

Chief Officers Group in the Third Sector (COGITS)

Minute of meeting – 20 April 2023

Attendance In-Person: Helen Keron, Glenkens Community and Arts Trust Ltd (HK) (Chair)
Norma Austin Hart, Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway (NAH)
Roland Chaplain, Royal Meteorological Society (RCh)
Barnaby Fryer, Loch Ken Trust (BF)
Carolyn Kennedy, Better Lives Partnership (CK)
Helen McAnespie, Befriending (HM)
Lauren Milligan, Independent Living Support (LM)
Fiona Smith, Glenkens District Trust (FS)
Karen Ward Boyd, Holywood Trust (KWB)

Attendance Online: Pamela Deans, D&G Advocacy Service (PD)
Mhairi Ross, APEX (MR)

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

Apologies: Rachel Cowper (The Crichton Trust), John Dougan (Relationships Scotland Dumfries and Galloway), Craig McEwen (Inspired Community Enterprise Trust Ltd), Lisa Todd (Dumfries and Galloway Mental Health Association)

Welcome and Introductions

HK welcomed members to the meeting and introductions were made. A wide range of roles and organisations were represented at the meeting, providing a good networking opportunity.

HK reminded members of the aims of COGITS and that COGITS was part of a wider vision to enable TSDG to do its job. It was created after a suggested need from the chief officers. The aims include:

- Peer support
- Access to learning / information. TSDG can help the group – scanning the landscape and in relation to strategic issues
- Amplifying our voice – if you are working alone, but clear on what you are doing, it is hard to see that your voice is being heard. COGITS can ensure it is heard at a regional level as well as being a forum where we can invite key people to discuss topical and strategic items.

Apologies were noted as above

Note of the meeting of 14 December 2022

Subject to minor amendment, the note of the meeting of 14 December 2022 was agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising / Rolling Action Log

Shared Prosperity Fund Update

The Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) is a UK Government fund, part of levelling up. The administration has been devolved to local authorities. In Dumfries & Galloway the council has submitted an investment plan which we are still trying to see, this should detail how they are going to spend the funds. Just over £1million was available for 2022-23

None of the fund was spent in year 1 (2022-23). The grants we saw published were from levelling up funding but not SPF. A plan had to be submitted as to how to roll forward to year 2. This has resulted in approximately £2.5million being available this year for:

- Communities
- Investing in businesses
- People and Skills

Decision making has been agreed as:

- Communities – Place Planning Partnership
- Investing in Business – Business Gateway
- People and Skills – Local Employability and Skills Partnership (this is the largest amount)

All partnerships are DGC led.

NAH has written to the Head of Service indicating that this is not grass roots led and that TSDG would like to apply to the communities fund for a sum to distribute to grass roots communities.

Business Gateway has limited experience in working with Social Enterprises – NAH has asked would they consider working with TSDG on this and has also asked for funding for a SE manager.

Multiply – is a specific pot of money, it is part of SPF but separate, it is for numeracy programmes. It is £389k per year for 3 years. None was spent in 2022-23, it has been rolled forward into 2023-24. The LEP has been placing contracts on Public Contract Scotland – for organisations to come in and run numeracy programmes. As it is being done in haste, there is perhaps not enough time to animate the TSOs which could be really effective at delivering Numeracy programmes, it is likely that large national organisations will get the contracts, this does not benefit Community Wealth Building.

The UK government indicates the Third Sector is a mandatory partner which must be consulted.

MR indicated they had received a 3 month contract, this runs out at end of May. Nothing had come forward as a replacement therefore a staff member was on redundancy notice.

HK confirmed TSDG will continue to lobby. NAH has a meeting with S Rogers. It is helpful to be able to indicate that the concerns are not just what TSDG thinks, but that they are what the Chief Officers are saying. BF suggested we could have a formal statement. NAH agreed this could be drafted, it would show a single unifying voice.

The Economy and Resources Committee (ERC) is the decision making forum. We are lobbying groups and councillors privately, ensuring they are aware of the effect on the TS.

Potential actions include:

- A letter should be sent to the Chair of the ERC (Cllr Ian Carruthers) indicating:

We are very disappointed to see that DGC has decided to take this approach, you are aware there are other areas of Scotland which are taking a very different approach, they set up a SPF group, it had TS representation and has taken a collaborative approach.

- Express disappointment and a desire for more engagement with the TS and we could invite them to this meeting.
- Suggest that a sum is allocated to TSDG who would then administer a grants scheme (small awards). TSDG has one person on the PPP group. There are 34 members of which 24 are council members, some from SOSE, The Stove and us. We are not comfortable this is slightly tokenistic. We could suggest more TS representation on the PPP.

