

VOLUNTARY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF MEETING Tuesday 24 January 2023

PRESENT: Councillor S. Smith (Chair); Councillors Beswick, Davidson, Dearnley, O'Neill, Rush, Sheerin, Sullivan, Taylor, Wazir and West, Mary Adekugbe (Nigeria Community Association), Nasmine Akhtar (Awakening Minds), Fiona Bowker (HMR Circle), Ryan Bradley (Rochdale AFC Community Trust), Kathy Carr (Bowlee Pavillion), Melanie Chapman (Future Directions CIC), Joanne Faulkner (Home Instead Rochdale), Nicky Iginla (Caring and Sharing), Jamie McGlynn (Citizens Advice), Paul Steer (Citizens Advice), Valery White (Townships & Communities Manager, RBC), Liz Windsor-Welsh (Action Together) and Jonathan Yates (Citizens Advice)

OFFICERS: K. Davies (Governance and Committee Services)

26 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed those present and attendees introduced themselves.

27 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emsley, Faisal, Gartside, Mir and Place (also representing Rochdale Connections Trust), Asma Begum (Soul Sisters), Naomi Burke (Healthwatch Rochdale), Jane Catz (Back of the Moss Community Centre), Kerry Edwards (Burnside Centre), Jav Rehman (Bridging Communities), Emma Salloway (Neighbourhood Cohesion & Community Centres Engagement Officer, RBC), Souhad Sharif (Lamet Habayeb Association) and Ghulam Shahzad (Rochdale Environmental Action Group).

28 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Voluntary Sector Partnership meeting held on 21 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

29 COMMUNITY CO-OPERATIVE CONSORTIUM

The Partnership received a presentation from the Chief Executive at Action Together that sought agreement from Members on the next steps for the proposed Community Co-operative Consortium.

Members were informed of two options that were available to progress the Community Co-operative Consortium:

1. To set up a legal consortia or formal partnership
2. To work as a loose partnership

It was acknowledged that various options would exist if Members chose to set up a legal consortia or formal partnership. Members would need to invest development capacity resource to set this up and organisations would need to contribute time and potentially money, or secure funding elsewhere, in order

for the legal co-operative to be successful. Any funds secured would contribute to the running costs of the consortia and the legal management.

Alternatively, Partnership Members could actively work together to strategically bid for work and put in joint funding bids. If they chose not to set up a formal consortia or partnership, Members would have to agree, dependant on the opportunity, who would lead and which partners would be involved in opportunities as they arise. Decision making and expectations would be agreed with facilitation upfront and results would be more immediate as opportunities and a timeline would be known from the offset.

Members considered the strengths and weaknesses of each option before the decision came to a vote.

Resolved:

1. That a loose partnership be formed to develop the proposed Community Co-operative Consortium;
2. That the next meeting of the Voluntary Sector Partnership be a one item agenda led by Action Together to focus on progressing strategic bids with Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations.

30 CITIZENS ADVICE

The Partnership received a presentation from representatives of the Citizens Advice SORT (Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale and Trafford) Group detailing the impact that Citizens Advice Rochdale had on residents throughout 2022.

Members were informed that 5,920 advice calls had been answered, 1,337 people had received in person support and 107,000 Rochdale users had visited self-help tools over the year. Citizens Advice debt caseworkers had also helped Rochdale residents with a total of £5.4 million worth of debt in 2022, and over £511,000 worth of debt had been written-off.

A number of new services had been launched in seven locations across the borough to address the ongoing cost of living crisis. This included a new energy adviser service, WhatsApp service, an Out of Hours service and an additional project with Rochdale Foodbank. A Macmillan advice service had also been launched; two Macmillan social welfare caseworkers had provided support to Rochdale residents (and family members thereof) with a cancer diagnosis.

A dedicated mental health caseworker had provided advice to all Rochdale residents with a long term mental health condition who needed specialist benefit advice. From April 2022 to October 2022 there had been a 160% increase in the total number of residents helped via the mental health caseworker in comparison to the previous year. There had also been an increase in demand in people applying for disability benefits.

Partnership members were informed that Citizens Advice could be contacted through their website, via the telephone advice line or in person. An up-to-date

timetable of face-to-face sessions held within the Rochdale Borough is available to view online: [Face to face CA Rochdale](#)

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

31 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Melanie Chapman, Project Support Worker at Future Directions CIC, informed attendees of the Safe Places scheme funded by Rochdale Borough Council and the Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership. Residents can visit a registered Safe Place throughout the borough - a shop, office, community centre, café or public building such as a library or leisure centre - if they are lost, feel scared, or need help. Safe Places will welcome and reassure, allow you to wait at a premises until you feel confident to move on, or contact someone on your behalf.

There are 48 Safe Places currently registered for the scheme; venues can be viewed by downloading the free app which provides directions to the nearest open Safe Place when you need it. Alternatively, registered Safe Places can be viewed on the [website](#). Members were urged to contact melanie.chapman@futuredirectionscic.co.uk with suggestions for additional Safe Places and groups or organisations who might be interested in joining the scheme.

Ryan Bradley, Rochdale AFC Community Trust, informed that the Trust are currently working on a bid to install play zones and upgraded kick pitches in each township of the Rochdale Borough. The bid is due to be submitted by the end of April 2023 and Ward Councillors would be approached to discuss and identify sites where kick pitches could be installed in the best interest of local need.

Mary Adekugbe, Nigeria Community Association, informed attendees that the Association required help with finding a venue to run their food distribution service from every Monday. The food distribution service provides culturally appropriate food to the local Nigerian community. Members were urged to contact nigeriacommunityassociation1@gmail.com with venue suggestions.

32 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the 2023/24 meetings of Voluntary Sector Partnership will be held every 12 weeks where possible on Thursday mornings from 10.00am. Provisional dates are as follows:

- Thursday 22 June 2023
- Thursday 21 September 2023
- Thursday 25 January 2024
- Thursday 21 March 2024