



VCS Annual Assembly 2015

9:30am Wednesday 20th May 2015, Shrewsbury Town Football Club

REPORT

Welcome

Jackie Jeffrey, Chair Shropshire's VCS Assembly, welcomed everyone to the event. Jackie spoke about the changes that have taken place and the feeling that change has become so normal "there is no change, there is always change". Jackie explained that a strong theme of the event would be saying thank you to the voluntary sector, public sector, Board and Forums of Interest for all the work delivered over the last 12 months.

Highlights 2014/15

Jackie encouraged the audience to read the VCSA Annual Report included within the event packs. The Annual Report helps to highlight the work completed over the year. Jackie briefly spoke about some of the main work areas:

- The VCS Showcase has proven a success, allowing Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to promote their work and illustrating the diversity of the sector and the breadth of support VCS groups and organisations offer to local people. Jackie thanked all the organisations that have supported the Showcase and particularly Pauline for her work organising the event.
- Social Inclusion and the work taking place to ensure the VCSE sector is engaged in the work of the Marches Local Enterprise (LEP) has been a significant feature of the last year. This work is a significant opportunity with some risks that need to be mitigated. Not only does the change in EU funding offer the opportunity for VCSE organisations to attract resources but it has also allowed new relationships to be formed across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire. The work has allowed a stronger relationship with Big Lottery to be developed, and brought some investment in research through the creation of a robust body of evidence. More recently, Big Lottery has invested in VCSE capacity building to equip the VCSE sector with the information and skills needed to compete with private and public sector delivery bodies. Jackie thanked Kate for all her work coordinating the Social Inclusion Mini Group and its work. Jackie also encouraged the sector to ready themselves for the anticipated start of the programme in October.



- Employ with Conviction has proven a highlight of the last year as support for this movement has grown. Led by the Criminal Justice Forum and supported by Pauline, the project has been successful in communicating the importance of offering employment opportunities to ex-offenders. The benefits of recruiting ex offenders (to the individuals and employers) are now more widely understood and Jackie encouraged the VCSA membership to consider Employ With Conviction when recruiting.
- Working with Health has been a very important area of the Assembly's work. The VCSA is a key member of the Health and Wellbeing Board. As VCSA Chair, Jackie spoke about her experience of a steep learning curve in representing the sector on the Health and Wellbeing Board. Over the last year significant developments have seen health partners come together to respond to the Care Act, Better Care Fund and Future Fit. Jackie mentioned the VCSA Board's recent work to understand how the sector can contribute to the Year of Physical Activity. Jackie thanked those who have played a particularly big role as VCSA representatives including Rachel Wintle, Heather Osborne, Nicola McPherson and Sarah Thomas.
- Jackie spoke recently about the economic research work the VCSA Team had supported in 2014. The work had explored economic growth and resilience and the role the VCSE sector plays in promoting thriving local economies. This theme would be picked up by the VCSA Guest Speaker later on the agenda.
- The State of the Sector Survey had also been an important area of work in the last year. Allowing the Board to better understand the sector's issues, fears, worries, impact of financial cuts and opportunities for the future. Jackie thanked all those who had taken part in the research and encouraged the audience to take part again next time. Jackie drew the winner of the prize draw. The winning entry, gaining a hamper of local produce, was Edward Dugdale from Tickwood Care Farm.

Terms of Reference

Part of the Annual Assembly involves ratification of changes made to the VCSA Terms of Reference. Jackie ran through the key changes suggested by the VCSA Board and asked the membership to agree to the proposal to confirm the Terms of Reference. Linda Cox proposed the Terms of Reference were agreed and this was seconded by Julia Baron. There were no concerns raised within the audience.



Quick Fire Forum Updates

The VCS Assembly Board Members (Forum leads) presented key information covering the achievements of the Forums and ambitions for the year ahead. The Forums were given only 1

minute to present so the updates were focused. This section of the Annual Assembly is a fun way of highlighting the incredible diversity of work undertaken, and the robust partnership arrangements in place in Shropshire.

