**Note of Virtual meeting of the Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) – 22nd April 2020**

1. **Present:** Raymond Branton, Chair (Family and Community Development), Alan McCloskey (VSGWL), Diane Cameron (WLSEN), Angela Mason (WLSEN), Helen Davis (West Lothian Youth Action Project), James Penman, Minute Taker (VSGWL), Tracy Murdoch (Kidzeco), Lisa Drinnan (Community Action Blackburn), Jay Haston (Men Matter), Angela Moohan (The Larder), Alison Wright (Carers of West Lothian), Lorna Bryson (Cyrenians), Douglas Westwater (Community Enterprise).

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| **ITEM** | **KEY POINTS** | **ACTION BY** |
| 2. | **Apologies**Raymond welcomed everyone to the meeting.Apologies - Koen Van Der Straeten – The Brock, Errin Anderson – Polbeth Hub, Stephanie Simpson – Victim Support, Simon McGowan – Children 1st, Beth Maclean – Safe Families, Elizabeth Stevenson – Signpost, Alan Davidson – Bridge Community Project, Matt Pearce – WC & Harburn CDT, Tom Heron – The Vennie, Joanna van den Berg – Firefly Arts, Allie Cherry-Byrnes – Homestart, Dawn Henderson – Families Outside |  |
| 3. | **Previous minutes & matters arising**The action notes were accepted as an accurate account of the previous meeting.**Matters arising from previous minutes**Item 7 – Unable to progress as the Working Group has not met due to other priorities. To be carried over to future meeting.  | **Working Group** |
| 4. | **Note organisations updates, from emails, in Appendix 1**Main points discussed from updates* Social Enterprises are suffering more than most as income has dried up. Charities doing better.
* Trying to get more clarity in accessing business support grants for Social Enterprises and if furloughed staff can volunteer.
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| 5. | **Highlight organisations questions from emails.**Q:  When will the Council make a decision on the hardship fund?Email from Officials received saying that the Hardship Fund was the Council’s immediate priority. Council are working through applications now. Sector will be updated when further information is available. Money will be distributed as soon as possible. 50 applications have been received. |  |
| 6. | **Working group, Modernisation fund and revenue budget updates**Panel have made recommendations regarding organisations eligibility. Applications were submitted at the end of January but organisations are still awaiting communication from West Lothian Council. 150k over next 3 years has been put on hold for the time being. Resilience fund would be useful for West Lothian but not happening now due to other priorities. Third Sector need to be proactive as there was no consultation re Hardship Fund. Third Sector need to lobby West Lothian Council in advance of the fund becoming available.Revenue budget to be revisited once current situation is over. Regeneration team have prioritised other funds at this time.There is no discussion taking place re Social Enterprise Fund. Social Enterprise action plan was to be launched on 1 April with £26 million over 3 years. No action plan until next year at the earliest. | **Action: Sector to put forward ideas for Working Group to progress****Action: Working Group to maintain momentum with Officials**  |
| 7. | **Update on Covid 19 sector supports**VSGWL team focused on sharing information as quickly as possible. Just under 1000 people have signed up to volunteer through Volunteer Scotland in West Lothian. These volunteers have been contacted and have been added to a waiting list. Organisations are requested to contact VSGWL if they require volunteers. VSGWL currently helping NHS recruit volunteers for their distribution centre.Community Enterprise will forward an email for circulation to TSSG members detailing what support is available to organisations at this time. Community Enterprise offering a ‘triage’ type service at the moment.Scottish Government are encouraging partnership bids for the Wellbeing Fund.The Larder, to put forward for funding from the Supporting Communities fund. | **Douglas Westwater/Raymond Branton****Diane Cameron** |
| 8. | **AOCB**Health Improvement Scotland are looking to create hubs to help people with digital skills training. Looking for an office/hub to use for a group of trainers to support the local community. Please let Alan know if anyone has space available towards end of May/beginning of June for 2 weeks. Costs would be covered e.g. deep clean, heat and light. Tracy put forward Kidzeco for inclusion on list The Larder and Foodbank have collaborated with 15 other organisations to submit application to the Food Fund for £416,000 for a 5 month period. Council will be looking for some additional information. Organisations that are part of the collaboration are asked to return the information requested to Angela as soon as possible.  | **Alan McCloskey** **Angela Moohan**  |
| 9. | **Next meeting dates**Zoom meeting every 2 weeks. Next meeting 6 May. |  |

**Appendix 1**

Organisations’ Updates

Angela Moohan

The Larder

The Larder usually celebrates the fact that over 80% of our income comes trading, however this is now our main issue.  All trading stopped on 23rd March and we don’t know when it will start again or indeed how the income streams will perform.  The only consolation is that we are not alone.  Currently delivering cooked chilled meals to individuals and families referred as needing food as a result of COVID-19.

Q:  When will the Council make a decision on the hardship fund?

