

Fife's Third Sector Strategy Group

Introduction

Fife's third sector comprises a diverse range of organisations, from small, geographically specific community groups made up exclusively of volunteers right up to large service-providing charities employing big staff groups and managing million pound budgets. The sector operates across a broad selection of thematic areas, including:

- Housing & Homelessness
- Health & Wellbeing
- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Environment & Sustainability
- Equalities
- Older People
- Social Care & Welfare
- Social Enterprise
- Children & Families
- Youth Work
- Substance Misuse
- Community Development & Engagement
- Rights & Advice
- Sports & Leisure
- Education & Training
- Employability

The diversity of the third sector is a great strength, but one of its drawbacks can be our inability to speak with a common voice. While organisations within the sector will have their differences, both in terms of focus and opinion, they also have a number of fundamental features in common:

- Voluntary management structures – third sector organisations are run by Committees or Boards whose members are unpaid
- Non-profit distributing– third sector organisations may trade and generate income in a range of ways, but any profit made is reinvested in the organisation, it does not go to private shareholders
- Social aims – third sector organisations exist to serve and support communities, whether those communities are geographical or communities of interest
- People at the centre – services are designed to benefit the users of the service, with service users involved in the design and in many cases, delivery and/or governance.

What is the Third Sector Strategy Group?

The Third Sector Strategy Group brings together a maximum of twenty senior representatives from the third sector, covering a range of thematic interests. The 4 core purposes of the group are:

- To strengthen the connections between the third sector and Community Planning – enhancing partnership working
- To provide a mandate for those playing a representative role on behalf of the sector
- To advocate and campaign on behalf of the sector and to grow the sector's influence and profile
- To support leadership initiatives that improve practice, communications and learning between third sector organisations.

The group will meet four-to-six times per year. Members will be asked to step out of their organisational roles and be prepared to think more widely about the challenges, needs and aspirations of the third sector. Examples of work the group may undertake would include:

- Leading the development of a Fife Third Sector Manifesto for Scottish/Local Elections
- Providing input to the Community Planning Partnership/Plan 4 Fife and improving the linkages to Community Planning
- Leading on particular campaign issues as and when appropriate
- Shaping and influencing the work and priorities of FVA.

Who can join the Third Sector Strategy Group?

Membership requests can be made by any staff member, volunteer or Trustee who operates at a senior/strategic level and has leadership influence and decision-making powers (governance or operational) within their own organisation. It is the individual who joins the TSSG, not the organisation, so substitutes are generally not permitted.

Membership is determined by the existing members of the TSSG and FVA, with a view to ensuring a broad range of thematic interests, community coverage and, expertise and experience.

Members are expected to join a minimum of 2 TSSG meetings each year.

Third Sector Strategy Group – Link to Community Planning

Community Planning has been around in Scotland for some time, but its importance to the third sector in particular has grown in recent years. At its most basic level, Community Planning brings together public sector agencies to plan services for communities, the idea being that working in partnership will lead to more co-ordinated and community-orientated services. The Scottish Government places a strong emphasis on the importance of third sector involvement at all levels of Community Planning, as it views the sector as making a key contribution to the growth of the economy, the wellbeing of individuals and communities and the improvement of public services.

Fife Voluntary Action represents the interests of the third sector at Fife Partnership (the Community Planning board for Fife) since its inception. As well as this, we also support and facilitate a number of thematic third/voluntary sector networks (including the TSSG). Through these networks, there are a range of people playing a representative role on behalf of the third sector at multi-agency partnerships.

The TSSG aims to strengthen and support the sector's links to Fife Partnership, with FVA. It draws together third sector representatives covering a range of thematic interests, improving the mandate for those playing a representative role. It would also help the sector to take a more proactive stance in relation to Community Planning; rather than responding to the agenda set by our public sector partners this could be our opportunity to shape the agenda to a greater extent.

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