

Planning meeting to prepare for the Third Sector Meeting with the Minister for Housing & Local Government

Tuesday 11 June 2019, 10:00 – 12:00

between

WCVA, Baltic House, Cardiff and Morfa Hall, Rhyl

Minutes

Attendance:

Noreen Blanluet, Co-Production Network for Wales
Ian Davy, VAMT
Peter Williams, DTA Wales
Chris Johnes, Building Communities Trust
Iwan Thomas, Planed
Eli Crouch Puzey, Welsh Women's Aid
Katie McColgan, Interfaith Council for Wales
Bryn Hall, Clinks
Paula James, Welsh Government
Simon White, Welsh Government
Judith Stone, WCVA
David Cook, WCVA
Anna Nicholl, WCVA

1. Welcome and intro

Judith welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that she is now responsible for facilitating activity under the Housing and Local Government portfolio. Following the Cabinet re-shuffle, the change of portfolio was noted previously as Local Government and Public Services. The membership of this planning group has been refreshed in order to align with the new responsibilities of the Minister.

2. Minutes of last meeting - Local Government and Public Services Planning Meeting 14.11.18

Paula noted that the paper referred to in the minutes did not go to the Local Government Partnership Council (LGPC) when planned due to the passing of the former Minister. It was eventually submitted three weeks ago. Anna noted a paper on the voluntary sector was submitted to the LGPC in February 2018. A meeting took place recently between WCVA's Chair, Chief Executive and One Voice Wales recently, with an action for proposals to be developed and sent to the Minister. Chris said he had raised concerns between the community sector and town and community councils. Paula said this is a good point to refresh the paper and this will be discussed under item five.

In relation to the actions from the last meeting:

- WCVA to publicise details of third sector reps on PSBs and RPBs - in progress.
- See information about the [Wales Civil Society Forum on Brexit](#).

Judith noted the group's four priorities prior to the Cabinet re-shuffle:

- Commissioning
- Relationships between the third sector and public bodies, including local government
- Citizen participation
- Empowering communities

3. Update from Welsh Government - Paula James (Local Government) and Simon White (Housing)

The Local Government Partnership Council (LGPC) has recently discussed public sector preparedness for helping citizens through Brexit, including a contribution from Citizen's Advice Cymru. The [Welsh Government website on Brexit](#) was highlighted as an important resource. Next LGPC meeting will include an up-date on Brexit from the Brexit Minister.

A Working Group on Local Government was set up to develop joint recommendations to make local government services more sustainable. It included third sector representation from Gaynor Richards (NPT CVS). The group's recommendations have been accepted by the Minister. Three key recommendations:

- i. The simplification of regional working and the regional landscape. Statutory Joint Authorities/Committees were agreed as a useful mechanism for joint working. Departments are working through a process of rationalisation.
- ii. External stakeholders will be invited to contribute to a review of strategic partnerships, which will report to LGPC on 2 October. The Minister recognises that Welsh Government has been responsible for some of the structural clutter with partnerships. A joint letter from the Minister and WLGA's leader will be sent to key stakeholders, including WCVA, One Voice Wales and the NHS. The expectation is for information to be cascaded through these networks. External involvement in feedback is welcome as this issue affects so many. A sub-group will drive this work.
- iii. A third priority is to re-instate a local government improvement function, to be hosted by WLGA. Proposals are in development.

On this last recommendation, Noreen noted how co-production can help local authorities and that this could be the time for the Co-Production Network to talk with WLGA.

Members expressed interest in participating in the review of strategic partnerships. Paula confirmed this would be welcomed. Iwan noted his involvement in a review of partnership structures in West Wales. Ian said the Public Service Boards (PSBs) and Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) reps are meeting to review arrangements, recognising there is more overlap between their remits than was originally envisaged. It was noted that this could be an issue for the Third Sector Partnership Council's (TSPC) next meeting. Suggestion to look at areas of common concern, recognising regional variations.

Action 1: WCVA will cascade information about the review of partnerships and table for discussion with the TSPC (date of next meeting TBC).

Action 2: WCVA to follow up with WLGA regarding plans for engagement with the third sector on the review of strategic partnerships.

Simon White provided an update on the housing aspects of the Minister's portfolio, highlighting himself as a key link person. The Housing portfolio consists of the Housing Policy Division and the Homes and Places Division (which has a regeneration, 'bricks and mortar' agenda). The Minister is taking an enthusiastic and constructive approach; highlighting the breadth of the portfolio and leadership by Deputy Minister, Hannah Blyddyn, on the regeneration portfolio. Housing is a cross-cutting issue in the Programme for Government, with links to education and health and social care.

