

**Voluntary and Community Sector Annual Assembly 28 April 2009
Annual Assembly Evaluation Report**

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

1. Consider the feedback obtained from the Annual Assembly.
2. Use the key findings to assist with planning the Annual Assembly 2010.
3. Note the issues Assembly Members highlighted for the attention of the Board (see section 5).
4. Note that information collected through the discussion group sessions is included in a separate report.

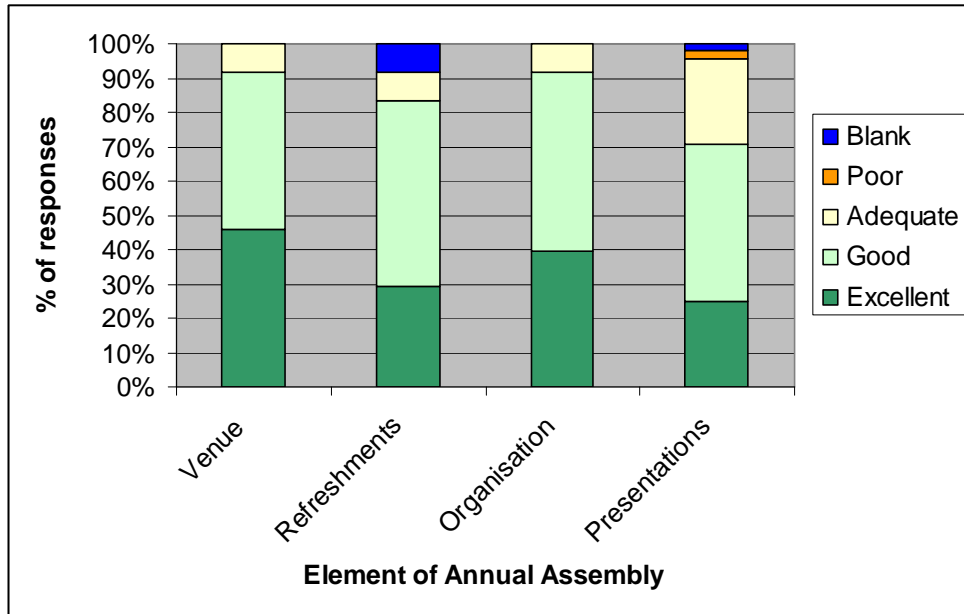
1. Background

- 1.1 The VCS Annual Assembly was held on the 28 April 2009. The day included a mix of presentations and an opportunity for assembly members to get together into smaller groups for a discussion session. Key elements of the agenda included:
- Welcome and Assembly Progress Report
 - Low Carbon Leadership – Step Forward Third Sector?
 - Joint Commissioning and the VCS
 - Developing the new Compact
 - Forums of Interest Discussion Groups
 - Procurement by Shropshire Council
 - Summary of next steps and close
- 1.2 An evaluation form was included in the packs distributed to each attendee. This report sets out the evidence collected through the evaluation form. Approximately 100 people attended the Annual Assembly and 48 evaluation forms were completed in total.

2. Event Ratings

- 2.1 Figure 1 below highlights the fact that most attendees rated elements of the Annual Assembly as either excellent or good. Overall levels of satisfaction with the event appear good but many attendees included more specific feedback on their evaluation forms and this is covered under the sections presented below.

