

## **Third Sector Partnership Council**

**11 March 2021**

### **Microsoft Teams meeting**

#### **Meeting Note**

#### **Attendees:**

Jane Hutt AM – Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (DMCW)  
Ruth Marks - Chief Executive, WCVA  
Anna Nicholl - WCVA  
Ben Lloyd – WCVA  
Felicite Walls - WCVA  
Fiona Harris - WCVA  
Karen Whitfield - Wales Environment Link  
Kate Young - Health, Social Care, Wellbeing and Sport Planning Group  
Susie Ventris Field - Welsh Centre for International Affairs  
Andrea Cleaver - Asylum Seekers & Refugees  
Matthew Williams - Welsh Sport Association  
Derek Walker - Social Enterprise  
Owen Evans - Children in Wales  
Patience Bentu- Ethnic Minorities  
Sandy Clubb – Volunteering  
Jamie Burt - Employment  
Iestyn Wyn - Sexual Orientation  
Carl Cooper – Intermediaries  
Elin Maher – Welsh Language  
Chris Johnes - Building Communities Trust  
Gethin Rhys – Religion  
Paul Glaze - Youth  
Cath Hicks – Education and Training  
Christopher Williams – Older People  
David Bowles – Animal Welfare  
Gareth Coles – Arts, Culture and Heritage  
Ruth Power – Housing  
Sophie Weeks – Guest  
Amanda Williams –  
Charles Whitmore – Wales Civil Society Forum  
Philip Fiander – Interim Chair of TSPC Funding and Compliance Sub-committee

#### **Welsh Government Officials attending:**

Alyson Francis - Deputy Director, Communities Division  
Chris Buchan – Head of Communities and Third Sector team  
Dr Jeremy Evas – Pennaeth/Head: Prosiect 2050  
Glynn Jones – Chief Digital Officer  
Aaron Fortt – Third Sector Team  
Helen Brown – Third Sector Team  
Janine Yearsley – Third Sector Team

## **Agenda Item 1 – Open and Welcome Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (DMCW)**

DMCW opened meeting by thanking members for attending. TSPC agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd November. DMCW explained that due to several administration issues the minutes were not currently available on Welsh Government's website but would be published as soon as possible.

## **Agenda Item 2 - Agreement from TSPC to sign off key TSPC documents**

### **TSPC Covid Recovery Group Report**

DMCW acknowledged the tremendous work undertaken by TSPC in producing the TSPC Covid Recovery Group report. DMCW asked Chris Buchan (CB), Head of Communities and Third Sector, and Anna Nicholl (AN) from the WCVA, to take TSPC through the report.

CB explained that the sub group responsible for the report had decided to focus on three key work streams (Volunteering, Relationships and Support). Detailed and focused meeting were held for each of the three work streams resulting in a set of key issues/comment along with a set of high-level proposals to improve things into the future.

CB shared a slide (Annex1) to show how each of these work streams overlaps. He also gave examples of where work is already underway.

DMCW asked for comments before asking TSPC to formally agree the report and its recommendations.

### **Comments on the TSPC Recovery Group Report:**

*Chris Johnes (CJ) - Building Communities Trust*

- CJ noted he felt this report was a thorough and intellectually coherent piece of work that has managed to capture a thematic approach which other groups have not always been able to achieve. CJ was pleased to see the inclusion of community policy within the report and was also encourage that elements of the recommendations were already going forward.
- CJ explained that the recommendations surrounding the “hard wiring” of community voice were time critical to avoid a return to ‘normal’ and also to ensure that that they impact on the production of Wellbeing Plans next year.

*Kate Young (KY) - Health, Social Care, Wellbeing and Sport Planning Group*

- KY echoed CJ's comments that the report is good and comprehensive, and added that when we think that about the relationship work stream we need to mindful of the impacts on Community Services at the moment where there has been an increase in demand for services and a decrease of resources. The Wellbeing agenda is key – the wellbeing of society and the wellbeing of communities are intertwined.

*Victoria Lloyd (VL) – Older People*

- VL explained that work which has already taken place needs to be built on now. VL has been in discussions with WLGA and LAs where discussions have already started on the level of demand for services. Moving forward, 'Hard Wiring' will be crucial to coproducing effectively. We need to be open and transparent in our decision making.

