

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

### Minute of meeting – 14 December 2022

**Attendance In-Person:** Helen Keron, Glenkens Community and Arts Trust Ltd (HK) (Chair)  
Roland Chaplain, Glenkens Business Association (RCh)  
Rachel Cowper, Crichton Trust (RC)  
John Dougan, Relationships Scotland (JD)  
Craig McEwen, Inspired Community Enterprise Ltd (CM)

**Attendance Online:** Pamela Deans, D&G Advocacy Service (PD)  
Kat Dick, Newton Stewart Initiative (KD)  
Sue Irving, Loreburn Housing Association (SI)

**Present In-Person:** Natalie Anderson, TSDG (NA)  
Alan Hall, TSDG (AH)

**Apologies:** David Barr (Aberlour), Carolyn Kennedy (Better Lives Partnership), Julie-Ann Lyons (LGBT Youth), Lucy MacLeod (OutpostArts), Helen McAnespie (Befriending), Clair McFarlan (Solway Firth Partnership), Michelle McRobert (Dalbeattie Community Initiative), Mhairi Ross (APEX Scotland), Phil Stewart (D&GCAS), Karen Ward-Boyd (Holywood Trust)

#### Welcome and Introductions

HK welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were noted and NA and AH were thanked for supporting the COGITS meetings.

Members introduced themselves and highlighted recent wins from their organisation.

Unfortunately, there were problems with the sound quality and camera view for online attendees.

#### Note of the meeting of 6 October 2022

The note of the meeting of 6 October 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 and:

- Mentoring: NA to ask Jane Stanistreet to provide an update on the mentoring scheme and distribute this to members with the slide deck
- The Voice project – an update will be providing at the next COGITS meeting
- Cost Of Living
  - HK and JD raised this at the Community Planning Partnership Board, it is apparent that the concrete actions are to deliver it rest very much with the third sector

- DGC - NA to clarify with NAH if discussions have taken place with Douglas Kirkpatrick – bulk buying fuel, and other fuel / transport issues

**Actions:** NA to send members the mentoring scheme presentation and an update from JS  
 NA to add The Voice Project to the agenda for the next meeting  
 NAH to clarify if discussions had taken place with DK, DGC

## Opening Talk

HK indicated that she was looking to make meetings really valuable to justify members taking time out to attend. HK proposed structuring the meetings as an opportunity to:

- Network: get to know each other and address professional isolation
- Scan the horizon: look at what strategic risks etc are around, distil matters at hand and get information out from TSDG staff to the chief officers.
- Be a strong voice in the region: we have the right to have a voice. TSDG has a role to represent the sector, COGITS should work hand in hand with TSDG. The meetings are a way to hear what people are saying and then ensure it is represented appropriately. It is important to convey to the statutory and public bodies that COGITS is a group with knowledge and expertise. Members can do this individually, through HK as Chair, through TSDG or through COGITS as a group.

## Strategic Context for the third sector

### Cost of Living Crisis

AH delivered a presentation covering recent TSDG cost of living work, on behalf of CB (HoO, TSDG)

Cost of living is an ongoing crisis and a priority for TSDG. Current work includes mapping warm spaces, undertaking a state of the sector survey and consultation with third sector organisation, including the last discussion at the last COGITS meeting and the current series of online conversations.

The slide deck for the presentation can be found [here](#).

Key points included:

- TSDG will run another survey in February (using the same questions and hopefully engaging with the same respondents for comparator purposes) – there might be more insight into the impact of energy prices at that point.
- The second TSDG online conversation would take place the next day
- Examples of organisational impact:
  - Mental Health association – anticipate increased net cost of £73k
  - Food Train figures: Fuel, volunteer and service delivery costs are increasing alongside a drop in fundraising.
- Small organisations are facing similar challenges.
- 38% of respondents were unsure if they could cover increased costs from reserves, 17% said they could not.
- A number of respondents were pinning hopes on fundraising or reducing services rather than closing.
- Some were increasing service requirements, although 28% were considering reducing services.

