

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMISSIONING GROUP
WEDNESDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2007**

Attendees:

Bill Edwards (Chair) BE
Jo Charlan JC
Richard Browning RB
Denis Durnian DD
Paula Boshell PB
Councillor Jean Stretton JS
Laura Breslin LB
Jonathan Yates JY

Apologies:

Mark Powell; Jo Farrington; Moira Blood; Liz Wilson

Minutes and matters arising

PB requested that the minutes be amended with regards to the item on the database. RB confirmed that the section should say 'coincide with VCFP activity' rather than end with. He also confirmed that ratifying decisions by e-mail had been an effective means of making decisions when the group was not quorate.

Update on Commissioned Activities

DD confirmed that if the remaining funding is not spent by mid January, it would be absorbed and spend on activities outside the CECG.

Database

RB reported that during the meeting with VAO regarding the database, he had been asked whether the commissioned database was data protection compliant. RB has consulted the Council's data protection manager who has advised that whilst the database is not in breach of the data protection act, there is scope for improvement. ERS, who are completing the work, suggested that the CECG approved the questionnaire. However RB stated that the CECG approved the content of the questionnaire and made no judgement upon the compliance with data protection. As PB could not attend the first meeting with VAO, RB will meet with VAO again to discuss the database.

VCFP Infrastructure allocation

PB provided an overview of outcomes, targets and activities. PB distributed a job description for the post of Community Engagement Manager. DD requested that measurable outcomes and outputs are separated. JS raised concerns that if the person was not in post soon, it could mean that the project is not realistic. PB stated that the salary had been raised in an attempt to get someone in to post and that the hope was to recruit someone on secondment.

JS requested that the costs be recalculated to reflect the secondment of 3 months. LB asked if any activity could be started before the person is in post and PB confirmed that where possible, it would be. LB suggested that training vouchers provided by the Director for Social Change could be used towards some of the training highlighted in the proposal.

RB and PB left the room and the group held a discussion about the proposed activity.

DD began by stating that a delivery schedule would need to be drawn out and that £62,000 would be a maximum possible cost, not a given.

The group requested that the following changes be made to the project costs:

- That the costs for administration, premises and management be reduced by 50%. The group requested this, as it was understood that VAO core costs are funded via Priority Programme Funding (PPF).
- That salary costs be reduced by 25% to reflect the reduction in the timescale of the project.
- That recruitment costs cover actual costs, not estimates.
- Confirmation that 50% of the scale 5 officer time will be spent on the project.

PB and RB rejoined the group

PB questioned the rationale for reducing the overhead costs and stated this represents only 5% of full-cost recovery and administration costs are not funded by PPF. These costs are part funded by different projects making contributions under the ethos of full cost recovery. RB confirmed the Priority Programme Fund SLA includes outcomes related to the VCFP and developing representation on the LAA.

LB requested that the Commissioning Unit provide some clarity around the issue of full cost recovery, as there is some confusion around when it should be used.

Action: DD to seek clarity on full cost recovery methods.

Enabling Mechanisms Infrastructure Commission

DD requested that a reasonable timescale be set for the expressions of interest to be returned as the document is ready and a panel is required. A date of Wednesday 19th December was agreed. JS, BE and RB agreed to sit on the panel, however JC will request other nominees.

Action: JC to send out a request for panel members.

Discussion of statutory volunteer commission

RB reported that at the previous meeting it had been agreed to begin a piece of work around volunteering. He stated that since that meeting, he had held discussions with Adult and Community Services who are already carrying out

a piece of work to set up volunteering structures within the Council. Currently, Cathy Jackson is doing this work in addition to her core duties. Cathy has highlighted the outputs and outcomes that are very similar to the CECG's recommendations. Therefore, there is a strong case to use the proposed guide allocation of £12,000 to buy in support to finish the task. RB stated that specific allocations have been used for Global Grants and for the VCFP infrastructure allocation.

LB suggested that there could be scope to open this activity up to other bodies via the Oldham Partnership, depending on how far the project has already progressed. PB reported that the Volunteer Shop is likely to be lost, although a bid is being submitted to the Lottery to continue activity. She voiced concerns over potential lack of joint work at a later stage. The members present approved the proposal in principle, however the group was not quorate and further ratification will be sought. A full cost breakdown was requested for the activity, with a guide allocation of £12,000.

Any Other Business

JS reported that she has received an e-mail from John Eley stating that VAO had expressed concerns regarding the forthcoming LAA conference and invitations should be sent to all organisations listed on the VAO database. Inviting all 500 organisations is not practical and invites have been sent to key organisations with a LAA representative role and the elected members of the VCFP. It was suggested that the LAA conference could be a way of picking up issues that are taken to the Voluntary Sector conference.

PB argued the significant decisions would have been made by the time of the Voluntary Sector conference.

No decision was reached and RB to discuss further with PB.

RB stated that if all agreed allocations commence, there would be around £40k remaining to spend by March 2008. The following suggestions were made with regards to allocations:

1. Allocate remaining amount to Global Grants and modify the eligibility criteria by removing the employability requirement and replacing with a more general engagement requirement.

For information, the previous application round was over-subscribed and officers are confident the extra allocation could be spent.

Action: JC to submit, for the next meeting, a proposal in support of a grant scheme.

Following the volunteering review by VAO, the report identified a series of recommendations for consideration for the CECG. To date the CECG have agreed to allocate funding for developing statutory volunteering and a piece of action research that includes some volunteering outreach activities. The following considerations have not been fully discussed and could utilise the remaining £40k.

1. Further innovative outreach work in areas where volunteering levels are low, and to involve those groups of people who do not usually volunteer.
2. Sustaining the operation of VAO's existing Volunteer Centre which offers support to potential volunteers calling at the town centre premises, as well as to volunteer involving organisations.
3. An independent study to determine how best to support the development and sustainability of volunteering into the future, and which meets the needs of both volunteers and volunteer-involving agencies.

The proposals will be discussed at the next CECG and if you require any questions answering prior to the meeting, please forward to JC.

Date of next meeting

A date for the next meeting was not set. Members will be advised, via e-mail of a proposed date.