*Patience Bentu (PB) - Ethnic Minorities*

- PB endorsed the report and spoke about the importance of ensuring the diversity of volunteers, and their crucial contribution to a Green and Just recovery.

DMCW thanked the TSPC members for their comments and hoped that whatever administration is in place in the future these work streams will be hardwired into all policies and plans. DMCW also noted that over the last 12 month we have seen the positive impact of Local Government, Welsh Government and the Third Sector all working together – we don't want to go back to the third sector having to claw its way back into partnership working. We have seen across Wales where the pandemic has a disproportionate impact which has highlighted inequality, this is why the First Minister is concentrated on building back fairer.

DMCW feels this report is tremendous and very powerful and has come to the same conclusion in many areas as those recommendations in the Equalities Local Government and Communities Committee's report which has cross party support. We must now use the two reports together effectively.

**ACTION:**

*DMCW asked TSPC to sign off the TSPC Covid Recovery Group report – All TSPC members agreed.*

**Work plan for TSPC Funding and Compliance sub-committee**

DMCW asked the Chair of the sub-committee, Phil Fiander (PF) to take TSPC through the TSPC Funding and Compliance sub-committee work plan.

PF explained that since the last TSPC meeting the committee has been working collaboratively to pull together the work plan. The work plan has some long-term issues which may take the term of the next Government to resolve. To achieve these activities Welsh Government, the third sector and the public sector will have to work together. PF has been encouraged from his conversations with Welsh Government and the sector that there was a willingness for this to happen.

PF gave a few examples of areas of work where the sub-committee have identified, which are –

- How to ensure new grant managers have access to the appropriate training when funding third sector organisations.
- Ensure that third sector organisations and Welsh Government departments are aware of the Third Sector Scheme and how the code of practice for funding the sector should be implemented.

### **Comments on the TSPC Funding and Compliance sub-committee workplan**

Sheila Hendrickson-Brown (SHB) - Intermediaries

- SHB noted that the key when awareness raising is reframing the mechanisms in the context of supporting the sustainability of the third sector – it changes the focus.

Rocio Cifuentes (RC) - Ethnic Minorities

- RC echoed the comments from PF and SHB and added that it will be important to focus on raising awareness of the Code of Practice and what it stands for and to see this work influencing other funding areas. RC also noted that pressures on the sector have increased with no increased resources.

DMCW noted that if TSPC are supportive of the work plan then Welsh Government will support it too.

#### **ACTION:**

*DMCW asked TSPC to sign off the TSPC's Funding and Compliance sub-committee work plan – All TSPC members agreed.*

### **Agenda Item3 - Next Steps**

DMCW was pleased TSPC had accepted these two documents and explained that it would be important to move these agendas forward and whilst they have been gathered together into a framework for action that has some consistency of approach, it is key that we are not still discussing these same issues in another 5 years' time.

TSPC now have a number of prioritised areas of work to take forward, and each will need its own detailed action plan with key milestones and ways of measuring success. But one of the key things needed is to secure buy-in for these activities from the wider sector along with their involvement in the changes we hope to achieve.

DMCW explained that TSPC will be a key mechanism in guiding how this can be done and invited PF, CB and Anna Nicholls (AN) to share what they thought were the key Next Steps for making these two documents come alive and start to deliver change.

PF - explained that the sub-committee would have to meet to discuss detailed action plans for each piece of work with clear milestones which will build on the work plan TSPC has agreed today, believing that TSPC now has building blocks in place to create change by working together.

AN - There is now an agreement to get on and build the practical steps and to communicate what's happening to get people involved.

CB – Recognised that some of the recommendations have mechanisms in place to take them forward whilst others would need new mechanisms that will need time to build (which in some cases we don't have much of and will therefore need to move quickly). Timing will be critical in ensuring some of these activities are delivered, as will good communications across the sector and within Government.

DMCW Acknowledged that the programme of work contained in the Recovery report and the Work Plan are substantial but fundamental and asked TSPC to ensure that these activities remain sustainable and are monitored which will allow TSPC to hold Welsh Government to account.

Derek Walker (DW) Noted that outgoing Governments are not able to tie in new Governments to commitments, so how do we ensure that this work will move forward into the next senedd?

