
Third sector interface – progress report

1. SUMMARY

The CPP is working towards the development of an interface with the Third Sector to give greater authority to third sector representation in the CPP and to simplify distribution of funds to support development of the third sector by the Scottish Government and by partners locally.

The Management Committee agreed a research brief to support this work on 22 July. This report updates the Management Committee on progress to date.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Management Committee note the report and comment as appropriate.

3. BACKGROUND

In May 2008 the Third Sector intermediary organisations (CVSs, volunteer centre and ABSEN) were asked to respond to a challenge to develop more effective working relationships to improve outcomes for support to the third sector.

At the same time the Scottish Government indicated that their financial support would be combined into a single funding stream from April 2011 to be directed via a single “interface” to be agreed with the CPP. The format and operation of the interface was to be determined locally.

The process of developing the interface has proved to be more difficult than originally expected with some progress, but no consensus on a way forward. Whilst a number of CPP areas now have interfaces in place, others are experiencing similar issues. A meeting was convened at the suggestion of the Government’s third sector team as part of their ongoing support for the process. The Argyll and Bute meeting on 2 June was attended by:

- Raymond Park of Strathclyde Police in his capacity as Management Committee chair (he also chaired the meeting)
- Cllr John Semple, Third Sector spokesperson
- Geoff Pearson from the Government’s third sector team
- Third Sector representativesⁱ
- Council representatives involved in the CPP and third sector supportⁱⁱ

The meeting agreed that some of the funding allocated by the FAB Partnership for developing the interface should be used to commission research to provide better quality information to support the process. Given the tensions between some of the partners the meeting agreed that the

research should be independent and the Council agreed to manage the process of appointing the researchers.

4. DETAILED RESEARCH

The research brief was produced by the Council, taking account of comments made by people present at the meeting on 2 June. Weighted scoring criteria were agreed as part of the brief and the tender was publicised using the “Quick Quote” facility on the Public Contracts Scotland portal.

The key questions that the research will address are:

- **What are the support needs of the third sector in Argyll and Bute?** (focussing on different categories of organisation)
- **Who provides what support and where?** (i.e. organisations, capabilities and geographic coverage)

The research will also identify examples of interfaces agreed in other areas, but make no recommendations on what would be the most suitable for Argyll and Bute.

Four responses were received and when scored against the assessment criteria the clear choice was ODS Consulting (www.odsconsulting.co.uk).

The lead consultant was briefed on 27 August and a timeline has been agreed for the final report to be presented by the end of October.

5. NEXT STEPS

ODS Consulting will conduct the research based on:

- a review of existing literature
- contact with organisations providing support to the Third Sector (local and national providers)
- contact with a sample of Third Sector organisations to validate findings.

The report will be used to catalyse development of the interface, including consideration at the CPP Conference.

The interface will be classified as a Strategic Partnership within the overall CPP structure and will be subject to a partnership agreement so that all parties are clear about the purpose, membership and operation of the interface.

The interface will be focused on the objectives set out in May 2008, i.e.:

- More active third sector, supporting more community activity
- Better quality support for third sector organisations across the whole of Argyll and Bute
- Equitable access to support for all communities in Argyll and Bute
- A clear voice advocating the interests of the third sector in Argyll and Bute locally and nationally
- Stronger and more active social enterprises winning contracts to provide services

The interface is a significant element of the CPP structure and all partners are committed to have an operational interface by April 2010. The desire is to reach consensus on the way forward.

If the different partners are unable to reach consensus on the development of the interface, the CPP may have to consider imposing a solution with a chosen partner. Some consideration has been given to this as part of forward scenario planning within the Council.

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James Hilder (ABSEN)

Jim Clinton (Bute Community Links)

Nicola Welsh (A&B Association of community Councils and TSSG member)

Lorna Ahlquist (Cowal Community Care Forum and TSSG member)

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