thrive by helping put them on a more sustainable footing.
- Community Asset Loan Fund (also administered by WCA) which will initially have a pot of £2m of financial transaction capital and will offer loans of up to £250k over a maximum term of 25 years to third sector organisations seeking to take ownership of community assets – land or buildings. Details of both these funds can be found on WCA's website - [WCA](#)
- Investment in digital skills support (£0.5million) for the sector that will begin to answer some of the recommendations in the Discovery report that Promo Cymru produced earlier this year. The new NEWID partnership that has formed to take this work forward.

MSJ then invited Derek Walker and Phil Fiander to provide an update on the progress of the NEWID partnership and Funding and Compliance sub-committee respectively.

Derek Walker (DW) gave an update on the digital support work and the new NEWID partnership - The **Newid programme** is all about change and developing services rather than about the technology to meet the needs of citizens. The programme is a partnership programme, which will feature extensive support around skills for third sector employees, support of organisations and transformation for service delivered as a single integrated programme.

The programme will be delivered in a way that you would expect the third sector to deliver it. In an inclusive way ensuring no-one is left behind with digital inclusion agenda at the heart. Operating through a culture of openness and shared learning, for example Wales Co-op developed an online recruitment portal that was able to operate bi-lingual and this is now available for other organisations. The partnership is also keen to continue working alongside Centre for Digital Public Service (CDPS) to ensure we do not duplicate effort work to the same standards.

MSJ commented that this work was so important given the widening digital divide. We must do everything we can to enable access and the MSJ is pleased that the Deputy Minister for Climate Change is being kept informed of the work given his portfolio responsibility in this area. This work needs to be about creating a solid foundation of support for the long-term and producing the evidence that will guide our next steps.

Phil Fiander (PF) - the sub-committee continue to work well with the Minister's officials and Grants Centre of Excellence (GCoE) on the details of the proposals and guidance. The general feelings toward the proposals are positive and that the changes will ultimately be beneficial, however there are some concerns about loss of flexibility, innovation and who the beneficiaries will be. We need to ensure all grant schemes fully embrace the Third Sector Scheme and its Funding Code of Practice, ensuring early engagement at every stage of policy and grant development. There is more to be done around collaboration and communication to ensure that the processes are understood. The sub-committee also hopes that this work on 3-yr funding will ultimately be rolled out to all hypothecated funding being spent on WG's behalf. The sub-committee welcomes the continuing engagement with (GCoE).

PF went on to seek the Minister's support in relation to the loss of EU funding and in particular reminding the delivery partners of the replacement funds of the Funding Code of Practice. PF noted that this point was also raised with the MF&LG during her recent meeting (21 October 2021) with the third sector.

MSJ confirmed that she has raised these concerns with cabinet already. Commenting that we must get the longer-term grant funding process right with the sub-committee's guidance. The Minister noted she felt the sub-committee was right to rename the "monitoring" section of the guidance as "continual engagement", as well as making sure there are clear links to funding code of practice. The Minister also recognised that once WG has set the scene the opportunity to share this good practice with other public bodies is clearly there.

Kate Young (KY) - Supported what PF had said. KY made the point that Core work is not always about delivering services. It can be about bringing a voice at the table for policy colleagues with their extensive knowledge and expertise.

KY referenced the Sustainable Social Services grant and noted that although the grant is not perfect, the voice of the community was part of the process, which made a difference that led to more transparency on the ground, which is key to helping people get involved. It is important to keep the ongoing dialogue with Ministers and policy leads.

MSJ agreed that co-production and lived experience are key.

Helene Hayes (HH) – Again supported what PF had said and really welcomed longer term funding, acknowledging that it will help to retain expert staff, and will be a great advantage in allowing them to develop long-term relationships with partners and enable them to engage and understand their needs and co-design solutions.

Rocio Cifuentes (RC) – echoed what had already been said but added that there is also a need to retain space for innovation to respond to emerging needs. There is an absolute need to ensure fairness and transparency at the centre of everything.

Karen Whitfield (KW) – made the point that is important to set out the parameters at the beginning of the design of funding and to ensure goal posts are not moved during the grant period.

MSJ commented that so much of this is about good policy development, with involvement of the sector from at the very beginning.

Agenda Item 3 – Progress update against the TSPC Covid Recovery Report ‘Relationships’ work stream

Ben Lloyd (BL) – BL gave an update on the work to establish an oversight group for the Recovery report’s “relationships” work stream. A draft paper has been produced to outline this work, bringing together the voluntary, public and private sectors, acknowledging that they would like suitable partnerships. This is complex, long-term work and the paper envisages it being undertaken over the Senedd term.

Paul Dear (PD) - updated the meeting on his work exploring options for a fresh approach to working with communities. This work, which began in the context of Brexit, was suspended due to Covid but has now recommenced on a broader basis, with oversight primarily from the MSJ and the MCC, recognising that the issues are cross-cutting across all portfolios.

