

Minutes of Forum Meeting 28 November SNC Committee Room

1. Present

Sarah Steele SNVB (Chair); Jenny Carter SNVB (Minutes); Peter Storey Chair Northampton VCS Forum; Phil Drage Tove Valley Baptist Fellowship; Tony Wilkinson SSAFA; Athina Beckett Buckingham Canal Society; Carol Hulm Home Start Daventry and South Northants; Linda Scaysbrook Evenley Youth Club / Brackley Community Association; Natasha Clarkson Tove Valley Baptist Fellowship; Jenny Osborne SNVB; Debbie Tisley Byfield Book Exchange; Lynda Moran Byfield Book Exchange; Michelle Batchlor Victim Support; Nick Cole Users Support Service; Caroline Robertson Silverstone Pre-School; Lesley Haithwaite Silverstone Pre-School; David Nunn Towcester Museum; Dennis Gould Towcester Rotary Club; David Edge SNVB; Tracy Benham TADD; Anne Hoodak TADD; Keith Rippon TADD; Rachel Baillie CONVERGE; Bob Williams SNVB

Apologies

Barbara Langton Age Concern; Pam Haigh Child Minding Northants; Christine Thomas Voluntary Reading Help; Ann Reynolds Banbury CAB

2. Introduction – Jean Morgan Chief Executive South Northants Council

Jean welcomed everyone and talked about the importance of improving the working partnership between the voluntary and community sector and the Council. She saw in the Forum the potential for a “sounding board” and as a partner in the SNC consultation process.

Jean also made an offer of support from SNC to the Forum, perhaps to host meetings in the future.

3. Setting the Scene for South Northants Sarah Steele SNVB

Sarah explained that there are 7 districts in Northamptonshire and that South Northants is at present the only district with no forum for the voluntary and community sector. The aim in the county is to have a countywide forum that will have representation from all 7 districts, which will then consult at county level and ultimately nationally. It was noted that South Northants is a geographically large area, mostly rural with a dispersed population so getting the views of everyone will be difficult.

Sarah stressed that the forum would be independent and would not be run by South Northants Volunteer Bureau, however until the forum is formed and functioning SNVB will facilitate the meetings and provide what support it can through publicity, venue for meetings etc.

She explained that the purpose of the present meeting was to gauge whether there was enough support for a forum to go ahead, and what form that forum would take eg. an electronic forum conducted by computer or as a “live” forum where members met on a regular basis.

4. Presentation by Peter Storey Chair Northampton VCS forum.

Peter spoke about the Northampton forum and how it provides links and information for the voluntary sector and a voice for the whole sector in the area. It is supported by Northampton Volunteering Centre which provides admin and secretarial support.

The forum has a Steering Group which identifies issues of interest, sets up the meetings and decides on the agenda. The forum is a vehicle for consultation but it is up to the forum members to drive the agenda forward and the number of people attending varies depending in the issues involved.

Some members of the Steering Group sit on local boards with other public bodies such as the Local Area Agreement Board and then feed back to the forum members.

Peter was asked about whether the forum had made any difference in the voluntary sector. Peter responded that they had successfully engaged with Northampton Borough Council over funding timescales for the approval of grants.

5. Group introductions.

Those present introduced themselves and their organisations.

6. Group discussion.

There was a lively discussion about whether a forum should go ahead and what role it would fulfil. There was general agreement that the forum should go ahead and that it have 2 tasks:

- To take part in consultation with local public bodies such as local councils and NHS
- To actively include not only groups who already receive grants but also smaller local groups who currently are not represented anywhere else.

There was also agreement that the forum should function mainly as an electronic forum and meet perhaps annually in person.

It was proposed that a meeting be arranged in January for a core group of people to meet and decide how to move the forum forward, and then to have a larger forum meeting in the spring, taking Jean Morgan up on her offer of help and hopefully having the meeting again at SNC.

7. Local Voluntary and Community Sector Priorities

Sarah asked everyone present to complete and return to SNVB a Voluntary sector priorities form. These priorities will be included in the 4 year VCS strategy that is currently being drafted for the county.

8. News of current consultation opportunities

Sarah highlighted 2 current opportunities:

- i) User representative required on the Northamptonshire Maternity Services Liaison Committee
- ii) Northamptonshire NHS Partnership Board is holding 3 workshops in December as part of the "Facing the Future" consultation

Both these are posted on Forum page of SNVB website

The next meeting was arranged for Wednesday 23 January at 10.00 at SNVB, Moat Lane, Towcester.

Those attending:

Linda Scaysbrook

Michelle Batchlor

Linda Moran

Dennis Gould

Phil Drage

Rachel Baillie

Sarah Steele

Jenny Carter