- New services were increasing – food donations, lunch drop ins, warm spaces
- The previous COGITS discussion had generated good ideas for further exploration and action.
- Repeat messages are coming through – the same issues are being raised and with similar implications.
- There has never been as many requests for volunteers as now.
- Warm Hubs – are now being referred to as warm spaces. TSDG has mapped 41 of these, including the detail on DG Locator and has received indications of another 37 being considered (once funding available for some).
- TSDG is awaiting information from DGC about the use of service spaces as warm spaces (eg libraries).

HK indicated GCAT had sourced a small amount of funding to give people drinks if they are in the café but not purchasing and is hoping to extend this to soup. It is hoped to be a stigma free way to help people.

JD updated that they are seeing more people face to face when they had thought that post pandemic online appointments would increase. This might suggest that people are attending appointments in person to access a warmer space.

RC updated that the whole Crichton estate was fed by gas from the NHS, the Crichton Trust had seen a huge increase this year. The Crichton Trust was working with the Royal Bank of Scotland on a green loan – this comes without a setup fee and has a lower interest rate to encourage organisations to green their energy supplies. The Crichton Trust is looking to move to ground source heat and bore holes. The loan scheme is for the whole spectrum of activity to reduce reliance on traditional energy sources.

SI indicated that if you don't address building fabric issues there is no point in changing to newer greener solutions. RC confirmed that the loans can be used for building and fabric too.

RCh heard recently that approval has been given for Edinburgh Castle to put solar panels up – this might help applications for other conservation areas.

*SI and JD left the meeting at this point*

### Shared Prosperity Fund

HK clarified that the Shared Prosperity FUND (SPF) is the replacement for EU funds, it comes from the UK government. Each region in Scotland was invited to submit a bid including an investment scheme of projects.

TSDG has been working hard on this issue and has stressed that the third sector must have a wide involvement in this. Dumfries and Galloway has been awarded the amount requested, this is approximately £1mill in 2022-23, £1.8mill in 2023-24 and £4mill in 2024 -25, the amount is significant and increases over the next 3 years. Projects will be for the general benefit of D&G.

Confirmation of the funding awards to regions was announced the previous week. DGC is in discussion with the UK government about carrying forward underspend.

It is clearly mandated that allocation of this fund should be done in partnership with third sector, with specific reference to Third Sector Interfaces (ie TSDG in Dumfries and Galloway). A good example is Edinburgh which has ringfenced a sum for the third sector. Dumfries and Galloway Council has not referred to the SPF / TS in this way.

HK asked whether COGITS can make a difference? DGC Economy and Resources committee will be considering the SPF plan on 24 January 2023. HK requested that if Chief Officers would want to, they could email their councillor and ask what the mechanism will be for the third sector to access this fund. The concern is that proposals will only include DGC preferred projects.

AH updated that there should be further information in this week's TSDG bulletin, that DGC were finalising comments in relation to this.

### Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan

HK introduced this item. The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Delivery Plan was discussed at the Regional Economic Partnership meeting on the 9 December. The plan is available [here](#).

There are a number of actions within the RES delivery plan which identify the third sector as a key delivery partner. There is a strong steer to make sure the South of Scotland is represented with one voice. COGITS is a good way for HK to distil out the issues which are common to all of us and input into discussions in her role as a Regional Economic Partnership (REP) member. There are strong views externally that if communities differ in their voices then you do not need to listen to any of them, so it is crucial that we are all clear on the region-wide issues that affect us all

RCh indicated that strength of diversity is vital, recognising it not as a problem, but learning ways to listen to each other and undertake collaborative projects. For those who are in positions of governance there is a time lag between what is happening "on the ground" and what they are basing their decisions on, they are using the wrong indicators.

HK highlighted the disconnect between community consultation & engagement and the creation of national policies.

KD updated the group in relation to their recent experience with a Local Place Plan (LPP). Unfortunately it will not go into the national planning framework as this is being reviewed. The Local Development Plan (LDP) is now being reviewed every 10 years rather than 5 years. If there is a difference between the LPP and the LDP, how does this get resolved? There is concern that the costs involved in developing a LPP (time, consultation venues etc) may make it prohibitive. In reality is it just a tick box exercise to show that they have done this and it will just sit on a shelf? HK and KD will discuss this further.