There have been initial conversations with other partners, including the Minister’s meeting with members of Community Movement Cymru in August, and officials hope to widen these conversations from now on, with external engagement with the third, public and private sectors, as well as academics, now key. PD emphasised that the intention was to link this work up as closely as possible with related activity, such as the Relationships strand of the TSPC’s work, to avoid duplication and identify where any new approaches would be most worthwhile. Anyone wishing to discuss this further was invited to contact paul.dear@gov.wales.

Chris Johnes (CJ) – Made reference to the “Relationships” work stream paper BL updated on, thanking those who have worked on it for making a complex picture more easily understandable. But we need to start taking this conversation to communities to get a common understanding of what we’re trying to achieve. Having a Senedd-long work programme is key because these issues go so deeply (we’re dealing with culture change) but we need to see some areas of early progress so that we keep up momentum and avoid slipping back to old ways of working. There are clear links into the community policy work and we also need to bring in the work of the Resourceful Communities Partnership.

MSJ acknowledged that we have to get our cross-government work right and it’s crucial that it reflects all the external work that’s happening. Adding that there’s a lot going on in this work stream, and work around Health and Social Care is one of the areas that we can start working on as a priority.

Susie VentrisField (SV) – made reference to climate change emphasising the importance of engagement where people live and having simple conversation – things the sector does so well. SV feels there is still a disconnect between being listened to and engagement. Recognising that because of the pandemic there are more digital events however this does not capture all the voices.

MSJ recognised these are crucial points and the relationships are complex. The Minister invited Ruth Marks (RM) to highlight any live Relationship issues council members had raised. RM shared 4 points:

- 1) Referenced to the role of the voluntary sector in resilience planning. The sector is working hard with officials within WG and creating links with Local Government. The Sector are inputting into the UK government consultation on resilience. RM asked if there could be support from the minister to add a short item on the role of the Third Sector to the Wales Resilience Forum chaired by the First Minister in December.
- 2) RM commented that it was great that the DMSP was in attendance, and that the sector has had very productive meetings with her officials concerning legislation and procurement. With the aim of having a bespoke event in 2022, more information should be available shortly.
- 3) Paid roles and Living wage week – Following the FM's announcement to the increase of the living wage, RM noted the importance of linking this to the different principles of the WFG Act and the work of the WFG Commissioner on Universal Basic Income.
- 4) Commented with respect to the work of the F&C sub-committee and PF's comment how different it is building relationships with UKG departments around EU replacement funding. RM noted that UKG officials have been keen to engage but have a different approach.

Adding that these are related but different points as regards to relationship space, many grassroot organisations employ no staff; apply/attract public funds but inspire passion for causes rooted in communities. All linking back to the work WG is undertaking on community policy.

MSJ – thanked members for the fruitful discussion and the highlighting of live issues. Commenting that DMSP will be pleased to hear of the sector's on-going support regarding the Social Partnership and Procurement Bill.

Action: MSJ agreed to liaise with the FM's office to ensure there is a strong third sector voice at his Resilient Forum event.

Agenda Item 4 – Progress update against the TSPC Covid Recovery Report 'Volunteering' work stream

MSJ gave an update on the formation of the Volunteering Cross-sectoral leadership group, as part of the Covid Recovery Report work. The Minister noted that she was pleased to see that a draft TOR has been produced and that Gretel Leeb had agreed to chair the group. An initial meeting is planned before Christmas and the Minister expects a fuller update to be brought to the next TSPC meeting. MSJ noted that she expects Equality and Diversity to form a big part of our thinking in this area, particularly as a Nation of Sanctuary.

MSJ also noted the success of the new strategic element of the Volunteering Wales grant and the useful learning and evidence it will provide. She also noted that officials and WCVA are planning two learning events for February, with details available soon. These events will be used as one of the opportunities to involve the sector in the

development of the new milestones that are key to providing status and expectations to this area of work. Thanking everyone for the excellent progress we are making.

Agenda Item 5 – AoB – Covid 21 day Review

MSJ noted that she wrote to the Sector in October to seek their help to ensure we can stay at level zero. (The letter circulated to the sector on behalf of the MSJ was put into the meeting's chat function for reference).

Kate Young (KY) – confirmed that the letter has been cascaded across networks and expressed that there would be hostility and feeling of injustice if Community Centres for example are closed ahead of pubs.

Gethin Rhys (GR) - raised concerns around the potential to extend regulations and the impact that would have on the sector. GR also noted that the perceived lack of enforcement by other agents, e.g. Transport for Wales, create a more difficult environment for third sector organisations when they (and often their volunteers) are asked to enforce the regulations.

MSJ welcomed this feedback and stressed that members should continue to write to her or her officials to help her understand the views of our communities and our most vulnerable citizens. Closing the meeting by thanking the group for the great progress that has been made collectively to deliver against the Recovery Report Work streams.