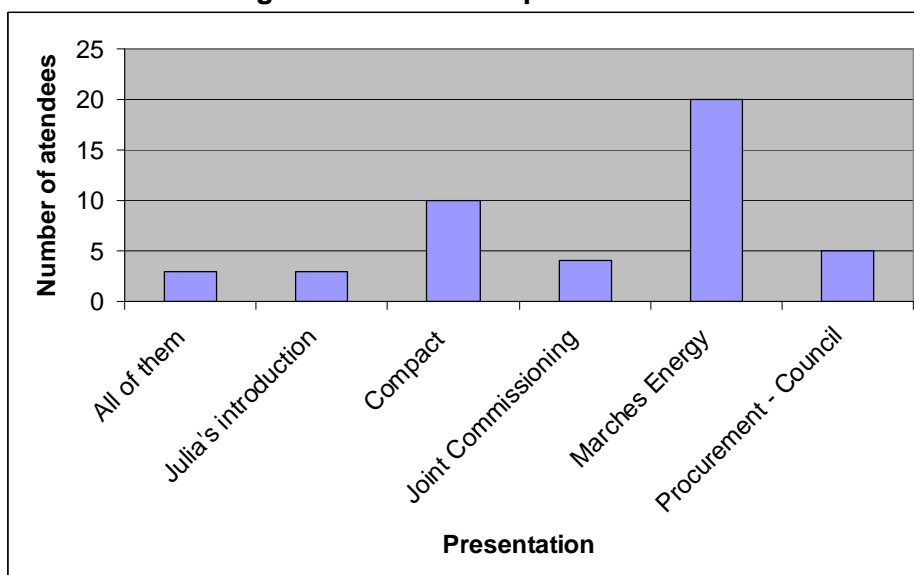
Figure 1 Attendees views concerning different elements of the Annual Assembly.



3. Presentations and Speakers

- 3.1 Annual Assembly attendees were asked to state which presentation they had found most useful. The results show that different individuals/organisations found different presentations the most useful but many commented on the presentation from Marches Energy Agency. Common words used to describe the presentation were 'interesting' and 'thought provoking'. All presentations received positive comments.
- 3.2 There were some comments made concerning the fact that finding a speaker able to appeal to all Assembly Members was important and that a few of the 2009 presentations were more geared towards larger VCS bodies than smaller groups and organisations. Smaller groups and organisations hadn't found the focus on commissioning and procurement as helpful as the larger VCS bodies.
- 3.3 The compliments speakers received through evaluation forms have been collated and fed back to the individual speakers.

Figure 2 Most useful presentation.



- 3.4 The evaluation form was used to ask for ideas for speakers for the 2010 Annual Assembly. The box below summarises the feedback received.

Box 1 Suggested speakers for next year

General themes

- Commissioning update (3)
- Arts
- Community working
- Equality and diversity
- Key issues around training in the voluntary sector
- Sustainability strategies for VCS organisations in terms of financial and management systems and planning.
- Where Shropshire Unitary Council is going and the priorities that have been identified in the near and medium term and how that has an affect on the VCS and how the sector can contribute.

Speakers

- Speakers from the voluntary sector on the work of their organisation.
- Presentations from Funding bodies
- Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership
- National speakers who work in the Voluntary Sector
- Continued updates from Julia.
- DASH
- Portfolio holders

Other comments

- Someone to lift/inspire the voluntary sector and promote it.
- We need Topical speaker suitable for all as you have had for this.
- Issues current next year - difficult to predict now.

4. Learning points

- 4.1 Box 2 shows that Annual Assembly attendees took a range of different learning points from the day. There were a number of useful learning points people picked up from the presentations and the discussion groups but many people also commented on the general values of the event and the chance to network.

Box 2 Learning points from the day

Learning points from presentations

- Impact of global warming.
- Marches presentation very useful.
- I have learned more about the Marches Energy Agency.
- About CROs - who they are and where they work. How badly we are doing re climate issues.
- Access to funding, the new Compact for Shropshire, need to reduce carbon levels.
- Very interesting information regarding Joint Commissioning and the VCS plus update of low carbon required steps forward.
- Structures and funding mechanisms for the PCT.
- Most about Joint Commissioning.
- Tendering Information.
- About procurement.

Learning points from discussion groups

- Importance of visual arts in community development.
- Learnt valuable information from Visual Arts Network.
- More about Shropshire Arts projects.

- About structure of VCS Summit Children and Young People meetings.
- That there is a proposal for Children's Trust in the areas of the LAAs.
- Clarity about the Compact.
- The forum discussion brought forth most opportunity for information and a steep learning curve that similarly sized organisations face similar issues and problems.

