

Minutes of TSPC meeting on Resilient Communities held on 25 January 2017

Attendees

Carl Sargeant AM, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children
Amelia John, Deputy Director Communities Division
Angharad Richards, Head of Community and Third Sector Policy
Helen Brown, Third Sector Policy Unit
Anna Nicholl, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)
Victoria Ward, Wales Sports Association
John Hallet, Communities First, Ely Caerau and Fairwater Cluster
Sean O'Neill, Children in Wales
Gethin Rhys, Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales
Peter Williams, Development Trusts Association Wales
Martin Featherstone, Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils (WACVC)

Opening remarks

Carl Sargeant AM (CS) open the meeting by thanking everyone for coming explaining the purpose of the meeting was to gather the views from the sector regarding resilient communities. CS also explained his priorities and asked the group for their thoughts on what they felt a resilient community looks like.

In relation to Communities First the CS explained that the initial engagement process ended on 15th January with a very good response. He recognised there are many people who have committed to making great contributions to their community in tackling poverty and he thanked them for this. Although the first engagement process had closed this does not mean the engagement with people has ended completely. CS stated he will be making a further statement mid to late February on Communities First.

Points made from the group

Anna Nicholl (AN) thanked the Cabinet Secretary for meeting and told CS WCVA were looking at working with partners including CVCs more innovative ways of working and would welcome the opportunity of working with Welsh Government in the future whatever changes are implemented.

Peter Williams (PW) welcomed CS opening comments and stated it was important to establish what is meant by empowerment and whether the focus in the future for Welsh Government would be to provide intervention services or the creation of more jobs within communities. PW then raised issues around the community assets agenda and wondered whether the Scotland approach would work in Wales and asked CS what support could be provided by Welsh Government on this agenda.

Victoria Ward (VW) shared an example of work which had been undertaken by Wales Sports Association and Business in the Community regarding sporting assets which has been transferred to community groups. VW explained community organisations often need help to be skilled when they are considering taking over an asset.

Action Point: CS said he would discuss this with Ken Skates AM.

Gethin Rhys (GR) agreed with VW on up-skilling people and also made the point that sometimes a small amount of funding to organisations can have a huge impact on a community.

John Hallet (JH) said Communities First could come and go but felt what needs to be looked at is the lasting effects in communities of the various programmes. He expressed his concerns regarding smaller organisations bidding for Children Zones for their community when Local Authorities are pulling together much larger bids without consulting communities. He stated he would like to see join up in the process and much more working together. JH also commented on pre employment work which he had been involved in and the work which is currently being undertaken with people who do not have the confidence to even talk to any potential employer.

Sean O'Neill (SO) stated that with all the uncertainty with Communities First and what the future holds for a lot of projects, he wanted to see a supportive transition process put in place for organisations. Programme such as Family First, Flying Start and Communities First all work with children who suffer from ACES. When Family First and Cymorth funding finished good services were lost.

Remarks from CS

CS stated that it was his responsibility to ensure communities do not go further into poverty and he believes that the Welsh Government's poverty programme is not tackling poverty effectively so Communities First can not carry in its current format. He stated that he wanted to see communities flourish and invest in areas which allow this to happen. He also made clear that he wanted to see Public Service boards include poverty in their plans which should bring services together including finances.

In relation to community assets he wanted to see a made in Wales approach, however he agreed we need to ensure communities organisations have the right skills to take over assets and he considering this issue.

He stated that he is very aware these changes are disrupting people and acknowledged this process is not easy, however, he gave his commitment to work with the sector in the future.