**Note of meeting of the Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) – 17 June 2020**

1. **Present:** Raymond Branton, Chair (Family and Community Development), Alan McCloskey (VSGWL), Diane Cameron (WLSEN), James Penman, Minute Taker (VSGWL), Jay Haston (Men Matter/Women Matter), Joanna Van Den Berg (Firefly Arts), David MacDonald (Whitburn and District CDT), Elizabeth Stevenson (Signpost), Tracy Murdoch (Kidzeco), Stuart Barrie (Homestart), Silence Chihuri (Fair Justice System for Scotland (FJSS) Group), John Moore (Lothian Community Transport Services), Angie Mason (WLSEN), Beth MacLean (Safe Families), Simon McGowan (Children 1st), Karen Nailen (Citizens Advice Bureau), Lisa Drinnen (Community Action Blackburn), Jane Deary (Craigshill Good Neighbour Network), Helen Davis (West Lothian Youth Action Project), Wendy Carmichael (LAMH), Mark Kennedy (Circle)

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| **ITEM** | **KEY POINTS** | **ACTION BY** |
|  | **Apologies**  Alan welcomed everyone to the meeting. There will be no fixed agenda for the meeting.  Apologies – Koen Van Der Straeten – (The Brock), Stephanie Simpson (Victim Support), Matt Pearce (West Calder and Harburn CDT), Errin Anderson (Polbeth Hub), Kate Allen (Safe Families), Alison Wright (Carers of West Lothian), Angela Moohan (The Larder), Heather Watson (WLDAS). |  |
|  | **Previous minutes & matters arising.**  The action notes were accepted as an accurate account of the previous meeting.  Joanna and Karen agreed to join Angela in setting up a Covid-19 response group. | **Angela, Karen and Joanna** |
|  | **Working group update**  Meetings have reconvened between West Lothian Council and the Voluntary Sector. The primary purpose was to look at the relationship the sector has with the council and to review the funding for the next financial year. Time was lost on this due to more urgent matters and it is important to drive this forward.  As much intelligence as possible is needed from the TSSG to feed back to the council in order to try and have an influence on their decision making. The sector is keen to attain a position where it can have more say in funding decisions. Previous council papers are no longer relevant, and a fresh look is needed in order to ensure the Third Sector is funded where required. An investment model is the better option to prevent the usual small number of organisations dominating the budget. This will give the council the opportunity to invest in the sector and its partners to provide better outcomes for the people of West Lothian in line with council priorities.  The sector is aware of the ongoing economic impact Covid 19 is having and how vital the Third Sector have been in leading the response. A position paper has been compiled and will be submitted to the council to open negotiations. Alice Mitchell and Dougie Grierson will be invited to the next TSSG meeting (1 July) to start discussions. The key point of the paper is to change the default position of the council with regards to funding. The council have welcomed this and seem receptive. Open dialogue is key to bringing about meaningful change. The council need to make an early decision on the size of the budget for next year.  The three options under consideration are.   1. One fund open to all. This would give organisations a blank slate to start on an even playing field. Every application would be assessed on its own merit in alignment with the council’s priorities. Any organisation could make a bid for funding if they meet the criteria, this will maximise the budget. 2. Single entry point for applications then funds to be diverted to different subsections within the council for decisions to be made.   Single entry point for applications then funds to be diverted to any organisations who are collaborating to provide council priorities.   1. Top slice then open grant for remaining budget. A large slice of the budget will be earmarked for essential organisations and then the rest of the Sector can apply for the remaining budget. It may be simpler to remove this money from the budget so that other organisations know how much is on offer.   It is requested that the criteria be clear, and that the council are transparent and accountable in their decision making to allow organisations the best chance when applying. This is an area that has been lacking in the past.  Decisions on this will be made by council before the Working Group meeting on Wednesday 24th June so more details will be available for next TSSG meeting.  Modernisation fund money is in reserve until it is required later in the year.  Clarification is required from West Lothian Council on what their priorities are.  There is a push to get the Council to recognise the importance of core funding. Securing core funding can make a great difference in an organisations long term sustainability. Opportunities for this are rare.  