

**Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Operational Board
Tuesday 12 June 2018 9.30-11.30 am
Gloucestershire Counselling Services, Alma House, High Street, Stroud**

MINUTES

Present:

| | | |
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| Jan Burn | Kingfisher Treasure Seekers | (JB) |
| Maz Jennings (Chair) | Furniture Recycling Project and YMCA Cheltenham | (MJ) |
| Catherine Kevis | Gloucestershire Community Foundation | (CK) |
| Norman Gardner | Citizens Advice Gloucester | (NG) |
| Simon Gillings | Youth and Community Services | (SG) |
| Emma Griffiths | Gloucestershire Counselling Service | (EG) |

Apologies:

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Bridget Davies | Gloucestershire Care Services |
| Elin Tattersall | GRCC |

In attendance:

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|--------------|------|
| Mike Brain | (MB) |
| Matt Lennard | (ML) |
| Jem Sweet | (JS) |
| Susan West | (SW) |

1. Welcome

MJ welcomed everyone and thanked Emma for hosting this meeting.

2. New Chief Executive Officer

The Board asked how the need for a CEO was decided. They were concerned at the lack of communication with them about the role and on the speed of the application process.

ML reported that the Trustees (the Strategic Board) identified that the Alliance needed further capacity, particularly to develop strategy and policy.

MJ thanked the staff team for their achievements in getting the Alliance into its current position which has led to the creation of the CEO role.

Mike Brain had been appointed as Chief Executive Officer and Cordell Ray from CCP is now Acting Chair of Trustees. The Strategic Board consists of three Chief Executives and is planning to expand the number of trustees.

MB explained he had stepped down as Chair of Trustees when the Board had decided, after several weeks of discussion, to appoint a CEO because he was interested in applying. His appointment is for 12 months depending on performance and funds to sustain it after that.

MB explained he had no communication with any of the staff team or Board during the application process. He thought the Trustees had planned to consult at least with MJ on its

plans. He also highlighted that none of the Alliance's stakeholders were involved in the interviews. MB accepted the position because he wants to make a difference to the Alliance and its future and put it on a better business footing.

MB is agreeing his immediate priorities with the Strategic Board; these focus on internal systems and processes. The staff are currently employees of GFirstLEP and the plan is for the Alliance to employ its own staff. He will be consulting to TUPE staff from GFirstLEP to the Alliance. The plan is to continue using GFirstLEP to provide payroll services, at least in the short-term.

The Board felt there was still a lack of clarity on the roles of the two Boards and the relationship between them. The Strategic Board are the trustees of the charity with legal responsibilities. MJ attends Strategic Board meetings to voice views and concerns of the Operational Board. She is concerned that the Operational Board is not being kept in the loop on developments. She also questioned the amount of staff time involved if all four Alliance staff continue to attend both Board meetings.

The Board queried its own role and relevance. ML said Board members can offer advice and support for staff and on projects. There was concern that stakeholders who fund the Alliance are determining the agenda to meet their needs rather than those of the VCS. Operational Board members can offer a wide range of VCS views but don't want to be seen as a "tick-box" exercise by the Strategic Board or Alliance stakeholders.

MB agreed on the need to improve communications. He said the Operational Board exists to support the Alliance, challenge what the Alliance is doing and bring the perspective of their organisations to inform whether or not the Alliance is going in the right direction.

MB said Gloucestershire County Council and the CCG pay the Alliance to deliver the strategy agreed by the VCSE sector. VCSE organisations had had the opportunity to input to the strategy through the consultation process during 2017.

He is keen to run an engagement programme with the sector, including a survey, which will be owned by the Operational Board, to hear the views of Alliance members.

MB reported he is looking to rent office space in Gloucester. The Alliance currently has two desks at Tewkesbury Borough Council with restricted internet access, no printer and no telephone. His aim is to find affordable space, ideally shared with other VCSE organisations.

ACTION: MB to raise the Operational Board's concerns at the Strategic Board meeting on 18 June. Unfortunately MJ is unable to attend due to other work commitments.

3. Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2018 were approved. There were no matters arising.

4. VCSE Strategy 2018-19

ML explained the strategy is now live and is useful to relate all activity back to the strategy. It will be available to the Board on a new Google drive he is setting up.

MB aims to establish how the Alliance's funding covers the cost of delivering its activities. He reminded the Board that the Alliance now has a three-year funding agreement with both

Gloucestershire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group. He will establish a reserves policy to create a surplus to improve the Alliance's resilience.

5. Gloucestershire 2050

ML said the Alliance had run a survey to get a VCS response to the impact of the Gloucestershire 2050 proposals. Only one response had been received. He understood there has been a limited response to the main survey. SG commented that people are more concerned about tomorrow rather than 30 years' time.

6. Current projects

Community transport scheme (CARMA)

CARMA is a community transport scheme to encourage people to volunteer their time using an uber-style app. The Alliance has received funding from Gloucestershire County Council to test the scheme's feasibility. ML reported that six people attended the first meeting held in May. The project is divided into volunteering, safeguarding technical requirements and marketing, with most of the money to be spent on technical requirements. He acknowledged more support and motivation from the VCS is needed to progress the project effectively.

