

Chief Officers Group in the Third Sector (COGITS)

Minute of meeting - 23 June 2022

Attendance: Roland Chaplain (Glenkens Business Association), Pamela Deans (D&G Advocacy Service), Alex Dickson (DG Befriending Project), John Dougan (Relationships Scotland), Helen Keron (Glenkens Community Arts Trust Ltd), Trish McWilliam (Dumfries and Galloway Carers Trust), Kalpana Ratnam-Roarty (User & Carer Involvement)

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

Apologies: Karen Ward Boyd (Holywood Trust) Kim Dams (DG Voice), Carolyn Kennedy (Better Lives Partnership), Helen McAnespie (Food Train), Clair McFarlan (Solway Firth Partnership), Mhairi Ross (Apex Scotland), Ian Seymour (CTC)

Welcome

NAH welcomed everyone to the eighth meeting of COGITS, apologies were noted as recorded. Introductions were made. AD indicated that this would be his last meeting, Helen McAnespie will be representing the DG Befriending project in the future.

COGITS is a very open, inclusive group, with the purpose to support and provide a networking opportunity to decision makers in the third sector.

Note of the meeting of 28 April 2022

The note of the meeting of 28 April 2022 was agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

All were captured within the rolling action log.

Rolling Action Log

The group considered the updates on the rolling action log, noting progress made. The group noted the items on the Mentoring Framework and the RES Delivery Plan would be on the agenda for the meeting on 22 September 2022.

Chairing of COGITS

NAH indicated that preferably all the TSDG forums should be chaired by people from the third sector. The next Chair of COGITS will be supported by TSDG, including administration and minutes.

The group discussed how we might go about encouraging people to be Chair / Co Chair, key points from this were:

- A clear time limit / fixed term would be beneficial
- Appointing a Chair at one meeting for the next meeting. Consideration would need to be given as to how to identify the next Chair. This could be influenced by current, and national, issues.

HK indicated she is stepping down as Chair of TSDG in September and would like to maintain a relationship. If the group can wait, HK would be really interested in taking on the Chair after November. Consideration could be given to the meetings being themed, with a colleague giving a presentation and leading that part of the meeting.

NAH indicated that she would be happy to stay on as Chair until that point.

Action: Proposal for HK to take on the Chair after November to be considered at the meeting in September 2022.

Priorities

NA updated colleagues on the analysis of the word cloud outputs from the priorities exercise at the previous meeting. The presentation is available [here](#). Each priority theme had been reviewed and the words generated had been sorted into groups. The key group was then analysed, with the two main areas for priorities identified. The results of the analysis are summarised as:

Theme: Third Sector Representation

Key Group: Networking / knowledge

- Networking
- Knowledge

Theme: Working in Partnership

Key Group: Networking / Knowledge

- Working Together
- Meeting / Networking

Theme: Leadership Challenges

Key Group: HR / Staff Resources (non funding)

- Staff Recruitment and Retention
- Training

Theme: Campaigning

Key Group: Financial

- Funding
- Rural Poverty

Theme: Political Engagement

Key Group: Political

- Working Together
- Knowledge

Theme: Other

Key Group: Split across Financial and Development

- Training and Development
- Shared Prosperity Fund / Increase and Support Members / Guidance

Theme: Regional Strategy

Key Group: Regional Economic Strategy

- RES Delivery
- Identify related actions in Delivery Plan

Annual Programme

NAH indicated that a proposal for a programme for the next 12 months (based on the priorities identification exercise) will be brought to the next meeting. Consideration will be given to who can be brought in from specific areas to speak and which topics (eg DGC, SPF)

When the new DGC Chief Executive takes up post, it would be beneficial to have an early meeting with them. NAH agreed to draft an email of introduction, explaining COGITS and indicating that we would be asking them to attend a meeting

The group felt that meeting agendas should be structured, but flexible enough to accommodate unexpected current issues.

Meetings are a good place to get support (peer and external). Members were encouraged to think about how we can support each other, horizon scanning in relation to the TS in Dumfries and Galloway and ordering priorities.

Consideration needs to be given to how to encourage more members, establishing a broader core group. The next meeting should be in-person or hybrid.

A good example of an unexpected agenda item was the publication this week of the NCS document, this will have a huge impact on many of the services the TS will provide.

Actions: NAH to draft / send an email to introduction to the new DGC Chief Executive

Engagement with Dumfries and Galloway Council

NAH introduced this item, indicating that it had been discussed at the last meeting. The meeting papers included a draft template for engagement with six key questions that members can use it if they wish.

TSDG wrote to all the new councillors, introducing TSDG and our role. Some councillors had been re-elected and already knew of us. We had a good response; a significant number of new councillors took us up on the offer. The new councillors seemed very open.

NAH met with Linda Dorward (Co-Leader and Depute Convenor), and also met Stephen Thompson (Co-Leader and Convenor) at the CPPB meeting. NAH has started meeting other councillors and will continue over the coming months. COGITS colleagues were encouraged to make contact, explain what they do and start to establish a relationship. NAH gave a presentation to SNP group and will try to meet with the Labour and Conservative groups.

NAH asked whether the template was something that people would use? HK thought it was good. There was no expectation to use it. There are possibly too many questions but they are perfectly reasonable, the type of questions a leader in the TS can ask. They will likely receive a few the same, and realise there is some co-ordination behind it, which is not a bad thing.