There is a need for council to formalise themselves with what is on offer from voluntary organisations in West Lothian.  Case studies of how new partnerships have formed due to Covid 19 could be used to show Council that fund sharing could be a viable option.  Historically there has been a parent/child approach between the council and the voluntary sector. Recent times have shown how independent the Third Sector is and how well we know the community and their needs. We have broken down barriers ourselves by working in partnership with schools etc.  There is an emerging futures fund that has been launched by the Lottery. Criteria to be checked to see if there is any scope for application to be submitted.  There is a requirement for organisation health checks to be replaced with effective monitoring as a lot of the current health check is not relevant.  All information gathered will be added to the paper and Alan will submit. | **Alan**  **Alan** |
|  | **VSGWL update**  Assessment of applications to the VSGWL fund were finalised and recommendations have been forwarded to the National Lottery for their endorsement. Communicating decisions to everyone that applied will start on 17 June. Another round of the fund will be available later in the summer. VSGWL will distribute further information as soon as possible.  The Regeneration Team at West Lothian Council have established a Covid 19 recovery group. Alan has been invited to join. It will be named the Covid 19 Recovery & Mental Health and Wellbeing. It will consist of Elizabeth Nisbett from the Anti-Poverty Group, Lorna Kemp from the Integrated Joint Board Health and Social Care Partnership and Martin Higgins from the NHS.  West Lothian Council and NHS Lothian have developed a health and wellbeing strategy with support from Scottish Government. Local authority and NHS staff have access to a wealth of resources particularly during the current crisis and thereafter. A request has been made and discussions are ongoing to make this resource available to staff within the Third Sector. Alan to keep TSSG updated on any developments  Results of the TSI survey are not yet available. Alan following this up with Glasgow TSI who were collating the results. Stall awaiting response. VSGWL will distribute results with partners when available.  VSGWL continues to be in regular dialogue with all the volunteers who signed up to help during the Covid 19 crisis. If any organisations have a requirement for volunteers, please contact VSGWL.  Volunteer Week was very different this year due to the circumstances. VSGWL will share the analytical report round the sector. | **Alan** |
|  | **WLSEN update**  Social Enterprise doing well in West Lothian. WLSEN are keeping engaged with the national social enterprise picture.  A series of zoom calls will start on 25 & 26 June 2020 and will be staggered over the following few weeks regarding reopening of retail, childcare, cafes etc. Further information to be distributed.  After Social Enterprise Reset Week there has been interest in holding area zoom calls with Social Enterprises out with West Lothian. Dates to follow.  The mental health group are not as far forward as first hoped. They are looking at the help that is available from Social Enterprises and Voluntary Organisations and working to develop a web page with up to date information on what each organisation does and what information a service user or referrer may require.  Community Enterprise are available to help organisations look at future cash flow, governance, HR etc. Please contact Diane if this is of interest. |  |
|  | **Organisation updates & misc**  The food consortium has applied for further funding from WLC for purchase of food during July and August. There are 3 ways to access support. Through the Foodbank, the Advice Shop and the Community Food Hub. The Food Hub are affiliated with 4000 organisations that donate food. You need to get added to the Mailing list as emails are sent out daily with a list of items that are available. Items can be picked up from the Deans premises or delivery can be arranged.  There is also a contingency fund in place for July and August through WLC to buy specific items such as food, toiletries and cleaning products. 4 days’ notice is required to allow time to purchase these items.  Youth Action Project are nearing the end of their current funding for food provision, but referrals are still high, proving that there is still a need in the community for this service.  Red Cross are developing Covid-19 contact centres and are looking for staff to man these centres. It is hoped that there may be highly skilled social enterprise staff that could be removed from furlough that may be able to be seconded to help. This may help prevent redundancies in struggling organisations. They need supervisors to run these centres as well as staff that would be paid the national living wage. |  |
|  | **Next meeting dates**  Zoom meeting every 2 weeks. Next meeting 1 July. |  |