

# **Chief Officers Group in the Third Sector (COGITS)**

## **Minute of meeting**

**9 December 2021**

**Attendance:** Roland Chaplain (Glenkens Business Association), Kim Dams (DG Voice), Pamela Deans (D&G Advocacy Service), Alex Dickson (DG Befriending Project), Heather Hall (Usual Place), Kalpana Ratnam-Roarty (User & Carer Involvement), Mark Smith (River of Life Church)

**Present:** Norma Austin Hart (TSDG), Natalie Anderson (TSDG), Alan Hall (TSDG)

**Apologies:** Sian Bertram (D&G Hard of Hearing), Yen Hongmei (D&G Multicultural Association), Carolyn Kennedy (Better Lives Partnership), Jenny Milby (Stewartry Council of Voluntary Services), Phil Stewart (D&G CAS), Karen Ward Boyd (Holywood Trust)

### **Welcome**

NAH welcomed everyone to the sixth meeting of COGITS and apologies were noted. Attendees gave a brief introduction of themselves and their organisations.

### **Notes of the meeting of 19 August 2021 and matters arising**

- ***Engagement of Third Sector with elected representatives***

NAH reported that she had been trying to arrange meetings with the MPs and MSPs however had been struggling to get responses and only 3 meetings had taken place to date.

The TSDG Board would meet on 16 December and NAH will discuss with the Trustees the possibility of an event in 2022 involving TSOs, local politicians and the local council. The timing of this might be best after the local council elections in May.

COGITS discussed:

- the challenges in engaging with local politicians, noting that it helps to have a specific agenda and list of asks, in addition to updating them on the progress of the sector. MSPs are likely to engage if there are items relevant to their portfolio

- The Chamber of Commerce being quite successful with its breakfast events, NAH offered to make contact to discuss this.
- The timing of an event, that this should take place after the local council elections in May and avoiding the summer period, so possible June or September.
- The opportunity to ask all local council candidates their views on the 4 key areas in The Big Report (Community Transport, Employability, Digital Inclusion and Community Empowerment).

**Action:** NAH to contact the Chamber of Commerce to discuss breakfast events

**Action:** NAH will draft a letter to send to all political groups in January and ask them to ask the questions of their candidates, with independents being contacted separately

- ***Voice of the sector***

This item related to how the third sector can find an effective voice on strategic groups. Progress with developing a framework had been impeded by the introduction of the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (the timescales involved, and resources required for implementation). NAH would give an update and presentation at the next meeting of COGITS.

**Action:** NAH to give an update and presentation at the next meeting

- ***Mentoring Pilot***

NAH updated the group that good progress had been made and TSDG would be looking to roll this out in the new year. The roll out would require additional mentors and mentees. A full update would be given at the first meeting of 2022.

Norma Austin Hart said that she would present a framework at the next COGITS meeting.

**Action:** NAH to present a framework at the next meeting.

## **Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund**

NAH gave a presentation on the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund including:

- A summary of the Fund
- Key Issues
  - Areas of Focus
  - Outcomes
  - Who Can Apply
  - Striking a Balance
- Timescales

The presentation is attached as an appendix for information.

The fund was announced in late October with £448,796 being allocated to Dumfries and Galloway. The fund opened for applications at the end of November and needs to be used by the end of March 2022. The fund is aimed at community groups and organisations, to promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing. Eligibility criteria are very broad.

Un-constituted groups will be eligible to apply, if these are identified at the initial review stage, TSDG will contact the applicant direct to find out more and ascertain if a constituted organisation can be identified to host.

In striking a balance, to achieve the outcomes consideration must be given to geographical spread, categories of activities funded and grant amounts. Indicative splits in relation to grant bandings have been considered. Diversity of eligible applications will also be considered to ensure a broad range of recipients.

Applications opened on 30 November 2021, webinars were taking place this week and workshops for scoring panels would take place on the following week. TSDG would undertake early assessment for eligibility in mid-December and start to identify small projects (up to £3,000) which might be eligible for fast-track decisions.