DMCW noted that the recommendations we have agreed to day in the two documents give that commitment. Officials in this meeting today, particularly those in CB's team will work with TSPC to take forward the work. It is important to also remember that this work very much reflects the recommendations of the Equality Local Government and Communities committee's report. This committee is an influential cross party which will want to see these recommendations actioned.

#### **Agenda Item 4 - Digital Strategy**

DMCW invited Glyn Jones (GJ), the Chief Digital Officer for the Welsh Government, to talk about the Digital Strategy for Wales and its delivery plan, and key role he sees for the voluntary sector in it. DMCW explained this is an area for action recommended under the "Support" Work Stream of the Recovery Report is "Digital".

GJ gave a presentation on the progress of the Digital Strategy which is hoped to be published before the Senedd Elections. The strategy has been developed and designed around the user to try to ensure the individual has good access to public services regardless of whether they will be using online services.

GJ explained that Welsh Government are aware that there are connectivity issues to deal with and that this strategy need connectivity to be dealt with in order to work.

The Centre for Digital Public Service (CDPS) is supporting the design and delivery of digital public services. GJ confirmed that this work, and the work of his office in general, will continue to be done with third sector involvement and GJ has been working with Derek Walker at The Wales Coop and Anna Nicholl at the WCVA to build on work with Digital Communities Wales; ensure collaboration with the CDPS; and begin to identify priorities for the sector such as skills, inclusion and connectivity.

In response DW was pleased to see that Welsh Government has heard and acknowledged the connectivity issues along with issues around skills/training, affordability and inclusion.

DW noted that it's important to remember that public services are delivered beyond the public sector by third sector organisation, but also that the third sector is much broader than public services delivery - and there is a need to support the digital capacity and skills of the sector more generally. There are some third sector organisation who are able to deliver on this agenda while others are working without digital skills or equipment. We have some way to go to realising the potential of digital in how the sector is able to deliver activities and the sector want to work alongside Glyn and Welsh Government to help do this.

Gethin Rhys (GR) highlighted that many faith groups have gone online with their services which has meant that some people have become reliant on free internet services – like those provided by some café's – as they are unable to afford personal internet in their homes. As we come out of lockdown we need to be mindful of the financial inclusion issues that affects the digital inclusion agenda and make sure that we are not excluding the already excluded.

DMCW was happy to see the work already underway and suggested that these issues should continue to be discussed with GJ and his team.

## **Agenda Item 5 - Welsh Language Strategy**

DMCW invited Dr Jeremy Eves (JV) Head of the new Prosiect 2050 Unit in the Welsh Government, to explain to TSPC how some of the work he is leading and how he hopes to involve the sector in it.

JV gave a presentation on the Prosiect 2050 showing some of the engagement happening to try and establish how more people can use Welsh more on a day to day basis. The team have been looking at brand analysis to understand attitudes toward the language - this work has shown that people are supportive of the Welsh language and want to look at how they can promote the Welsh Language. JV acknowledged that the sector would be key to delivering the strategy and asked if TSPC would be willing to meet with him to discuss these matters in more depth.

JV also updated TSPC that TEAMS will soon have a simultaneous translation function.

Elin Maher (EM) – Welsh Language, welcomed this timely agenda item and raising awareness of planning for the Welsh Language. If we are asking the third sector to include it in their policies it will be crucial that the Welsh language is seen as a cross-Government issue that is included in all policy and work areas. EM said that she welcomed the approach and the conversation.

**Action: JV and TS team to arrange meeting with TSPC members to enable a more in-depth discussion.**

## **Agenda Item 6 - AOB**

Dormant Charitable Trust – CB explained work had started on unlocking the potential money tied up in Dormant Charitable Trusts across Wales. CB committed to ensuring TSPC is kept up to date on this work.

## **Closing remarks**

DMCW closed the meeting by reflecting on how when first chairing TSPC 20 years ago they would take a whole day!

DMCW said that today, by agreeing long-term plans on how we develop relationships and further realise the great potential of the voluntary sector in Wales, reassured her that we are moving in the right direction together.

Ruth Marks said that this meeting was important to mark a moment in time as we hopefully begin to emerge from the crisis, and TSPC members would like to put on record their thanks to the DMCW for the support she has given the sector, and to her officials. The contact and relationship between the third sector and Welsh Government during the pandemic has made them the envy of UK colleagues.