

**CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL**

A meeting of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel was held on 17 December 2018.

**PRESENT:** Councillors R Arundale, S Biswas, R Brady, S Dean, L Lewis and Z Uddin

**OFFICERS:** S Blood, A Allen and M Davis (MVDA)

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillor D J Branson, Councillor D Davison, Councillor J Goodchild.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest declared.

**18/22 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2018 were submitted and accepted as a true record.

**18/23 COUNCIL'S PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY SECTOR- AN INTRODUCTION.**

The Chair welcome Mark Davis, Chief Executive of Middlesbrough Voluntary Development agency (MVDA) and Lesley Spaven, Head of Community and Service Development to the meeting.

At their meeting on 18 June 2018, the panel had identified the Council's partnership working with the Community Voluntary Sector (VCS) as one of the panel's investigations, this was the introductory meeting in relation to the review.

MVDA was established in 2002 as the primary infrastructure organisation for Middlesbrough's voluntary and community sector (VCS), now known as the local support and development organisations (LSDO). The role of MVDA is to support, promote and develop local voluntary and community action by for example, supporting the VCS to engage at a strategic level (Council partnership). The Chair had requested that MVDA be invited to attend the meeting to provide information with regard to the relationship that MVDA and local voluntary community organisations have with the Council.

Mark Davis, Chief Executive outlined that the presentation was very much contextual and would provide an overview of the voluntary sector, a brief overview of MVDA and provide some fine examples of partnership working with the Council. It was outlined that once the terms of reference were agreed, MVDA would return to a future meeting to provide addition information.

The panel learned that the voluntary sector is a diverse sector and was made up of:

- General charities
- Community groups
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations
- Sports and social clubs
- Campaigning groups
- Social enterprises
- Co-operatives
- Housing associations and Registered Social Landlords' (RSLs)

There were also other organisations, for an example, Community Interest Companies (CICs) which can or cannot be classed as a voluntary sector organisation depending on certain features.

It was outlined that Voluntary organisations should be:

- Independent and autonomous
- For public benefit
- Not for individual gain
- Governed by constitution or rules
- Accountable to members

In terms of Middlesbrough, MVDA were aware of 800 different voluntary organisations. Of those 800 voluntary sector organisations, the officers advised about that 600 were active in Middlesbrough. Those who may not be active, were for example, national charities, who have a local presence but may not be here delivering their services all the time.

The panel were advised that the majority of the voluntary sector deliver services in relation to health and social care, and service users tend to be children and young people/ closely followed by adults and older people. People were the main focus of the voluntary sector, and this was not dissimilar to the Tees Valley, based on current research.

Voluntary community organisations operate differently, and there was often the assumption that they are solely voluntary. However although all VCOs are voluntary and rely on volunteers, over 50% of local organisations and groups in Middlesbrough had no employers.

The Chief Executive outlined that an in depth study had been carried out a few years with 30 Voluntary community organisations. Of those 30 organisations, they has generated £4.36 million income into the area, created 340 full time jobs, and between them had 4,000 volunteers. The study had been representative of the Voluntary sector, to include small grass root organisations to large national charities.

In terms of the voluntary sector, there were some key points:

- Flexible and responsive services- generally voluntary organisations respond to the needs of local people. A study carried out by the Lloyds bank foundation outlined that charities with income less than £1million were able to respond better to the needs of the community.
- Intelligence about need and what works- they have in-depth knowledge of what is needed and how to support partnership working.
- Innovative and proactive solutions
- Providing a safety net- for example food banks
- Cost-saving through prevention and early intervention

In terms of MVDA, the Chief Executive outlined that the National membership body had identified four key roles of infrastructure:

- Identification of local community needs
- Support the identification of needs in the local community and facilitating innovation and improvements in service provision to meet those needs
- Support to develop skills and capacity
- Supports local Voluntary Community organisations (VCOs) to fulfil their missions more effectively
- Communication and collaboration
- Facilitate effective communication and collaborations amongst local VCOs and between different sectors
- Influence and advocacy
- Supports local VCOs to influence policies, plans and practices that have an impact on their organisations and beneficiaries.

