

Cross Party Group Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector

Minute

Wednesday 23 April 2014, 18:00 – 7:30

Committee Room 4, Scottish Parliament

Convenor: Margaret McDougall MSP

Topic: Future planning of the CPG

In attendance:

Fraser McRobert; Hudghton Fraser; Liz Watson; Harriet Eadie; Melanie Nairn; Gillian Lithgow; Rebecca Marek; Morven MacLean; Euan Renton; Derek Todd Donna Morris; Paul Reddish; Phil Rowsby; Joyce Munro; Fiona Barlow; Kathleen Doyle; Kathryn Wane; Paul Okroj; Paul White; Chris Wilson; Annabelle Ewing; Margaret McDougall

Apologies :

Lynn Kalman ; Andrew Lindsay ; Bob Bogle; Fiona Campbell ; Emma Whitelock ; Annette Wilson ; Louise McGinty ; Lesley Ann Muirhead ; Angela Napuk ; Amria Ahluwalia ; Sam Whitmore ; Amie Blackaby ; Eric Mitchell

Welcome and introductions

1. Margaret warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting of the CPG, which was then followed by a round of introductions.

AGM

2. Margaret explained that the minute of the 2012-13 AGM could not be found due to changes in secretarial staff, and apologised for this oversight. Kathryn, in her role as secretariat, chaired the election of the office bearers:

- Margaret McDougall MSP was elected as Convenor: firstly by Paul White (SCVO) and Rebecca Marek (Scottish Youth Parliament)
- Annabelle Ewing MSP was elected as Vice Convenor: firstly by Gillian Lithgow (Youthlink Scotland) and Liz Watson (Befriending Networks)

Margaret then chaired the election of the secretariat: SCVO and Volunteer Scotland were elected firstly by Harriot Eadie (VC Edinburgh) and Chris Wilson (Voluntary Action Fund).

Minutes and matters arising

3. The minute of the last meeting was agreed. Margaret updated the Group that a Parliamentary Motion for a Members Debate on the impact of social isolation and loneliness had been submitted and she would keep the Group up to date on progress.

4. Margaret presented a short update on the Convenor's report for the last year: The Group met four times, including this meeting:

- In June the CPG held a joint meeting with CPG on International Development
- September's meeting focused on the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill.
- In February the CPG was joined by Liz Watson from Befriending Networks who spoke on the topics of volunteering, older people and social inclusion and from by Lynne Blanchfield, Volunteer Be-friender.
- Today's meeting on the future direction of the CPG

5. Members can find the Convenor's Report on CPG page of the Scottish Parliament website

Forward Programme for 2014/15

6. Margaret introduced the topic of the future direction of the Group, explaining that as Convenor she would like to see the Group being more interactive, action focused and having flexibility to respond to particular issues affecting volunteering and the voluntary sector.

Members raised, discussed and agreed a number of points:

Purpose

- The purpose is vague, lacks clarity in some places about who it is aimed at, and is not currently measurable in terms of what the CPG is / is not achieving.
- What's needed is set of objectives and work programme for the year to shape and focus what and how the CPG communicates with MSPs and national government
- The scope of the CPG needs to be expanded. Many members raised the issue of volunteering transcending sector boundaries. That is, it can be found in many public sector organisations for example in the NHS and local government. The CPG needs to engage these stakeholders too in debating the issues faced by volunteering organisations, public or voluntary, across thematic policy areas.

- Some members asked about the potential to have two separate CPGs: one on volunteering and the other on the voluntary sector. Margaret agreed to check with Standards and Procedures team at the Parliament.

What members need / want from the CPG

- Network and learn from experience and expertise of members of the Group
- Enhance MSPs understanding of the key issues facing volunteering and the voluntary sector
- Highlight research and evidence on the volunteering and voluntary sector at the meetings
- Action-orientated group e.g. drafting shared position statements

Timing of meetings

- Convenor and members agreed to have 4 meetings per year and to alternate them between lunchtime and evenings to increase diversity of participation from organisations

Topics the CPG should debate and discuss in the next year

- Need for the CPG to have longer term vision. The Group should look at issues facing volunteering in the next 5 years, not just in the short term.
- Many topics were put forward:
 - The referendum and its impact on volunteering and the voluntary sector
 - Volunteering in European context; building on EU year of the citizen
 - The role of volunteering in delivering public services; what does the future look like; what are the key issues facing organisations
 - The future of volunteering – given demographic and technological drivers...who are future volunteers? What will they want to do? Is this different from what organisations need them to do? Is this different from what services are needed? What investment is needed to support volunteering?
 - Community empowerment; what does volunteering in itself do for communities?
 - Integration of health and social care
 - Trustee's and encouraging a diversity of participation, especially among younger people
 - Celebrating Volunteers Week
 - Ethical issues of involving volunteers e.g. relations between paid staff and volunteers, and how does this play out in local areas where heavily unionised?; role of volunteering in addressing fiscal deficit;
 - Topics that chime with legislative agenda and committee business
- Members agreed that the overarching theme of all four meetings would be the future of volunteering and the sector, and to explore a range of thematic issues within this.

- Secretariat agreed to draft objectives, work plan and approach to raise awareness of the activities of the CPG to be circulated for comment by members.

Action:

- Margaret McDougall will speak to Standards and Procedures team to scope feasibility of breaking the CPG up in to two groups.
- Secretariat will draft objectives and work plan for members comment and to be agreed at the next meeting in June.

Margaret McDougall MSP is the Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector, with Volunteer Scotland and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations supporting the secretariat for this Group.