CK felt that people need to understand the vision behind it before they will commit support. It was agreed that community transport is an important issue and it was surprising that traditional transport providers do not appear to be interested in thinking of alternative solutions to the current provision.

MB suggested the Alliance team give presentations at future Board meetings to increase understanding and share the successes from key activities such as the VCSE strategy and CARMA.

ACTION: Alliance team

Digital e-learning

VolTech rejected the funding bid to create an e-learning package for community and voluntary organisations. ML is not aware of alternative funding sources and this idea is unlikely to progress.

Crowdsolving

This proposal is about creating an app for peer to peer volunteering. ML has met Fair Shares who he believes are best placed to lead on this project. Although they are enthusiastic, it's not likely to be a priority for them. CK asked ML to mention the #iwill element to Fair Shares.

ACTION: ML to follow up with Fair Shares.

Social impact project

Creative Sustainability are interested in this idea to measure the social impact of collective actions and are doing a similar piece of work.

ACTION: ML is meeting Creative Sustainability shortly to discuss.

7. VCS conference 2018

The event is scheduled for World Mental Health day on 10 October and is likely to be held at Forest Green Rovers in Nailsworth.

ML reported that funding is available from the University of Gloucestershire, 2gether Trust and the CCG which will be matched by the OPCC. The Alliance will provide staff time.

ML reported that the nature of the event had changed. The OPCC is leading on the project supported by the CCG and County Council. It will focus on an exhibition from VCS organisations rather than presentations and workshops. The aim will be for the VCS to showcase their offer to an audience drawn from the public sector through an exhibition and short Ted-style talks. The event will include a public health consultation. The plan is to use Slideo for interaction. The event will end with a panel discussion chaired by MB.

The Board was concerned that the event format is completely different to that discussed at the previous Board meeting. They felt that the funders seem to be driving the agenda. The Board was disappointed that none of its members had been invited to join the planning group and were concerned about the impact they can make.

JB had hoped the event could explore how the VCS sits alongside and works with the statutory sector, particularly how clinical and non-clinical aspects of mental health could work more effectively together. She explained that Kingfisher Treasure Seekers has been working with the CCG to share information, identify blockages and change process at CCG. She strongly believes the VCS needs to be part of the solution and more closely integrated with statutory services, breaking down barriers and co-designing a new solution. MB felt this might be better as a targeted seminar.

ACTION: JB to provide a one page summary proposing a follow-up seminar

8. New Project – Business Simulation and Back office

ML explained there are plans to look at creating a VCS hub. He is focusing on the non-physical infrastructure, particularly technology. Rob Fountain from Age UK Gloucestershire is taking a lead, supported by Young Gloucestershire, Carers Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire Community Foundation.

MB said the future aspiration is to have a purpose-built hub for the VCS, operating in a similar way to how the Growth Hub supports business.

MJ highlighted a need for such a facility. She has a new role with another young people's charity who would welcome the opportunity to consider a different working environment than is currently available to them.

The Board expressed its interest in the Alliance taking this forward.

9. Updates

- **Health and Wellbeing Officer**

JS had previously circulated his report.

He highlighted an issue where the Alliance had been asked to bring organisations together pre-tender to facilitate more partnership working and joint bids. This had happened at a pre-tender event for the Carers contract, but the CCG has now asked the Alliance to stop because such activity could be regarded as preferential treatment and compromise the tender process.

It was reported that the CCG are putting bids out to tender, holding an engagement event, allowing two weeks for organisations to register their interest and one week to put in a bid. It was agreed this did not enable partnership working or sufficient time to submit a sensible bid.

ACTION MB will report back to Emma Savage and Diana Billingham to discuss the issues raised and try to change the process. MB said the Alliance will challenge the public sector and highlight shortfalls. MJ stressed that this is an important role of the Alliance in order that we retain and promote our role as advocates of the VCS.

JS is planning to meet Jules Ford from the CCG for an update on social prescribing.

He is starting to schedule time in each district to meet smaller organisations and hear their views. This is starting initially on District Council premises and will take a while to get off the ground.

ACTION MB will attend District VCS forums to explain his role and that of the Alliance.

10. Any Other Business

CK reported that as part of Small Charity Week (18-23 June), Gloucestershire Community Foundation has organised an event in Cheltenham's Regent Arcade. Six small charities have signed up and will be giving advice and raising awareness of the impact of small charities. She encouraged Board members to visit the event and promote it on Twitter.

CK said that Gloucestershire Community Foundation is currently recruiting trustees. Potential applicants should not be deterred from applying because their organisation may also want to apply to the Foundation for funding. NG explained he is a trustee of the Community Foundation and Citizens Advice in Gloucester has still been able to receive funding.

11. Next meetings

Tuesday 2 October, 2-4pm, location tbc

Monday 17 December, 10am-12pm, location tbc