It was outlined to the panel that the infrastructure was translated through MVDA's Strategic plan 2015-2018, which has four specific priorities to which MVDA deliver- full details were covered within the presentation:

1. Voluntary Community organisations was circulated for information.
2. Local planning

3. Local People
4. Our organisation

Looking ahead, the Chief Executive outlined that there had been a significant strategic planning consultation exercise undertaken to look, particularly at the way MVDA engage organisations such as the NHS, CCG and the Council. This looked at five key aspects; demonstrating impact, influence and partnerships, investments, capacity building and development.

This piece of work was shared with the Council's leadership team, which resulted in an Executive report being approved on 21 March 2017 regarding 'Strengthening the relationship the VCS'. Within this report it addressed existing relationships and put forward proposed actions to strengthen the relationship with the VCS e.g. improving knowledge and communication by arranging themed summit meetings. The Democratic Services Officer outlined that the report would be circulated to panel members for information.

MVDA's Strategic Plan came to an end in April 2018 and the Executive Board, consisting of the Trustees had agreed that the Strategic plan would remain the same for the next three years. Whilst the strategic aims would remain the same, the detail would change, based on looking ahead and needs of the sector.

In terms of partnership working, the Chief Executive provided the panel with five examples from MVDA's reflection of partnership working. It was explained to the panel these were examples where MVDA had engaged directly but also from a more general voluntary sector perspective.

### **Commissioning**

The Council's Commissioning Unit, was the service that MVDA focus on developing strong links, not only with MVDA but also making links with the Voluntary sector. This area looks at the needs of the community and either identifies or commissions services to respond to the needs of the local community and developing joint approaches to work collectively.

In terms of future work, the Chief Executive advised that the Council and MVDA had agreed to focus on community intelligence. A plan has not yet been established as to how this would be carried out, however it has been identified that voluntary organisations hold specific information in relation to their beneficiaries/ local community generally. They were aware that there currently wasn't an effective process to collate the information into a system which could be used on within a commissioning agenda. This piece of work will be instrumental of the next year and would bring the voluntary community organisations together and develop a more coherent system.

Value for money was also identified as a key factor within commissioning. It was advised that although the commissioning unit buy in to deliver services, MVDA wish to work with the service to see how they can be smarter and look at the local voluntary sector to deliver those services.

The Chief Executive did however outline that he had attended a conference and it was identified that Middlesbrough does not receive the same level of funding from big organisations, such as Comic Relief, Big Lottery Fund as other areas of the North East. MVDA would do their best to support the sector to attract additional resources to the area.

### **Social Regeneration**

The panel were aware of the Mayor's social regeneration agenda, which sat alongside the physical regeneration of the town. MVDA were happy that they had been able to facilitate 'community conversations'. In 2017, the Council and MVDA agreed a plan to which they would facilitate voluntary organisations to speak to local people about what they thought their responsibilities would be and what in their view, others (e.g. local services), should be responsible for. In brief, it was outlined that MVDA commissioned 42 Voluntary organisations to speak to about 1,800 local people, representative of all wards, and community identity.

A four page document was produced following the community conversations (circulated to the panel), which centred on key themes, for example, Community life, crime and community safety and health and wellbeing.

From those discussions, local people were also asked what they thought were the ten things they should do for themselves, of which volunteering was the top responsibility.

### **Children's Services**

The panel were advised that there were currently 200 voluntary community organisations working with children and young people. These involve organisations which specifically work for children and young people, but also organisations who work with adults but the issue they deal with has a detrimental effect on the child, e.g. Domestic abuse/ substance misuse.

Due to the demand on children's services, MVDA began a two year work placement with the Early Help Hub, which placed a member of their staff within frontline services. The member of staff was able to start dialogue and by the end of the work placement, due their knowledge of the voluntary sector had been able to direct service users to appropriate voluntary sector organisations. This had a positive impact on the lives of children.