The closing date would be 12 January 2021, no fast-track decisions would be made until all applications had been submitted and initial review undertaken.

The scoring panel will meet during the week commencing 24 January, with results communicated at the end of January.

RC queried how information was being communicated given that many un-constituted groups might not receive information through the normal channels. NAH responded that there had been a number of successful social media campaigns which had invited expressions of interest (of which there had been 320 at the last count).

KD asked if it would be possible for organisations to make joint applications and if so, would the amount that could be applied for change? NAH confirmed that joint applications were allowed and that this was included in the application form.

NAH confirmed the Steering Group membership included Julie White, Heather Collington, Mark Molloy, Jim Parker and Kate Thomson.

NAH updated that the Scoring Panel had been identified but had not met. Members have not given permission to share their names yet. The panel consists mostly of managers in the NHS, D&G Council and D&G College. In determining the memberships of both groups, TSDG attempted to avoid having representatives from TSOs however it was impossible to avoid completely. If there is a conflict, that member will not be involved in assessment / decision making should an application be submitted.

The application process is almost entirely online. If any group is unable to use that process, TSDG will help.

If any member has further questions in relation to the fund, these should be directed to NAH.

## **Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Delivery Plan**

NAH introduced the RES Delivery Plan to the group; this was launched in late October / early November. The plan indicates the greater detail in relation to delivering the 6 themes, including 41 actions.

The third sector is identified as a key delivery partner in 23 of the actions, with the TSIs tasked with communicating these actions and making them happen.

The plan is available in full on the SOSE website.

COGITS was asked to consider how TSDG and this group might have a role.

For example, the first action is to “Develop and deliver interventions to address immediate and longer-term labour and skills shortages in a number of sectors of importance to the regional economy.” The third sector is one of 8 partners identified in relation to this action.

At this stage, NAH was flagging up the plan and its importance given there are 23 actions where we are expected to participate. How do we do this and feed through to the right people in the third sector? All thoughts should be communicated to NAH.

AD commented that 23 actions is a lot and that perhaps the focus should be on these, setting aside the remaining actions. COGITS members could feed in thoughts to each action, concentrating on the 23.

RC indicated that it might help to home in on a couple of different components:

- Food Growing – nourish and propagate, it might be beneficial to get some help from non-members, people in the area who have ideas.
- How to move people around the area in a more circular economy – road developments, electric transport in the future. Who should be the key drivers?

KD commented that it is tricky, that it is good that the third sector has such a say, but it puts a lot of responsibility on the sector when organisations are already stretched.

NAH concluded that there was a level of interest in the role of COGITS in this. An analysis and presentation would be prepared for the next meeting, focusing on the 23 actions with some summarising. The first step will be to understand the ask with a view taken from COGITS given that the TSDG view needs to be informed by the sector.

HH joined the meeting at this point, having experienced technical difficulties and provided an introduction for members.

NAH summarised the discussion, indicating that she was seeking the views of COGITS as to how we might approach:

- Understanding
- Assessing the role of the third sector in each action
- How to communicate with the sector
- How to support the sector to meet the delivery of the actions

NAH sits on the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership, the RES Delivery Plan will be the spotlight in coming months.

HH indicated that it would be helpful to have a document which makes the plan clearer; something that everyone can understand and can be actioned.

NAH indicated that the RES Delivery Plan will also be discussed at a TSDG Board meeting.

**Action:** NAH to provide an analysis and presentation at the next meeting, focusing on the 23 actions with some summarising

## **AOCB**

### **COGITS: Format, focus of the group**

NAH introduced this item by asking is the group going in the right direction and how to stimulate interest, eg by having a breakfast meeting at The Usual Place.

HH concurred that a Breakfast for Business would be interesting however likely not recommended for the next few months due to the pandemic. It is challenging to network and make connections on zoom and this inhibits mutual support and the associated benefits of this.

