

Voluntary Action Scotland

Meeting of Board of **Voluntary Action Scotland**.

28th & 29th May 2009, Perth.

This briefing from the Board seeks to summarise the main business under discussion, decisions and action arising. It is not a minute, but these will be available on request and will be put onto our Website in due course.

Those present at the meeting were:

Niall Smith, Harry Whiteside, Alasdair Nicolson, Kenny Murphy, Don Hunter Grant, Helen Rorrison, Jessie McNeil, Sandy Milne, Gaynor Jones, and Helen MacNeil.

Apologies: Fiona Skilling.

In Attendance: Flora McKee V.A.L. (Minutes)

It's Official! Voluntary Action Scotland is born.

In what was quite an emotional moment the final documentation to incorporate Voluntary Action Scotland was signed off by Harry Whiteside in the presence of a J.P. and the relevant banking forms completed. Jessie McNeil came well prepared for the moment and produced a bottle of champagne to celebrate and mark the occasion. In proposing a toast, Jessie said, "I have waited a long time for this moment". Thanks Jessie, and we will all seek to ensure the wait was worthwhile.

Kenny was able to report that the domain www.voluntaryactionsotland.org.uk had been purchased, email addresses set up and some preliminary design work had been undertaken on a Logo and will be emailed round CVS's for comment.

Membership of SCVO and VDS to be taken after company registration confirmed.

Sitting at the Right Tables

Critical to getting the views and opinions of the Network heard and acted on would be getting a seat at the right tables and Working Groups. Given the limited resources at this stage it would be necessary to prioritise where we sought to be based on potential impact, relevance and time commitment. We should also seek to build and fully utilise the existing Groups that members are already connected into. A mapping exercise was carried out of potential Groups where we were not currently represented and those where we already had some input. In seeking high level involvement we needed to be clear on what we offered and on the credibility of our voice. It was felt that our real strength in the Network was through the direct connections and information flow from the vast range of organisations that were the clients and membership of the CVS – this gave us an almost unique position. We saw particular strengths in:

- Intelligence and information gathering at locality level.
- Assessing impact of S.G. policies, S.O.A, Localism and Community Planning.
- Developing high quality and effective linkages between community development and social enterprise.

- Supporting, promoting monitoring high quality standards within CVS network and Interfaces.

A wider exercise would be carried out to identify where others from the Network were involved in national / regional groups or influential policy groups.

Meeting and Discussion with Tracey Slaven

In welcoming Tracey to the meeting, we hoped that this would be the start of a continuing dialogue with Scottish Government about how VAS could effectively engage within Policy Development and providing feedback on Policy implementation and inevitably and unsurprisingly we would want to talk about resourcing. Tracey mapped out the changing policy development processes emerging in SG as a result of the new relationships established as a result of the concordat. Within this approach it was our view that we could make an effective and credible contribution at both National and local level through our membership.

Given the still early stage of development of VAS, it was Tracey's view that there was no fixed view of the contribution that VAS could make. Agreed that we should prepare a briefing paper that could be presented by Tracey to the next meeting of the Cross Directorate Group and that this should set out our views on where we could make a strategic input.

The discussion on the emerging Interfaces, the variety of models which were evolving, their support needs and the pressure that some CVS's felt under to fit a particular model further highlighted the beneficial role that VAS could undertake. Tracey identified the need for a costed, strongly argued, proposal for support to the interfaces.

Tracey confirmed that the funding formula to be used for future allocation had not yet been confirmed. VAS indicated a desire for the potential impact on rural areas of changes in the funding formula to be further assessed, including consideration of a period phased implementation. VAS highlighted the difficulty in some areas of engaging with CPP's and asked what "pressure" was being brought by S.G. encourage meaningful engagement. The difficulties in some areas were recognised by Tracey and indicated that work was being undertaken in this area, in particular by emphasising and highlighting the benefits gained elsewhere through constructive engagement.

Work Programme Development

Split into 3 smaller groups focussing on Strategy, Wider Partnership Model and Company Finance and Policies, we laid out a framework of immediate work to be developed. Although considerable more work needs to be undertaken in the short term, timescales and targets were identified.

Strategy: By 23rd June to have worked up detailed paper identifying outcomes, key indicators and activities. This would also include role and remit, representative requirements, communication and marketing, Interface development and Support, strengthening our links to Social enterprise support, Website development. Membership: H.M., H.R., N.S.

