

## **Executive 18 March 2014**

### **Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel – Final Report – Voluntary & Community Sector and Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA).**

1. The response from MVDA to recommendation 5 of the Economic Regeneration and Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on Voluntary & Community Sector and Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA) was as follows:
  - That MVDA is requested to undertake work on its Sector Connector database to ensure that the database is kept up to date; that only properly constituted and bona-fide organisations are listed; and that data listed is current and relevant to any named Council Wards. MVDA should also report back on progress in approximately six months' time.

### **MVDA welcomes the findings of the Scrutiny Panel and offers the following comments on the specific recommendations:**

2. We welcome the recommendation that the agreement underpinning relationships between Middlesbrough Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) should be reviewed and updated, and MVDA will commit to supporting consultation with the sector.
3. MVDA particularly welcomes the Panel's appraisal of the draft Local Framework for VCS Engagement in Commissioning as a positive way forward and a possible means of not only engaging the sector in service provision but also assisting the Council in commissioning appropriate and cost-effective services. We look forward to being able to disseminate the framework widely (both among local VCOs and further afield as an example of good practice in Middlesbrough) and to working with Council colleagues to shaping local implementation of The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.
4. MVDA welcomes the suggestion of widening engagement in arrangements for voluntary sector liaison. We recognise that current arrangements will be reviewed in the context of the Council's Change Programme and will undertake to work with Council colleagues to support appropriate liaison arrangements and to support consideration of the VCS role in service provision.
5. MVDA appreciates the Panel's recognition of the value of our work and the recommendation that (subject to budgetary considerations and process) core funding should be maintained. We welcome the implicit recognition by Middlesbrough Council of the value of core grants in maintaining a healthy local voluntary and community sector.

6. We also appreciate the Panel's recognition of the value of Sector Connector and the awareness (para 103) that keeping the underpinning database up to date is labour and time intensive. MVDA's Board understands the importance of maintaining a sufficient level of administrative capacity in an agency that depends on good communication and information systems. In the absence of dedicated resourcing for maintaining our database, this is one of a number of on-going tasks for central administration staff.

In an environment in which voluntary and community organisations form, fold and change their legal status, structures and personnel, agencies such as MVDA are heavily reliant on receiving accurate information. We endeavour to check the status of all organisations we register and in our dealings with newly forming groups, we try to achieve a balance between supporting local people seeking to make a difference in their communities and ensuring that only bona fide VCOs are registered. This is becoming ever more difficult in the context of the new legal forms introduced by Government to encourage enterprise by individuals and organisations.