Positive comments

- General knowledge of VCS issues.
- More around the VCS.
- More about the organisations and support in the county.
- From all the speakers and information on FOIs.
- New routes for sharing information.
- The high level of interest in VSA role.
- Structure/support from VCS
- The Assembly is beginning to have an impact.
- VCS firmly progressing and sustainability of all the diversity. Informative speakers.
- Understanding of how VSA and FOI and Compact etc. fit together.
- Voluntary Sector Assembly is trying to involve various sectors.
- Most VCS organisations have common problems and interests.
- The new Council is making effort to engage with the voluntary sector. Hope it continues.

Networking

- Met new partners.
- Networking opportunities.
- New into role - made good contacts
- Lots of renewed contacts.
- The importance of networking with other forums and key players.

Negative comments

- Nothing - a networking event.
- Nothing changes.
- We keep trying to re-invent the wheel.
- Some presentations not suited to diverse groups of people so difficult to assimilate the information.

4.2 In a similar way to the question asking attending what they had learnt from the event, the evaluation form also sought to find out whether attendees would be feeding back information into their organisations on their return. Box 3 shows the results.

Box 3 Information attendees will take back to their organisations

Specific information

- A couple of issues raised in the Health and Social Care FOI could be useful starting points for further action by LINK (CiNCH).
- Compact consultation.
- Information of development and understanding of the new Compact.
- Excellent information from Sam Hine.
- Information to help us get better and an update on progress of Compact.
- Info about Energy efficiency from MEA.
- Low carbon issues.
- Re carbon reduction target by 2050.
- Information on procurement, funding and gathering of specific information to support our organisation.
- Procurement.
- That they need to keep up to date with local Children's needs developments - e.g. local Children's Trusts.

Networking/ Contact details

- Contact names and numbers (4)
- Contacts from local groups information re SIP.
- General networking with colleagues.
- Partners' information and contact information to share with team.
- Links with other groups.
- Information on communication channels, key areas to get involved in, who to speak to about key issues.
- Good and useful contacts with Community Working staff in Shropshire.

More general information

- I was able to draw relevant information on all the topics raised in each of the presentations.
- Details and information of the day - the key speakers inputs and the way forward.
- Forum arrangements.
- Needs of the sector especially the importance of volunteering.
- The priorities.
- That by getting involved we can make a difference.
- There is a body with a strong voice speaking for us.
- Value and role of the VCS.
- Importance to link with voluntary sector.
- Opportunities for funding.
- Funding arrangements.
- Confirmation of the difficulties VCS will have in maintaining services with decreased funding.
- We need a rep to go forward to the Assembly.
- We need to get a representative from the forum.
- Will file pack for future reference.

Negative comments

- Never submit a tender to Shropshire Unitary Council - sorry it just killed the day.
- None.

5. Key issues for 2009/10

5.1 The main issues noted on the evaluation forms for the Assembly Board to consider taking forward over the next year appear to fall under the following categories:

- Information sharing and communication
- Funding and support
- Training
- Volunteering
- Other issues – including work with the public sector

Box 4 includes the detail of all the comments collected through the evaluation forms.

Box 4 Issues for the Assembly Board to take forward

Information Sharing and Communication

- Information sharing.
- Make sure that information and in particular Board meeting minutes are circulated to all forum members.
- An effort by the Board to change the culture of the Assembly from information gathering to that of information sharing.
- Communication.
- Meetings with groups who provide similar services.
- Core supportive administration, help and communication.

- The importance of networking. Give our groups clout not just a chance to meet others.
- Dissemination of support triggers/contacts.
- Communication mechanisms especially around funding with changes over LSC.

Funding and support

- Core funding and sustainability.
- Future funding of VCS, Infrastructure support.
- Support for small organisations, resources on OT, Admin etc.
- How these smaller and rural voluntary organisations can be well supported and encouraged.
- Put tendering notices on Assembly newsletter.