Homelessness remains a key priority, including and beyond rough sleeping. The Minister has a strong commitment to social housing and wants councils to start building again, in line with the First Minister's commitment to modern socialism. The First Minister wants to legislate to improve the security of the rental sector.

Reforming routes to possession is a priority - there will be a consultation soon. The Affordable Housing review recommendations were published recently, highlighting the importance of local authorities to work together regionally to look at housing demand. A review of grant funding for housing is coming, along with a decarbonisation review of the housing stock.

Changes to grant funding mechanisms - the Housing Support Grants (homelessness, Supporting People funding, etc) remain together outside of the early intervention and prevention fund. RPBs now have housing representatives on them.

The issue of housing as a human right is moving up the agenda, with an event at the Senedd organised by Tai Pawb. The Homelessness and Supporting People agenda are the closest links with the third sector - Simon can help to engage other officials on specific topics.

Peter mentioned a partnership project between DTA and Wales Co-operative Centre, *Communities Creating Homes*, building on work on co-operative housing and community led housing. The Minister is interested in innovative approaches to housing.

Bryn asked for the current view of priority housing needs for ex-offenders.

Interfaith Council have been doing some work on homelessness and rough sleepers. Katie also mentioned the recent announcement regarding the closure of the Ford plant in Bridgend and the knock-on implications for housing. There was a discussion about child poverty rates in Wales, as relevant to the Minister's portfolio.

Chris highlighted confusion about which Minister has communities within their portfolio. Paula said elements sit within Julie James' priorities and elements within Jane Hutt's. Chris has raised this issue in a letter to the First Minister. Simon confirmed Alyson Francis is Head of the Communities Division, with Joanne Daniels as Director of Communities and Tackling Poverty.

Action 3: Simon White to provide an update on priority housing needs for ex-offenders to fharris@wcva.org.uk.

4. Key items for discussion

Paula noted the Minister's interest in housing in the broadest sense, with opportunities to contribute as well as addressing vulnerabilities. Chris commented this could be too broad an issue to focus on, saying that housing associations have been cutting regeneration teams, with a trend noted around fewer community resources. Iwan noted community land trust model developments and discussions with housing associations regarding possible sites in Pembrokeshire. There was a suggestion to focus on highlighting a range of different Welsh innovative models of community housing - for instance, decarbonisation initiatives led by the third sector, highlighting good examples and challenges e.g. regulatory issues. It was agreed for Peter and Iwan to lead on the co-ordination of a briefing paper.

Eli highlighted housing as a human right as a key issue - Bryn also noted an interest. Ian noted the link with the Housing First model and Judith noted Cymorth's work on this. Action for Judith to speak with the housing and homelessness reps regarding items for the agenda for the next meeting with the Minister.

Judith noted the timing of the range of local government activities and the opportunity to engage with the Minister on this, dependent on timing.

Noreen suggested we ask for a statement on the implementation of co-production and involvement by local government. She will draft a short explanatory paragraph.

It was agreed to set the tone of the meeting with the Minister by thanking officials for constructive engagement with the planning group and to ask for the Minister's general thoughts on her portfolio at the outset and an up-date on Brexit in her portfolio - then to focus on the three/four items.

Action 4: JS to contact housing networks regarding a possible item on housing as a human right for the meeting with the Minister.

Action 5: Members of the planning group to prepare papers; WCVA to advise of deadlines:

Items for Ministerial Meeting:

- Welsh innovative models of community housing - Peter and Iwan
- Housing as a Human Right - Eli and Bryn
- Request a statement on the implementation of co-production and involvement by local government. Noreen will draft a short explanatory paragraph.
- Possible item on local government review of partnerships

5. Review of membership

Action 6: Judith to make amendments to the membership list:

- Up-date Katie McColgan as representing the Interfaith Council for Wales;
- Remove Julie and Gethin (Cytun) from the list
- Remove Emma from Women's Aid
- Invite Tai Pawb to join.

Action 7: WCVA to e-mail the membership list to the group to ask for additional organisations to invite to be involved.

6. Date of next meeting

- **Ministerial meeting - Paula James has requested a date**
- **Speakers for next planning group**

Action 8: WCVA to confirm date for the Ministerial meeting and invite speakers to the next meeting, following the meeting with the Minister.

7. AOB

Action 9: Peter agreed to share information about a campaign led by Locality on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.