

# **Establishing a Voluntary Sector Forum in Moray Why? How?**

**March 2009**



30-32 High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BU  
A Company Limited by Guarantee and not  
having a share capital  
Company No SC175015  
Scottish Charity SC 021985



15 High Street, Elgin, IV30 1EQ  
Company No SC 247825  
Scottish Charity SC 034369

## **Establishing a VSF in Moray**

*Here are some questions that need to be answered by you. We have provided some thoughts and suggestions; however, your comments and feedback are vital. We also need to know if there are other questions that need to be asked.*

### **FEEDBACK – new comments in blue**

**What do you think a VSF should do?** Should it for example include:-

- Addressing policy issues and respond as a collective voice
- Building on existing partnerships with external agencies
- Contributing more effectively to Community Planning
- Demonstrating the value of the work of voluntary organisations to regional services and the regional economy
- Reducing the isolation which may be experienced by individual voluntary organisations
- Having a lobbying function
- Enable more partnership working
- Take on a funding role, particularly beneficial to smaller non-constituted groups
- Enable more joined up delivery of SOAs
- Possible development of a hub under the VSF banner
- Voice for the voluntary sector – local and national
- Raise awareness of the voluntary sector

- Agree with all suggestions made apart from final bullet point re lobbying function. This would need to be specified.
- All valid reasons to exist

**Who should get involved?** Should it be open and inclusive with membership generic (everybody and anybody)? Should there be sub-groups for areas/themed networks?

- Open to all in third sector
- The Forum should be open to all vol sector organisations. They should be as actively involved in Forum work as they can or want to be, however if they are not they should still be part of the information network and kept absolutely in touch.
- It should be open and inclusive. Depending on membership there could be a possibility of forming sub-groups
- Sub groups with themed networking
- Specific subgroups for one off events
- Unsure about themed networks as there is considerable pressure on time. Some service providers work across groups, e.g. children and adult services as well as disability and generic issues.

**How will local priorities and needs be addressed?** Should the VSF work within the aims of the Moray Compact? Would Single Outcome Agreements be used as guiding principles for service delivery?

- SOAs as delivery guidelines
- SOA must be used as guiding service delivery but not all are aware of SOAs

- Full stakeholder consultation to establish what the local needs are
- Not there to deal with individual organisation's problems (can be signposted) – sector representation not individual
- Find common issues and address at local/national level
- Agree with suggestion made. Those voluntary organisations providing statutory services need to be seen to be working collaboratively with the funding authority and in following Government directives.
- Should be from the ground level up

**How should a VSF be resourced?** There is no funding at present. MVSO and VCM are working on this project with their current staff and resources but this is not sustainable in the long term.

- Funding for a development Manager and Admin support
- There have to be funded posts to co-ordinate and administrate a Forum, additionally to the overall supporting of vol groups and volunteering.
- The North Lanarkshire model was positive in this respect - are there other similar opportunities which could be explored? All services/voluntary organisations are operating within tight financial restrictions.
- Perhaps an annual membership fee? Would this be adequate? How much would be needed?

**What should the relationship between the VSF and the MCPP be?** Do you think that it should be independent but with joint working in full partnership? Do

you agree that a VSF should not operate in isolation but that it should have an open two-way relationship with the MCPP?

- Independent with partnership working
- It should not be a direct replica of the CPP – take what works and learn from it
- Agree with suggestions made
- I don't believe that there is a need for any particular relationship – MVS0 does a good job

**What should the relationship between the VSF and the Elected Members be?**

Would a link between the VSF and councillors be seen as an important element towards building a greater understanding of the voluntary sector's contribution across the whole of Moray? Should Moray Council elected representatives have a seat on the VSF at a strategic level?

- There should be an elected member who acts as a Third Sector representative; there should be a corresponding representative on the VSF and they should liaise with each other – there should be a reporting framework
- An elected member gives the thing more credibility and clout perhaps easier entry into funding streams.
- It would not be beneficial for elected members to be heavily involved with in the VSF – it is important to maintain independence
- Elected members should not be part of the Vol Sector Forum structure. They, rightly, have a significant role within the CPP framework as it is and the link will be there.
- As suggested

## **Some more questions for you to consider?**

**How do we keep overlap to a minimum with certain community structures such as the Community Councils, the Area Forums, themed networks already in place, and other voluntary interest groups?**

- Either work in partnership with established structures or where relevant absorb them into the VSF framework
- I think the key to avoiding duplication, good partnership working etc is making sure that the communication and info sharing is really good. I am encouraged by the work Jacqui has already started doing in the Fairer Scotland job by engaging the info officers in forward planning info gathering rather than just retrospective stuff for eval reports. I would hope that there will be a sub group of the Forum which will very actively link into that work.
- Overlap would depend on which issues arise eg presently Elgin CC and Elgin North Forum decide on who takes on which issues – consultation!!

**How do you see a VSF being managed in the future? Do you want MVS0 and the VCM to continue to operate in same way?**

- Initially led by MVS0/VCM
- I have always thought that splitting the work into those two areas was sensible, but not to have 2 separately constituted groups. It causes confusion within the wider community and allows for an unhealthy distancing between the two. Coming back together

might help lever more funding. How will the recent decision to have a separate CVS umbrella organisation affect this? Having put DINKS funding into SCVO, will government and other funders see this as the full extent they will be prepared to fund MSVO and VCM have separate roles but could come together in partnership without having to operate in the same way

- Establish a small steering group to lead the development – eventually this could be developed into the strategic board
- Begin to set up smaller sub-groups at ground level to establish partnership working and create awareness of the VSF
- This would depend very much on how such a body evolves and how much needed to be done. Perhaps chaired by a volunteer?

**How are we going to get from where we are to where we want to be?**

- Steering group of do-ers – people who actually deliver
- Strategic timeline with definite action points
- Regular communication and updates to stakeholders
- Suggest you consider the outcome of this exercise and follow-up with meeting to discuss further action.
- If the will is there to have such a body then meetings between the interested parties need to take place and perhaps a couple of brainstorming sessions would be enough to find a way.

## General Feedback

- I confirm support for establishing a VSF in Moray and the examples given in Appendix 1 are all considered to be good working practice models.
- At the risk of it sounding a cop-out I think the paper and appendix cover it really well and very much like I hope it could be. I also think the N. Lanarkshire model is the one which would work best in Moray. The sub-groups need to be flexible and not necessarily directly mirroring the CPP theme groups. The Vol Sector sub-groups may be prioritised differently eg the Older People issues which seem higher on the Vol Sec agenda atm than on the CPP.
- I would call it something other than a FORUM – too many forums at present.