Training

- Impact of Independent Safeguarding Authority and how the sector and Council are making sure small groups know about it.
- Training for how small groups find out what is going on.
- Resources for training in the sector.

Volunteering

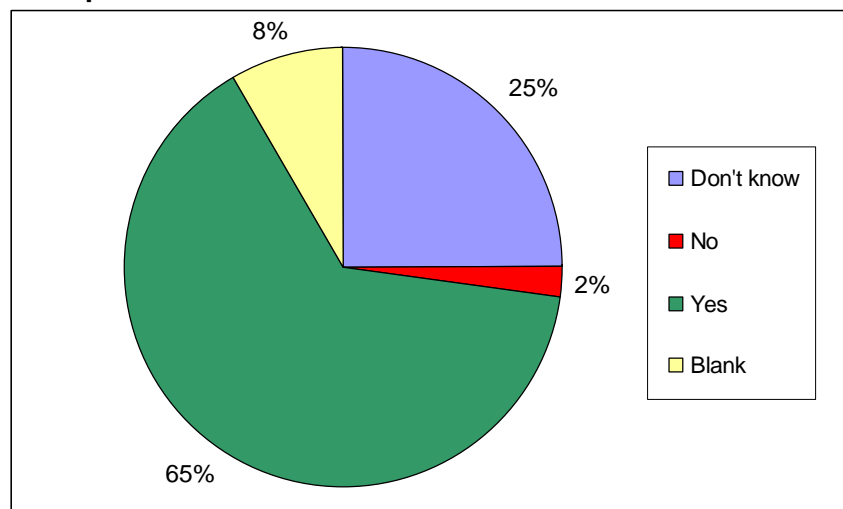
- Engaging volunteers and peer mentors to work within the sector in support of the sector.
- Exploring re-establishing Volunteer Bureau type operations around the county.
- Encouraging volunteers into organisations particularly small and very small organisations.
- Volunteers and voluntary youth sector.

Other issues

- Recession impact on the VCS.
- Co-operative working with CROs - where we are at and what needs to be done to improve.
- Demonstrate independence from Local Authority.
- I would like to see it more voluntary sector led and not Council led. If not seen as independent of the Council it will lose support.
- Transparency and accountability. A clear reminder of how the statutory sector can service work with voluntary sector. How the private sector fits into this area.
- More voluntary sector focus on the future political, national, regional impacts locally.
- Representation of the sector within the Council.
- Be more specific about the added value the Assembly brings i.e. why stay part of it.

5.2 Gauging interest in the next Annual Assembly was also seen as important. Fortunately many of the attendees (65%) said they would want to attend next year. Only 2% said they would not be attending the event in 2010 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Proportion of Attendees keen to attend the next Annual Assembly



- 5.3 Lastly, Box 5 provides a summary of the additional comments collected through the evaluation process. Key issues have been highlighted, particularly those raised by more than one attendee.

Box 5 Additional comments

Venue and Organisational comments

- Needed more space.
- The group work session was too noisy and cramped.
- Kitchen very noisy during presentations.
- It was hard to hear with lots of people in one room and noise from other parts of the building.
- There was a queue for the coffee.
- There were too many speakers.
- Presentations too detailed.
- Would have liked more opportunities to network and more breaks.
- The sessions were not appropriate to all the diverse groups represented.
- More workshops would have been appreciated/ spend more time group working and less listening.
- The length of the event was right.

Other comments

- Good opportunity to meet other organisations and link up with key people at a local level.
- Use of case studies would have been helpful.
- Need to focus more on the needs of small groups and organisations.
- The agenda seemed to be driven by the needs of the County Council rather than the needs of the VCS.
- The annual conference is evidence of the hard work which is shown throughout the year.
- Very well organised event.

6. Summary

- 6.1 Overall the Annual Assembly seems to have been well received by attendees but it will be important for the Assembly Board to carefully consider the feedback received in order to address the priorities held by Assembly members and to continue to improve the organisation and structure of the Annual Assembly over future years.