



GRANTS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FORUM

MEETING : Thursday, 16th July 2015

PRESENT : Councillor David Brown
Councillor Gerald Dee
Councillor Terry Pullen
Councillor Hannah Norman
Robin Agascar, Gay- Glos
Barrie Wyatt, GAVCA
Gary Loftus, Forever Manchester

Ex-Officio Member

Councillor Jennie Dallimore, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Officers in Attendance

Gareth Hooper, Senior Engagement and Partnerships Officer

APOLOGIES : Councillor Usman Bhaimia, Councillor Kathy Williams, Pauline Reynolds (Gloucestershire African and Caribbean Association), Anne Whitworth (Gloucester Law Centre), Mike Harrison (Hucclecote Community Association), Michael Teesdale (Abbeydale Community Association) and Helen Black (GAVCA)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Robin Agascar was appointed Chair for the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 January 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no questions from members of the public.

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

6. WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (VCS) IN GLOUCESTER

The Forum considered an update on the work undertaken to date to explore options for future joint working between Gloucester City Council and the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) in Gloucester.

Barrie Wyatt advised the Forum that two meetings had been organised by GAVCA with the VCS in May and June. The Forum noted that these meetings had intended to explore areas of common concern and approaches to future joint working.

The Forum noted that the meeting with the Council's new Managing Director, scheduled for Thursday 23 July, had been rearranged and would now be held in either August or September.

Barrie Wyatt advised that a number of themes had been identified at the meetings with the VCS. It was also noted that the following areas of focus had been identified:

1. Role of the VCS
2. Role of Gloucester City Council
3. Reasons for joint working between the VCS and Gloucester City Council

Barrie Wyatt suggested communities were better served by working together and establishing shared values. He also suggested continued joint working between the VCS and Council should be explored to help establish clear working relationships.

Members of the Forum recognised the challenges facing the VCS and highlighted the decline in funding and the impact this had on engagement within the VCS.

Barrie Wyatt suggested the meeting with the Council's new Managing Director would be a step forward in establishing a new working relationship and would potentially allow the Council and the VCS to make a more significant impact in communities in Gloucester.

Robin Agascar advised the Forum that he had attended a meeting organised by GAVCA and commented that all present at the meeting had recognised the considerable changes within the VCS. He suggested the discussions were useful for agreeing a new direction for the Forum in the future.

Councillor Dallimore reminded the Forum that despite the changes the Council had continued to engage with the VCS on a daily basis.

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It was noted that despite cuts in funding, the Council was still the most generous authority within the county and was committed to supporting the VCS.

Councillor Dallimore stated that any proposals for changes to the Forum would have to be presented to the Council's Constitutional and Electoral Working Group before being considered by Council.

Councillor Dee queried if the Gateway Trust had any involvement with the Forum. He was advised by Councillor Dallimore that they currently had no involvement with the Forum but that they could be invited to future meetings.

Councillor Brown questioned what could be done to ensure members of the VCS felt valued.

Councillor Dallimore suggested it was important to understand what being valued meant before considering what could be done to achieve this.

Barrie Wyatt suggested partnership working between the VCS and the City Council was one way of showing appreciation for members of the VCS.

Robin Agascar suggested the decline in voluntary structures had reduced the number of opportunities for the VCS to voice their concerns.

Councillor Dallimore advised the Forum that the Council still engaged with the VCS and cited the Safer Gloucester Partnership as an example.

The Senior Engagement and Partnerships Officer advised the Forum that it was important to consider how funding is allocated within the VCS to determine the best ways to assist communities.

Members of the Forum agreed that there had been substantial changes within the VCS and that it was important for the Forum to adapt to reflect these changes.

7. VOLUNTARY SECTOR UPDATE

Robin Agascar advised the Forum that many organisations in the VCS had tailored the delivery of their services following changes to the sector.

Barrie Wyatt advised the Forum that there was a shared feeling across the sector that more was being demanded of the VCS.

Councillor Dallimore suggested it would be useful to have further details of the increased demands being faced by the VCS. She was advised by Barrie Wyatt that GAVCA produced an annual survey which could be shared with the Forum.

Councillor Dallimore advised the Forum that she was not aware of any grant funded organisations that had been forced to close.

The Forum noted that several social enterprise groups had been created at neighbourhood level and were performing well.

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8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21st January 2016 at 18:00 hours.

Time of commencement: 18:00 hours

Time of conclusion: 19:05 hours

Chair