**Note of meeting of the Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG)**

**13 January 2021**

**Present:** Raymond Branton, Chair (Family and Community Development), Helen Davis (West Lothian Youth Action Project), Alan McCloskey (VSGWL), Monica Mochar (Well Being Scotland), Stuart Barrie (Homestart), Linda White (WLSEN), Karen Nailen (CAB), Alison Wright (CoWL), Lesley Mount (Signpost), Brian Pringle (WLDAS), June Dickson (Environmental CIC), Sylvia Forshaw (Cyrenians OPAL), Collette Moran (WL School Bank), Emma Husband (The Larder), Tracy Kerr (VSGWL), Andrew Murray (Safe Families), Silence Chuhuri (FJSS), Paula Lally (Health In Mind), Anne Pike (VSGWL Board), Gary Walker (Larder), Eddie Dunlop (Polbeth Community Hub), John Murphy (Community Action Blackburn).

Guest Speaker; Lorna Maisey, Money Adviser A

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| **ITEM** | **KEY POINTS** | **ACTION BY** |
| 1 | **Welcome and Apologies**  Raymond welcomed everyone to the meeting.  Apologies were received from Matt Pearce |  |
| 2 | **Guest Speaker**  Raymond introduced Lorna Maisey, Money Advisor, Anti-Poverty who gave an informative talk on money lenders.  Her talk was to highlight to the group the problem of unauthorised money lenders and covered.   * IT is a bigger problem than many realise. * Some less recognised forms of money lending are family and friends, small shops and gaming. * It is difficult for people to admit they have used money lenders. * Borrowing is not illegal but lending is. * People affected should be signposted to the West Lothian Council tool and mainstream lenders. * The advice shop can make sure people are getting everything they are entitled to and refer people to other organisations for grants and help in the community for access to food etc. * People are encouraged to report illegal money lenders through Crimestoppers or the Advice shop.   Questions asked   * How many people in West Lothian are impacted?   No true figure is available, but Lorna advised it is a lot more serious than you would think. It is often a side-line to other illegal activity.   * What is the register that can be checked to see if an organisation is authorised?   Financial Conduct Authority register which can be found on the FCA website.  After the talk, Raymond asked everyone to briefly introduce themselves and their organisations. |  |
| 3 | **Previous minutes of meeting held on 18 November 2021**  The action notes were accepted.  **Matters arising/review of actions from last meeting**  All other actions are on agenda for today`s meeting. |  |
| 6 | **VSGWL report**  Alan gave an update covering  **Recruitment**  Alan introduced Tracy who was on the call and is the new Development Officer (Partnerships) and Stuart Barrie who was also on the call, who will join VSGWL as Operations Manager on 31 January. Alan is delighted with both appointments as VSGWL has previously been running with reduced staff.  **£470K Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund**  Alan advised that phase 1 of the fund closes tomorrow (14th January) and is pleased with the number of applications already received, illustrating how well the fund has been advertised. So far over 50 applications have been received and the total of them well exceed the funds available. The assessment panel will start to review these in the next few weeks. VSGWL are still waiting to hear from the Scottish Government whether this will be a recurring fund but all indications are that it will be recurring into next year. No indication if the guidance will remain the same.  **Cyber resilience training**  David has already run two sessions and another one is scheduled for 14th January 10-11am with spaces still available. Previous sessions have received good feedback and more sessions are likely to be planned for later in the spring.  Questions asked   * Brian asked if there was a plan on how phase 2 of the funding will be allocated.  Alan advised that it will be discussed but expects there will be a phase 2. This will be determined by the applications for phase 1. Brian asked Alan to note that some organisations had taken the decision to wait to apply in phase 2. Alan confirmed this was noted. |  |
| 4. | **Council Working Group: planning/focus**  Raymond advised that a meeting had been held earlier in the week. He asked the group for any focus or agenda items that the group want addressed with council over the coming year and beyond.  Raymond suggested that a strategy to explore the strategic partnership should be addressed.  The group had nothing further to add and Raymond asked anyone to email him directly if they had any strategic points they want raised.  Raymond also advised that he will be looking for a replacement for Stuart who is a rep on the council working group but will be leaving.  No questions were asked.  **Action:**   * All to email Raymond with any strategic points to be raised. | **All** |
| 5. | **Council Elections Hustings**  The idea of holding hustings for the elections in May was raised at the previous meeting.  Raymond suggested this could be run in a question time format.   * With each representative allocated a slot of 10 minutes to speak and cover their main points. * Followed by an opportunity for the audience to ask questions some of which would already have been submitted before the event. * Ideally held in person and not online. * Likely held sometime in April. * Hosted by someone independent with good standing.   Mhairi Harrington was suggested. Any further ideas to be sent to Raymond. Raymond advised he would ask Alan if VSGWL would organise on behalf of the sector.  The group provided positive feedback on the idea and the following questions were asked.   * Will everyone take part?  It was agreed that most parties would want to be represented. * Will we open the event to Board members?  It was confirmed it was an open forum, open to everyone however would need to remain relevant to the third sector. * Is there value in a 3rd sector position paper in advance of the event?  All agreed a paper along the lines of the 3rd sector manifesto would be useful.   **Action:**   * **All to send any ideas of host to Raymond.** * **Raymond to speak to Alan about VSGWL organising.** | **All**  **Raymond** |