FS – would support this, there is a long lead time, incrementally get them comfortable, they can relinquish control over time. It is important to build respect and support.

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is being talked about by a lot of people but we are not seeing it turn into any kind of reality. In dealing with windfarm developers, they have about 10years of work planned however the windfarms cannot get DGC and SOSE to engage to discuss and plan.

Action: HK and NAH to draft the COGITS statement and the letter to the Chair of ERC

Potential wording:

We continue to be disappointed at the non-collaborative approach so far and seek assurances that DGC is keeping to UK guidelines. As an example, you could give TSDG a sum to allocate.

Would group be comfortable with this? BF responded yes, to do this and that it could unlock the funds.

NAH indicated that we are within a 3-year timeframe for planning – next year the UK government will be looking for plans post 2025, it is likely a 5-year plan will be needed. Multi year is a better option and we and DGC need to be ready. This could stop short termism.

FS suggested we indicate that good visibility, planning and more certainty around the processes facilitate and enable TSOs. The lack of certainty means organisations cannot plan so are less effective.

BF suggested we add that one of the problems for DGC has been in delivery and capacity – if you put the money here, we will enable delivery.

NAH indicated that we have offered to help them. Within their team they have the skills and expertise, but they are not using them. They do not want to give it up.

There is a risk for the region, the UK government has allowed unused funds be carried forward but if it is not spent by end of year there may be consequences and funds could be clawed back.

[AH's guide to the TSDG website](#) – it may be beneficial for new members to look at this.

[Mentoring scheme](#) – NA confirmed that the presentation slides and update had been distributed.

[Fuel and DGC](#) – NAH confirmed that there was no possibility of this.

The Voice

HK introduced this item, indicating that the Voice project has been a really important piece of work to make sure diverse voices are represented effectively. It is hoped to effect a cultural change.

NAH presented an update on the project, the presentation slides can be viewed [here](#).

The project had been driven by the large number of requests which NAH had received to sit on various partnerships and groups. PD and MR are participants in the pilot project

Four years ago TSDG commissioned research and interviewed nearly 63 Chairs of partnerships and groups and asked them why they wanted TS representation. The results were mapped on to Arnstein's ladder. Almost 60% fell in the bottom half of the ladder. This indicated that we needed to do something - the Voice project was born, to turn this around.

The participating Partnerships are:

- Public Protection Committee (PD is the representative)
- Community Justice Partnership (MR is the representative)
- Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (PD is the representative)
- Local Employability and Skills Partnership – SD sits on this so will broaden her role to include the representation
- Regional Economic Partnership (HK is one of the 3 reps)
- Community Learning and Development – in discussion
- Public Health Committee – in discussion

Chairs are asked a number of questions to make them think about why they want representation and how it would work. Agreements rare reached in relation to paperwork, especially if there is a confidentiality issue.

Representatives are supported on areas such as how to gather views. They are allocated a buddy, given training if needed and TSDG facilitates the development of a Huddle (for support and consultation). Huddle membership is drawn from the thematic area.

NAH highlighted the Working Together section of the TSDG website – a repository for papers, notes, consultations etc

NAH briefed COGITS on the Huddle Role Descriptor and the Voice Representation Loop.

Next steps will include:

- Progressing the CLD and PHC participation in the pilot
- Evaluating the pilot and how to recruit Voice representatives – a transparent and open recruitment process, possibly elections.
- Moving the framework forward after evaluation of the pilot.
- Consideration of how this links to the mentoring project / service (a leadership mentoring service focused on growing leaders in the sector but currently struggling to get mentees).

PD updated that is has been good so far. PD has attended one meeting however the papers had only been distributed 2 days prior to the meeting, they had been extensive and involved a lot of reading.

They should really have been distributed at least a week in advance to allow time for review and consultation (if appropriate).

The late distribution of papers was noted as a concern. We should consider monitoring this. It is not inclusive if papers are not sent out in time, eg if a representative is using a braille machine, or if slides go up without having been sent out in advance. Important decisions get made when people have not had the time / opportunity to appropriately consider the papers.

All community planning partnerships have signed up to a review at the end of the year.

PD – PPC and ADP have been extremely welcoming. There was more notice of papers at previous meetings. PD will raise with the Chair. They are happy to listen to the TS view.

Mentoring and developing leaders – KWB was keen to explore this in relation to their young people. NAH and KWB to have conversation.

FS identified that a challenge might be when representatives had multiple roles (eg being a trustee of a TSO and a Community Councillor), the representatives would need to be able to appropriately represent the third sector.