Helen Davis

Youth Action Project

YAP are very busy collecting, donations, delivering food parcels - mostly through Social Policy, Education and Almond Housing, some prescription collection West Lothian wide. We are also linking in with Matt at WCCDT providing meals for vulnerable people.

In addition we are offering supported bike rides for children & yp struggling with the isolation. Support is also being offered via calls, group chats etc to our client group. We are also trying to keep some of our Growing Together project work going with a temporary poly tunnel and veg plants growing outside Riverside wing in Craigshill.

Beth Maclean and Kate Allan

Safe Families

We continue to offer as full a range of services as possible. We are supporting families in crisis, linking them with volunteers who provide virtual support, and also delivering food parcels.

Virtual support ranges from sending texts, making phone calls or video calling using various platforms. Different volunteers provide a mixture of these supports.

We can provide food parcels or a voucher for the family to access groceries themselves.

We continue to make referrals to local Food Banks where appropriate.

We are recruiting ‘Connect Volunteers’ specifically to support families during Covid-19 only. They are undertaking a shortened volunteer approval process with us.

Lorna Bryson

Cyrenians OPAL

All Cyrenians groups and one to one face to face service have been cancelled at this time.

All staff are working from home.  OPAL is delivering a telephone befriending service to all our existing clients and any new clients at this time.  Volunteers are called regularly too.  Each week an activity pack is sent to clients to keep them occupied at home.  We have also dropped off essentials to some of our clients who have been finding it difficult to get out to get things.

Alan Davidson

Bridge Community Project

All of our staff team and some of our volunteers are currently working from home, with our 2 main services continuing to support clients remotely. Our financial wellbeing team is focusing much of their time on supporting current clients, ensuring that their financial requirements are met while also linking people into local food supplies and offering listening. We are taking on very limited new referrals. Our counselling service is offering remote counselling support through zoom and telephone. Our waiting list continues to remain closed, but we are hopeful of reopening with some new counsellors coming on board in May.

Karen Nailen

CAB West Lothian

All staff are currently working from home and we are delivering a telephone, e-mail and web chat service.  We are now starting to investigate delivering a face to face service for vulnerable clients in the coming weeks.  Our workload has increased by 80%.

Dawn Henderson

Families Outside

I have been contacting my clients regularly by phone, email and Zoom. There are still so many issues to deal with ;   food banks, prison information, contact with prisons , contact with families lawyers , social workers , schools ( the ones that are open ), Covid -19 and the impact on prisoners and their families and supporting families in this. In response to family issues, I have been sending resources for children and online peer support groups for these families.

Our Families Outside Helpline has been very busy too.

Jay Haston

Men Matter

We have been providing virtual group support meetings and one to ones with suicidal people. We have also been providing quiz nights and gaming days and nights and have a check in buddy system. We have opened this up to the whole community and are noticing increased numbers of abuse and suicidal ideations. We have also launched the Woman Matter side which offers all the same as men matter.

Diane Cameron

WLSEN

Focus on sharing info with members and where appropriate encouraging funding & support to be directed towards West Lothian e.g.

* WL Mental Health support providers – coordinated “Peer to Peer” input via the Social Enterprise Academy.
* Community Anchor Organisation Funding – nominated member organisations who play a role as community anchors
* Seeking resource to reintroduce the WLSEN Enterprising Third Sector Support Fund
* Senscot SEN Coordinator meetings – feedback & lobbying nationally e.g. seeking clarity around Furloughing (can people volunteer) & Business Support Grants (are charities eligible)

Alan McCloskey

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

We are continuing to work closely with our Third Sector colleagues and West Lothian Council to support individuals and communities.

We published this Directory of Services on our website. We have linked this to information gathered by WL Council about informal groups that have come together locally and incorporated this into our Directory.  We have created a Covid-19 Resource information hub on our website. We have taken a very active communications role ensuring Covid-19 news and funding opportunities are widely promoted.

We have created a Volunteer Register to record details about individuals who are wishing to help. 106 individuals have signed up with us directly so far. We have received a further 937 sign-ups from Volunteer Scotland.

Raymond Branton

Family and Community Development West Lothian

All of our childcare services are closed apart from one which is only for Key Worker and vulnerable children. We have retained one community worker in Broxburn and one in Armadale – both are supporting vulnerable families locally. We have furloughed 65 staff.

The irony is that it is our social enterprises that are decimated now and our traditional charities that are stronger – so much for an enterprising third sector!

Lisa Drinnan

Community Action Blackburn

Community Action Blackburn - both staff working from home since the Partnership Centre closed. Working on admin/ end of year finance tasks in the short term, and taken leave and TOIL. Along with partner organisations/ Regeneration Officer, looking at ways to support the community and we have set up a new Facebook page for online links and resources. We registered for the Fare Share scheme, but were advised there is a huge backlog. Diane (WLSEN) has nominated us as an anchor organisation to apply for funds from 'Supporting Communities' to disburse locally, so I'm contacting groups to find out what they need.