Do we need to raise further the profile of the third sector, emphasising what we are saying and doing and on behalf of whom? Perhaps an open letter? The TSDG Voice project is looking at how to address Third Sector Representation

RCh indicated that the land reform bill and act is going to be significant – it will be the responsibility of landowners to collaborate with local communities.

RC Indicated that there are students at the Crichton Campus who are looking for placements for 3 months or so. Placement students could undertake research which might help funding applications.

## **Opportunity to Collaborate**

HK introduced this item as an opportunity to consider anyone we would want to invite to a future meeting - eg whoever has mandated the local place plan strategies - the people who can answer the questions. Suggestions included:

- Dawn Roberts – CEO, DGC
- Steve Rogers DGC – economy and planning
- SOSE – Jane Morrison Ross and / or Gary Legg
- A representative from DGC procurement and finance, an organisation was supposed to get an uplift a year ago and still has not had it. This is a commissioned service (by the NHS and LA), it would be interesting to talk about their long-term strategy

## **Peer Networking**

HK introduced this item, in essence this was about how and where future meetings would take place in a way which enabled networking. Options would include Dumfries and also using various locations around the region.

No strong views were put forward therefore various options would be tried until we settle into a pattern which works for the group.

## **TSDG Online Resources for COGITS Members**

AH presented this item, highlighting the various online resources which TSDG provides which could help Third Sector Organisations. AH presented the TSDG [website](#) and gave a tour of it.

Key points included:

- Events - we invite TSOs to submit events via an online form – these are then shared to media and the bulletin
- Jobs – vacancies can be notified to TSDG in a similar way and will then be advertised until the closing date
- Membership applications are taken forward through completion of an application form, this then goes to a TSDG team member then to the Board for approval.
- Working Together – TSDG publishes informal notes from meetings in the Working Together section. The notes reflect a Third Sector view of the meeting, highlighting matters of interest. The section is split into themes and there might be multiple committees / groups within that theme. As the Voice project grows, TSDG will add committees / groups.
- Resources and guides – There are a substantial number of guidance resources available. It is possible to search these by key word or category. There are also links to external resources.
- Funding – TSDG would advise organisations to sign up to receive the weekly funding bulletin, this arrives on a Tuesday morning). We list local and national funds for the third sector along with their closing dates.
- Volunteering – There is a form which should be completed to promote opportunities. We also work with volunteer Scotland.
- DG Locator – this can be accessed on the website however people are advised to download the app to their phone if possible. Users can open DG Locator and pan in to find a service in the area where they are looking for it. Once you find one, you can click into it and retrieve

information on the service provided, location, contact details etc. It is a brief introduction, and you can link through to relevant websites for further detail.

- Through the warm hub mapping, DG Locator is getting a far higher profile with the NHS and DGC, a number of community and link workers have downloaded and are using the app.
- TSDG is encouraging all TSOs to get their details on using the current contact form. Moving forward, TSDG is going to offer TSOs their own URL which will have organisation information, TSOs will be able to update this information (eg contacts and services offered). This will give TSOs ownership of the information.
- DG Locator is a service map, not an organisation map. One organisation can have multiple services detailed.
- We have now introduced “what three words” which will help people find a location.
- DGC has asked TSDG to map the grit bins in Dumfries and Galloway to get a clear picture where they are.

### **Monthly Open Door Sessions**

NA updated members that monthly open-door sessions would be organised for COGITS members on the last Monday of each month in 2023 (with the exception of December which would be the 2<sup>nd</sup> last Monday). The sessions would be an opportunity to network and to meet TSDG staff and Board members. The sessions will be hosted in the TSDG offices in Dumfries, with an online link for any colleague who would prefer to join remotely.

### **AOCB**

There was no other competent business.

### **Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of COGITS will take place on 16 March 2023 at 10am, followed by a networking opportunity over a light lunch.