Generally these groups are part of a public sector framework which is at least in some way required to involve the TS. If the driving force is a requirement, would there be consequences if the TS did not go to the table?

Can be a nervousness if the people round the table are your funder, not such a concern if you are representing the sector rather than your individual organisation.

Action: NAH to meet with KWB to discuss leadership mentoring

Future Topics for COGITS

HK introduced this item, asking COGITS what members might want to know more about in 3 months. Suggestions included:

- Funding streams – what is available, who are good contacts. NAH confirmed there would be TSDG funder events soon
- Anything around learning and skills
- Haywood review of sustainability – this will be due out soon. There are far bigger implications than people might be aware of in relation to loss and damage, climate justice and the way we view natural capital in communities. Could this be a broader topic in relation to sustainability and Global Goals?
- Understanding the difficulties that DGC are having – invite the Chief Executive along to talk about their experience there, the challenges, how can we help.
- Funders, organisations, networking - a local funders forum – to help funders understand what we are looking for. There is currently more networking at a national level. Continuation funding for core activity. Partnership working as a key. There is concern about funders who do not fund core costs. We could reinforce what we expect from funders.
- National Care Service Review – Feeley report – D&G and sectoral interest, TSDG has a H&SC forum. Could COGITS focus on more strategic issues. There is another consultation on how it will be delivered.
- SPF – could we invite someone in from an area which is doing it better?

- Fair work agenda, TS pay and TS standards of employment. The pay disparity is huge / appalling. You are not going to attract future generations into the jobs. NAH indicated that at the IJB she emphasises they are stuck in a cycle of hiring people into jobs from the TS on better pay. This is becoming a critical issue. In the SOSE fair work survey, there was nothing about length of contract. There is concern about the mental health of existing workforce in the TS. A workforce plan is developed every 3 years – an assessment of all relevant numbers. TSDG has to do this for the TS – it is very challenging, TSDG has tried various ways to do it. Needs some good research from UoG, but TSDG has been unable to secure funding so far. We need a better understanding of what we do not know.

Planning and Preparing for Engaging with Key Decision Makers

COGITS agreed that the Chief Executive of DGC should be invited to meet with the group.

Jane Morrison Ross (SOSE) should also be invited, likely on a different date.

The challenge for this group is how to extract the maximum value from the meeting. What do we want from them, what do we need to present which requires a response? Options could include:

- Accessing DGC – the process and timescales are challenging, barriers are in place.
- Culture change for the long term
- Lack of trust in the relationships between the TS and DGC officers at all levels.
- KWB suggested there could be a staff exchange process between DGC and the TS so staff could gain an understanding of how the other works.

NAH has proposed to Richard Grieveson that we consider a Compact – an in-depth statement on how the council and TS will work together. It would define how the operations should work. NAH had experience of this in Edinburgh through EVOC. The development of the Compact took 6 months, it was properly consulted on, identifying what should be in / out scope. It could create an environment for healthy partnership working. It is not just a protocol, it is a much deeper exploration of how we want the relationship to work. This could be discussed with the Chief Executive of DGC.

There was one in D&G in 2010, it was fairly light touch and was never fully embraced.

Action: NAH to come back to HK / COGITS with a draft Compact proposal.

Cost of Living Crisis

HK asked COGITS if there was anything that organisationally they wanted to share in relation to the cost-of-living crisis.

KWB indicated concerns about the wellbeing of TS staff and the TS volunteer base. Key points discussed included:

- Is there a fund which supports staff to access mental health / wellbeing support?
- Is there an opportunity to bring people together to have a conversation with someone outwith their organisation?
- Should COGITS develop a set of standards for the TS for looking after its staff?

- Could TSDG collect data – what do partners / TSOs have in place for some of things – could they be made available to smaller organisations? Could we leverage expertise?
- Menopause groups.
- Can we access work that others have done?
- AH indicated TSDG could dedicate a page on the website to hold information.
- Should we ask how many mental health first aiders are there in the third sector? Would be more valuable to be able to contact a mental health first aider from another organisation? Would organisations need to give their permission to provide support to others outwith their organisation? Is there a source of funding which could be accessed to skill up the TS in respect to MHFA?

Monthly Open Door Sessions

HK reminded COGITS members that there is a monthly open door session at TSDG on the last Monday of each month, 3pm – 5pm, this is an opportunity for networking, meeting TSDG Board members and staff.

AOCB

Working Together – AH demonstrated the Working Together section of the TSDG website, this contains informal notes from relevant partnership meetings and any associated papers (as appropriate).

Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of COGITS will be confirmed.