It was suggested that the group next meets face to face, however this would depend on the pandemic situation.

RC endorsed HH's views, citing the arrangements to enable COP26 to have face to face interactions as a good model. Giving consideration as to how meetings might take place to enable the benefits of in-person meetings without increasing the carbon footprint, might it be possible to have half the meetings in-person and half virtually?

If possible, the next meeting in March would be arranged as an in-person meeting.

MS suggested that participation level will be influenced by the agenda, the relevance of this could generate real gain for participants. NAH indicated that initially the group had been asked what they wanted to cover. However, the context had changed so

much since then due to the covid situation, and with personal interaction and networking not being possible.

HH indicated that hybrid events could be a successful way forward.

It was suggested that the next meeting could be put forward as an opportunity for members to indicate what is relevant to them.

NAH put forward the question “Do we need a COGITS?”. The recent circumstances had been unfortunate, we could not create an environment where COGITS could thrive. Experience has shown that the successful forums are those which are nurtured.

KRR indicated that attendance was better when the meetings were in-person, more people brought ideas and information to the group. As a chief officer, the opportunity to share things with a peer group was important.

AH suggested that at the start of each year, the top 5 areas for that year could be identified to keep the agenda / purpose fresh.

Action: NAH to ensure that this is added to the agenda of the first meeting of each year.

## **Net Zero**

RC indicated that there is a raft of issues in relation to net zero and the impact for TSOs. It is problematic to keep up to date with everything and strategically this issue is likely to get put off given the financial and resource pressures TSOs are experiencing.

NAH indicated that the 5<sup>th</sup> RES theme is a green and sustainable economy. Of the actions, 2 are particularly relevant:

- Identify and advance amalgamation opportunities for energy efficiency and decarbonised technologies.
- Develop and implement a communications campaign and toolkits to support our businesses, social enterprises and communities to accelerate their journeys to Net Zero.

The third sector is a key partner in both, they are most directly relevant to the concerns RC has identified and there will be the opportunity for further discussion at the next meeting.

Energy Poverty was also a challenge and affects a high number of people on low incomes, NAH indicated this would be discussed at a tackling poverty forum.

HH indicated a concern that coming out of COP26, young people had been getting negative messages but without any real context. There had been no easy read information. This had been referred to the Commission for Learning Disabilities. A Canadian university and the University of Glasgow are keen to be involved in

accessible information. Would this be an area that the South of Scotland could lead on, to make it inclusive?

RC will keep abreast of developments through his connections and feed back to the group.

### **Dates for future meetings**

The group proposed to meet 4 times in 2022, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> last Thursday in March, June, September and December.

**Action:** NA will determine the dates and send them to the group

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting of COGITS will take place on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 10am.

<b>Actions arising</b>			
Date	Action	Who is responsible	Deadline
18/08/21	TSDG Board agenda item – event for Third Sector organisations to meet with local and national politicians	NAH	16/12/21
09/12/21	NAH to contact the Chamber of Commerce to discuss breakfast events	NAH	24/03/22
09/12/21	NAH will draft a letter to send to all political groups in January and ask them to ask the questions of their candidates, with independents being contacted separately	NAH	28/01/22
09/12/21	COGITS Agenda item Voice of the Sector – update and presentation of a framework on the supply and demand sides of Third Sector representatives on groups.	NAH	24/03/22
09/12/21	COGITS Agenda item Mentoring Framework – presentation at next meeting	NAH	24/03/22
09/12/21	COGITS Agenda item RES Delivery Plan – presentation and analysis at next meeting, focussing on the 23 actions	NAH	24/03/22
09/12/21	COGITS Meetings 2022, dates to be finalised and communicated	NA	15/01/22
09/12/21	COGITS Agenda, NAH to add to the agenda of the first meeting each year identification of the top 5 areas for that year could be identified to keep the agenda / purpose fresh	NAH	24/03/22