The Chief Executive further mentioned attracting investment to the town, and assisting areas. Fulfilling lives was a key investment to the town, where MVDA worked in partnership with the Council to secure funding to develop the programme. Other success stories of key investment were Talent match (getting people into the labour market) and Headstart (Young persons' mental health)

As demand on children's services increases, there was more challenge on prevention, and it was felt that a future conversation between MVDA and the Council took potentially look at prevention as there are expectations and opportunities, especially with the voluntary sector.

The panel were aware that children's services is often under scrutiny and with that brings changing relationships on a daily basis with key providers and service users.

### **Adult Social Care**

The Care Act brought in new regulations, and MVDA have been working with the Council to help support the implementation, working with local voluntary community organisations to identifying need. From this, the Carers Strategic partnership was established and community connect, and MVDA are working closely with the Council to deliver these. At present the relationship with voluntary sector organisations was strong.

Health

Lastly, the Chief Executive outlined that there was a strong relationship with the VCS and the Council under Health. The Health and Wellbeing Board had been merged to the Live Well South Tees Board and Executive, to which MVDA represented the voluntary sector on this Board. Although it was early days, it was exciting to see it evolve.

In terms of specific work with the Council and the voluntary sector, MVDA had facilitated work in relation to social prescribing, and looking at new ways of thinking and directing patients. A recent study outlined that 85% of appointment dealt with non-clinical issues.

Further successful partnership work had been developing 'Tackling Cancer together' the Mental Health Partnership and HIV prevention- a collaborative approach.

The Chief Executive lastly discussed some of the current challenges faced when in partnership with the voluntary sector; these were:

- Demand v. capacity - there was a huge demand for service, however at times capacity to deliver these services proved an issue.
- Quality v. cost - delivering quality services is often faced with a cost.
- Large contracts v. small providers - whilst the voluntary sector provide effective services, these are sometimes put to one side for larger contracts.

- Competition v. collaboration - there will always be competition
- Transactional v. transformational - it was outlined that whilst we wish for joint working for transformation, this is often faced with transaction.

Following the presentation, a number of panel members made comments in relation to the report.

A panel member advised that they were a volunteer, however some volunteer groups get frustrated with the timescales in becoming a registered volunteer due to DBS checks. Although the timescales are improving this could be sometime to be addressed.

The member further commented on that it was evident that MVDA work with the voluntary sector to support local people, and it is reassuring to see voluntary community organisations engaging in demand services such as children's services.

The panel applauded the community conversations and queried whether community conversations could be rolled out to all households in Middlesbrough, these could be promoted through for example, lovemiddlesbrough, Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough matters. In response, the Chief Executive advised that further community conversations would take place in the future, however voluntary community organisations do have capacity issues.

Finally, a general discussion took place in relation to the structure of MVDA and the general role of supporting voluntary community organisations. The Chief Executive advised that information on this would be circulated to members following the meeting for information purposes only.

The officers from MVDA were thanked for their presentation. Following the presentation, the panel discussed the next stages of the investigation. They advised that whilst the information was extremely informative, it would be useful to speak with the director of Culture, Communities and Communications to provide an update on the progress of the actions made within the 'Strengthening the relationship with the VCS' and how specifically the social regeneration agenda will mould future work with the VCS.

**AGREED** that the information be noted in support of the scrutiny panel's investigation.

18/24 **UPDATE ON FINAL REPORT - MIDDLESBROUGH COMMUNITY LEARNING**

The Democratic Services Officer outlined that the draft report in relation to Middlesbrough Community Learning would be submitted to the January meeting for approval.

**AGREED** that the position be noted

18/25 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE**

The Chair outlined that she had submitted her apologies to the meeting and therefore was unable to update the panel.

**AGREED** that the position be noted.

18/26 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING- MONDAY 21 JANUARY 2019**

It was noted that the next meeting of the panel would be held on Monday, 21 January 2019 at 1pm in the Spencer Room.