Wider Partnership Model: By time of Conference to be in a position to encourage VC's to join VAS and to have developed a wider partnership model that would retain support of CVS's. Ensure M & A's were appropriate for this wider model and seek to co-opt someone from VC's who could bring real value to Group in working towards that wider model. Representative from Board to

attend next meeting of the P.M.G. as a means of introducing ourselves to VC's and starting an open dialogue. By 23rd June group to have written detailed paper on development for consideration and discussion with Network. Membership: G.J., K.M., E.S., A.N.

Finance and Internal Policies

Mission statement will be drafted by K.M. for next meeting. Budgets will be prepared at 3 increasing levels of activity and resource requirement. Range of internal policies required by Company to ensure good practice were identified and will be prepared and circulated prior to 23rd June. Quotes to be gained for necessary insurances. Membership forms to be prepared for circulation to CVS's and Interfaces.

Co-option of Eliot Stark to Board

Eliot had joined the meeting during part of our discussions with Tracy Slaven. Eliot had previously met with what was then the "Steering Group" and had provided an informal link into some of the current issues within VC's and ideas as to how the 2 Networks might more closely engage. Eliot's own VC is now an "Interface" and as Chair of the PMG it was felt that he could usefully add to some of our discussions round Interface development and the means by which the wider partnership model be developed.

The contribution made by Eliot convinced the Board that he should be co-opted on as a Director to VAS. Any initial concerns that this co-option might be seen by some "as a step too soon" were overcome by the conviction that the decision was in the best interests of the company, was within our powers and that any concerns could be addressed through the Regional Meetings.

Meeting with Paul White, S.C.V.O.

Earlier correspondence from Paul had raised outstanding issues and unfinished business around representation on working groups, Memoranda of Understanding between S.C.V.O and the Network, SVA Management Group membership, Issues of competition and how VAS and S.C.V.O. might work jointly to support voluntary action. There was an open and productive discussion which identified common interests and agendas, yet recognised different and legitimate roles. Paul thanked VAS for facilitating the elections of additional reps to the SVA Management Group and spoke further about upcoming change in the SVA programmes reflecting the drivers of changes within the Networks and developments of Interfaces, economic recession and the changing landscape of CPP's and SOA's.

It was Paul's hope that the work and conclusions reached by Linda Dunion in relation to Communication between S.C.V.O. and the Network would produce some learning which would impact on a Memoranda of Understanding, though there was an appreciation that with the development of Interfaces the format of such a Memoranda or issues to be addressed may be different from what was previously discussed. Paul was keen to ensure that the staff team employed by S.C.V.O. to support the Network were fully engaged in undertaking a work programme which reflected requirements and priorities identified by the Network, in line with the *Thrive and Connect* business plan. VAS should be engaged in that process, that secondment of staff to VAS was not ruled out and that S.C.V.O. was keen to work in partnership with VAS.

Agreed that K.M. should represent VAS at the Intermediaries Network.

Presentation from Linda Dunion, See-Change.

Linda presented a summary of the research and conclusions reached in terms of her review into communications between the CVS network and S.C.V.O. Her final report was not yet completed and a presentation had yet to be made to S.C.V.O. It was also Linda's intention to make presentations to forthcoming Regional Meetings. Linda had clearly identified a number of areas where significant improvement could be made but further comment from VAS will wait till publication of the final report.

Future Jobs Fund

It was agreed that there was real potential for CVS to engage more fully in the FJF and that information should be circulated from VAS. Whilst there was a specific bid going in from S.C.V.O. for some 7500 of the 15000 jobs, there may be scope for a specific proposal from CVS's. This will be explored further with S.C.V.O. and discussed at our next meeting.

Freedom of Information Act

A reminder to all that the FOI can be a powerful tool in ensuring transparency of decision making, something which may become even more critical as funding becomes tighter. Members need to be aware of their powers under the Act and not afraid to seek disclosure when needed.

Future Support Needs of Interfaces.

A letter had been received from Geoff Pearson regarding our views on the future support needs of Interfaces. This letter highlighted the current funding and contractual arrangement with S.C.V.O. and V.D.S., and that should there be any requirement to change the support services required by the group of Interfaces then early warning should be given to these organisations. We welcomed this approach from Geoff and agreed to reply indicating how we might assist, with others, in scoping out future support requirements – with hopefully some solid proposals being available for the October conference.

Next Meeting

Next meeting planned for 23rd June in Edinburgh.