NA was asked to convert the template to a Word document and append it to the minutes. This can be found [here](#).

Actions: NA to put the template into Word format and append it to the Minutes via a link

This is just one tool which could be used to engage with councillors. COGITS has been keen on having an event with all levels of politician. We have not developed this as yet, we need to be very clear about why, and what the ask is, before we approach them. Also, we need to give the new council time to establish itself. The draft Plan is going to the council next Tuesday – this will be very high level, with no explicit mention of TS.

There was concern that the Plan is being put out by the council with not much about the TS at this stage when we are trying to knock down barriers and do more cooperative working. It was felt that this needs to be brought to the council's attention, it is time to include the TS in forward planning, it needs to be more inclusive. NAH confirmed that the plan is not detailed; it is a short page with bullet points – a statement of overall intent.

NAH asked what the group thought the TS should do in response to this. TM suggested calling a meeting, explain our frustrations. As we move forward, we are trying to change the culture of how things used to be, we are here, we need to be included, they need to look at us with new eyes – a new way of working, remember the TS is a force to be reckoned with, they need to be more inclusive with us

The group noted a concern that the councillors feel they cannot take part in discussions which may have implications on decision making, when decisions could be seen as being compromised, this disempowers our elected representatives. We need to have frank discussions with councillors and officials. NAH responded that not all councillors take the same view.

NAH shared the DGC priorities. JD commented that this does not talk about any collaborative working (eg with the NHS etc) – this is an issue, is it for the Community Planning Partnership Board? HK indicated that when you read the document there is no suggestion that they are adopting this, is it a statement of fact?

TM thought a high-level statement about inclusivity and partnership working should be included.

Actions: NAH to write to DGC and ask how it intends to deliver the priorities, and that we assume partnership will be involved.

Shared Prosperity Fund

The SPF is on the agenda to make sure the group is aware of what TSDG is doing and to establish if colleagues have picked up any information. The SPF is the replacement for European funds, to the level we had before Brexit.

We have been asking the council for information and consultation. It is to be administered by local authorities; they are required to provide an investment plan. The fund is £6.7mill over 3 years for Dumfries and Galloway. The Investment Plan should cover the 3 years and there is a relatively short timescale, the plan must be submitted by middle of July. There is no time for deep engagement with the TS and communities. The UK government is not assessing the level of engagement with the local communities. Plans need signed off by the UK government. TSIs see it as part of their responsibilities to try to get as much engagement as possible in the timescales. The RES was extensively consulted on, NAH has been trying to find out DGC's intent for engagement. There is a report going to the full council meeting next week. A lot of pressure will be put on REP members to be involved in some way in the compilation of the investment plan.

We have to be involved if we can but the level of engagement we can do with the wider sector is limited.

The TSI national network group has been told that even once the plans are submitted and approved there will be opportunity to re-shape. Any information you have gathered from your own networks would be most welcome.

TM indicated they had come across Anna Fowlie who had written a piece on the SPF, she was not very favourable. NAH indicated SCVO is a really good source of information. Some local authorities have responded more quickly than DGC. Midlothian is very advanced in planning. North Lanarkshire is undertaking good engagement with the TS.

HK sent an email to the leaders of DGC indicating that we were disappointed to see no mention of TS involvement. ST had indicated members of the REP will be asked for input. Time is short and they are blaming the change in councillors, but all other local authorities faced the same challenge.

At CPPB they always indicate the importance of the TS in being involved in decision making.

We might have something we can refer to by the September meeting. We can review it and see what our response might be.

Would help NAH in her position on REP to have the voice of COGITS behind her.

HK highlighted that there is a risk is that DGC will just use the money to boost their resources. There needs to be a balanced approach, 80% of it is to go on revenue.

It is not a huge amount of money, approximately £2.2mill / year, it is less than some LEADER years. It is not meant to replace LEADER. NAH is trying to find out what the intentions are to replace LEADER, there have been no announcements as yet.

AOCB

Digital Inclusion

NAH updated that TSDG had hosted a helpful session the day before involving the Digital Inclusion Research Team, DGC, NHS, SDS and a few other public sector organisations. The research is due to be concluded and reporting in September. The event on 22 June had been to promote thinking.

Fostering resilience in young people with additional support needs

HH updated colleagues in relation to this event (being run with the National Centre for Resilience and University of Glasgow) inviting anyone available to come along at 6pm that day.

Carers' Hub

JD updated colleagues on the new carers' hub that has opened at DGRI. Five services are working collaboratively with this and looking for other services. There are aspirations for it to be taken to other parts of the region. If colleagues want to visit, it is being staffed across the week.

Commissioning

KRR indicated that in last 18 months they have brought in project funding but are struggling to get core funding – this funds salaries and if they don't get it they may need to close. Can we as a group discuss / support / take a plea to commissioning. NAH agreed this was a long-standing problem. NAH would raise it at the next IJB meeting, urging those involved to have a more considered, structured approach to the timing of the commissioning process.

Action: NAH to raise the issue of the timing of the commissioning process at the IJB

TM added that core funding is needed to buy minibuses to continue. Would it be possible to work together, make it a shared thing and try to help each other to source the funding? If you can show cooperative working in your applications, it is positive.

NAH indicated that this type of working together came through in the priorities Mentimeter results and will be on the programme for this group

Next meeting

The next meeting of COGITS will take place on 22nd September 2022 at 10am, venue to be decided.

Future meetings have been scheduled on:

22 December 2022, 10am