| 7 | **WLSEN report**  Linda provided an update on developments within WLSEN.  **WLSEN board**  An AGM was held in December and board members were appointed.   * Maria Thorpe as acting Chair * Adele Prendegast as Treasurer * Trustees – Jane Deary from SPARK, Silence from FJSS and Angela Mohan   **Strategy**  A strategy day was held in December covering the organisation purpose and priorities and there is a follow up planned. Linda and her colleague Cameron are now working on the operations plan, communication and engagement strategy. Communications and details of events are being planned and more details will follow once available.  **Amplify**  Linda will be meeting with Shona Robinson (MSP) about the SE sector and the government proposal around a single intermediary. Senscot will host the meeting and Linda will have a slot to talk about WLSEN.  Eight new members have joined WLSEN over the year. A campaign is planned for later in the year to encourage more organisations to join their network including new social enterprises that WLSEN will support to build their business profile.  **Empowe**r  WLSEN continue to share information about learning and funding on their weekly, and new tailored communications as well as LinkedIn and Twitter. Organisations can sign up on the website to receive these.  WLSEN plan to hold events over the year ahead including   * Cyber Security. An introductory session will be held in February. Details are on the website and joining is through Eventbrite. * Exercise in a box - learn about what a cyber-attack might look like and what to do next.   **Collaberate** Mental Health and Wellbeing project.   * This is being pushed to be launched by the end of January. * Linda thanked those who had helped to get to this point. * West Lothian College have run a competition for the branding of the project and the winner will be announced soon. * Mary Sinclair from SENSCOT will be acting as the chair of the steering group. * A digital contact form is being created for members of the public to use to contact the project. * An application has been submitted to the Mental Health and Wellbeing fund to extend the project to 2023. * A second application will be submitted in March to provide a new constituted body to take over the project. Community Enterprise, Wellbeing Scotland and Welscot Legal are willing partners in the bid.   **Net Zero Project** The purpose of this project is to kick start two members net zero journey.   * WLSEN plan to make a bid to West Lothian Council modernisation fund. * Will look at scope 1 and 2 emissions for a smaller organisation. * Will look at 1,2 and 3 for a larger operation with a more extensive supply chain. * On completion the organisations will be able to share their learning and experience. * As part of the bid, there will be a carbon literacy learning component available to everyone. * More information will be on next newsletter.   No questions were raised. |  |
| 8 | **Forum / sector updates, developments and consultations**     1. Children and Families Forum   Helen advised this is still running monthly with the next meeting scheduled for 8th February. She was pleased to note that there were some new members at the January meeting.  This month’s meeting was a catch up and included an update on the Mental Health and Wellbeing framework and a discussion around the current impact of covid. An issue was raised at the meeting about access to covid testing kits.  There were no updates from the strategic group as there had not been another meeting. This also applied to the drug and alcohol partnership group.  The chair position for the children and families forum is up for re-election and nominations should be sent to Alan at VSGWL by 4 February.   1. **Race Forum**   No update   1. **Employability Forum**   Angela has been leading this forum but a permanent chair is being sought. Any nominations to be sent to VSGWL.   1. **CDTs Forum**   No update   1. **Anti-Poverty Task Force/Child Poverty Reference Group**   No update   1. **Mental Health Forum**   Linda advised that this is currently being led by WLSEN on behalf of the forum however they do not have the capacity to continue unassisted. They issued a survey to over 30 of their members who had been involved in the forum and received 4 responses. The responses indicated there is an appetite for the forum but that the organisations did not have the capacity for it.  Linda advised that she has been approached by others not on their database to get involved and feels an invitation needs to be extended further to organisations not on their database.  Alison mentioned that the learning disability forum is also currently without a chair.  A discussion was held around the recurring issue of capacity for all forums and groups having difficulties with appointing chair. A question was raised about how the forums can be developed to work better.  **Action**   * Raymond to refer to Alan to discuss how this can be resolved going forward. | **Raymond** |
| 9 | **AOCB**  Jay Haston who is working with the wave trust has emailed to say he is organising a networking event with Wave Trust and Andy’s Manclub which will be on Monday 28th January 1.30pm until 5pm. There will be tables with guest speakers. The event is free but donations will be welcome.  **Action**   * Raymond to circulate the details.   Linda asked about place based funding which West Lothian Council asked for bids for last year. At the time WLSEN did not have capacity to apply. As it is a 5 year programme did anyone know if there would be a further opportunity to make a bid?  No one had any further information.  **Action**   * Tracy to ask Alan if he has any further information.   Carers of West Lothian – Alison advised that the Scottish Government had just announced that funds were being made available to local authority areas for unpaid carers and respite grants. Carers of West Lothian will be distributing this, possibly through a hardship fund for fuel bills and increased cost of living for less well off families and unpaid carers. This needs to be completed by the end of March, so it is a tight timescale.  Once CoWL have the details of how they will be distributing the money, it will be advertised on social media and website.  Raymond suggested that the details are also sent to the Gateway to publicise.  School Bank West Lothian are looking to source funding for shelving in the office. Colette asked if anyone had any ideas where they could try for funding for around £4000-£5000 for this.  Suggestions made were   * Approach local companies to see if they may be able to help. * Highlight the need through social media and someone may offer to help. * Contact Almond Housing. * Contact the corporate arm of furniture places to see if they can supply. | **Raymond**  **Tracy** |
| 10 | **Date of next meeting**  The next meeting is 24th February 2022 |  |