

## REPORT TO POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 11 JUNE 2015

### THIRD SECTOR INTERFACE (TSI) LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

#### 1 Recommendations

The Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 **Endorse the importance of a strong working relationship between Aberdeenshire Council and The Third Sector given the TSI's role in the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and the development of the Single Outcome Agreement.**
- 1.2 **Approve Aberdeenshire Council's role within Aberdeenshire's Third Sector Forum.**
- 1.3 **Review and comment on the attached draft Terms of Reference.**
- 1.4 **Approve the submission of this report to The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Board in order to ensure it is endorsed by a wider audience.**

#### 2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 Historically Aberdeenshire Council have always participated in a forum meeting with the Third Sector Interface (TSI). However, given some of the challenges facing the previous TSI, it was recognised that this forum was not as productive as it could have been.
- 2.2 In 2014 work commenced to amalgamate the 3 separate charities which previously constituted the TSI namely: CVS Aberdeenshire; Bridge CVS and Volunteer Centre Aberdeenshire. In recent months Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA) has been launched and a new Chief Executive appointed.
- 2.3 The time is now right to give further consideration to the way in which we engage with the Third Sector. The establishment of a Forum is not simply an end in itself, it is a tool in the development of a more productive working partnership in which voluntary organisations and their representatives can play a much enlarged role in the shaping of services and the identification of key priorities. It is hoped that as the Forum develops it will make a valuable contribution to the development of something close to co-production in service delivery, contributing to the improvement of services and positive outcomes for those who use them.
- 2.4 This report has been developed in partnership with the Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action and Aberdeenshire Council's Community Economic Development Coordinator, the Local Authorities key link with Aberdeenshire's Rural Partnerships.

- 2.5 The Head of Finance, Head of Legal & Governance, Head of HR&OD and the Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated in this report.

### **3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required here as there will be no differential impact, as a result of this particular report, on people with protected characteristics. The Third Sector Interface represents many communities of interest, therefore providing an enhanced role for these groups to engage in policy development, priority setting and service delivery.
- 3.2 There are no staffing and financial implications. Engagement with the TSI will be absorbed into existing work priorities.

**Ritchie Johnston**  
**Director of Communities**

Report prepared by: Margaret-Jane Cardno (Area Manager, Banff and Buchan)  
28 May 2015 final

## **ABERDEENSHIRE THIRD SECTOR FORUM**

Aberdeenshire Third Sector Forum seeks to bring intermediary organisations and the public sector together with a view to ensuring that the Forum is involved in strategic discussions with public sector partners. The Forum enables the Third Sector to become actively involved in shaping agendas rather than reacting to them and facilitates a connecting point for dialogue, discussion and influence so that the Third Sector can better shape planning and decision making in Aberdeenshire on behalf of the area's geographical communities and communities of interest.

### **THIRD SECTOR INTEREFACE**

Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA) is Aberdeenshire's Third Sector Interface providing a single point of access where community groups, voluntary organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and individual volunteers that make up Aberdeenshire's diverse and vibrant Third Sector can find the support and advice they need.

As one of 32 Third Sector Interfaces across the whole of Scotland, AVA offers services in 4 key areas:

1. Supporting volunteering
2. Supporting local and national third Sector organisations that operate and deliver services within Aberdeenshire
3. Promoting Social Enterprise and helping it to develop and flourish
4. Providing an active and informed connection between Aberdeenshire's Third Sector and the various Statutory Agencies and Public Services Providers around the Community Planning table.

### **RURAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Rural Partnerships in Aberdeenshire were set up in the 1990s as independent organisations, created and managed by community representatives. They have evolved to reflect the needs of geographical communities and have developed extensive knowledge and expertise to fulfil their core purpose of helping to build stronger, more sustainable, communities.

They work together as the Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships Federation, and contribute to the Community Planning Partnership at all levels. They have the scope to do more to support agencies in their work with communities and key areas of their work include:

1. Helping communities develop prioritised action plans
2. Supporting and encouraging community led projects, particularly those with economic development outcomes
3. Facilitating engagement and involvement between communities and statutory agencies
4. Building capacity for groups and individuals involved in projects, mentoring and assisting groups to source funding
5. Contributing as a partner on Local Community Planning Groups and Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership

### **CREATION OF THE FORUM**

At a local level the relationship between local government and the third sector is extremely important given the role of the third sector in Community Planning Partnerships and developing Single Outcome Agreements.

It is recognised that an improved mechanism is required to better connect the TSI and Rural Partnership with key partners in order to ensure that the Third Sector can contribute more effectively to making Aberdeenshire a better place to live and work.

The Forum is the collective voice of the Third Sector, it does not itself deliver services, but seeks to create an environment where Third Sector organisations can work effectively with the Local Authority and other key partners in order to fulfil their potential.

Key aims of the Forum include:

1. The provision of a coherent, collective voice for the Third Sector and strengthen engagement between the Third Sector and Community Planning Partners;
2. The creation of a place and structure for strategic dialogue with Third Sector agencies and other partners across Aberdeenshire;
3. To increase the Third Sector's input in key areas of public policy in Aberdeenshire and impact on the delivery of public services;
4. To increase the awareness of the impact which the work of the Third Sector has on the citizens of Aberdeenshire;

Key objectives include:

1. To be a contact point for the public sector at an Aberdeenshire wide, strategic level;
2. To offer mutual support through events, meetings and communications in order to have a positive impact on the lives of Aberdeenshire's most vulnerable citizens;
3. To enable partnership working;

## STRUCTURE OF THE FORUM

The key purpose of the Forum is to provide a means of engagement between Community Planning Partners and Third Sector organisations. It is a means for strategic leadership across the sector, and across Aberdeenshire on behalf of the sector. This is done through partnership and collaboration:

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

- AVA – Chief Executive Officer with attendance by the Head of Operations and/or Head of Volunteering, Training and Learning as required.
- Rural Partnerships – The Head of Operations from each of the 6 Rural Partnerships.
- Issue based and thematic networks and Key Community Planning Partners – There are a number of key work streams which require consideration in this forum, for example Community Empowerment and Health and Social Care Integration. It is recommended that during each meeting time is set aside to reflect a rotating series of thematic topics in order that the purpose and value of the discussion does not become diluted over time. This approach ensures the right people are in attendance at the right time, identifying and agreeing specific actions and responsibilities.
- Aberdeenshire Council - It is recommended that in the first instance that Community Planning, Community Economic Development, Community Learning and Development and the Commissioning Team are represented at the forum meetings, With other officers invited to engage to discuss relevant topics.

## OPERATIONS

- The forum will meet 11 times per annum. This will be reviewed at the end of the first year.
- A Local Authority Representative will Chair the Forum, subject to review at the end of the first year.
- The Local Authority will provide the secretariat, subject to review at the end of the first year.
- The minutes and agendas will be published on the AVA Website.