- **Pan Disability Forum**, Jean Robinson – Jean explained that the Forum meets quarterly, and has explored a wide range of issues and met with various partners including Andy Begley and Ruth Houghton from Shropshire Council’s Adult Services, Tom Brettell regarding the Council’s Swimming Pool consultation, Penny Bason Coordinator of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Bill Evans from DWP. Priorities for the year ahead include Personalisation, Work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Assistive Technology, working with Healthwatch and Any Qualified Provider. Jean invited all VCSE organisations who are interested in the Forum and support people with disabilities to get involved.
- **Shropshire Older People’s Assembly**, Heather Osborne – Heather spoke about the Forum’s communication electronically and about the 4 public events that had been organised over the year. Numbers joining the Forum have increased and there are now over 70 members. Key areas of focus have included Care Act consultations on eligibility and charging. Another theme has been chronic pain management. Two open events are being planned for next year.
- **Shropshire Heritage Forum**, Pauline James – Pauline read an update provided by Mark Hignett, who was unable to attend the event. The Heritage Forum is designed to provide collective representation, pool energy, ideas and resources. The Forum has had a busy year and done a lot of work to commemorate World War One. Activities have included arts, drama, and a lot of work around Park Hall in Oswestry where trench systems have been built and the area’s role as one of the largest training camps has been remembered. The Forum has concerns over recent changes and hopes to find the resources it needs to continue its work offering training, support and the sharing of resources and funding.
- **County Sport and Physical Activity Partnership**, Chris Child – Chris explained that the partnership includes hundreds of small sports groups and clubs. Partnerships have been expanded even further in the last year with new projects with Shropshire Providers Consortium and the Shropshire Disability Network to develop Inclusively Fit. Work is also taking place with Shropshire Youth Association. 3 conventions were held during the year and key themes have included community spaces, outdoor activity and sport as a vehicle for change. Chris spoke about the VCSA mid day mile at the end of the Annual Assembly.
- **Shropshire Infrastructure Partnership**, Julia Baron – Julia explained that SIP brings together VCS organisations providing support for other organisations. Key areas of focus are funding, DBS checks, training, governance and keeping within the law. Julia spoke of the challenges faced by infrastructure organisations as funding is directed to the front line. SIP has supported national research undertaken by NAVCA and done its own work to understand and communicate the changing face of volunteering and the impact that is having on the voluntary sector.
- **Criminal Justice Forum**, Angela Parton – Angela thanked Robin Durham for his work supporting the Forum as Chair. Angela has now taken on the role of Chair for the Forum. She described the Forum’s work delivering the Employ with Conviction programme, the work that has taken place around the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda and more recent work to look at priority issues shared across the Safer Stronger Communities and Health and Wellbeing Boards such as the mental health of victims and perpetrators.
- **Green Shropshire Xchange**, Kate MacDonald – Kate passed on apologies from David Current and read a statement he had prepared for the Annual Assembly. Since GSX’s

establishment in 2012 the partnership has grown to include 29 members and a steering group meets regularly to take forward shared projects. More recently GSX has applied to become a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation), gained 8 trustees, sought new funding and formalised its constitution. The website is a good source of information on the work being carried out, including news and events.

- **Health and Social Care Forum**, Nicola McPherson – The forum brings VCS organisations together to share common concerns and good practice but also has a strong focus on working with the public sector and keeping up to date with the changing world. Issues looked at over the year have been the Better Care Fund development, new Adult Social Care model, changes to the work of the GP Community Care Coordinators and regular updates concerning the work of the CCG. Nicola invited others to join the Forum and mentioned the meeting organised for that afternoon.
- **Housing Support Forum**, Hilary Paddock – 16 housing support providers come together to represent the diversity of housing provision across the county. The needs of those using community and accommodation based services are considered by the group alongside other issues such as domestic violence. Two housing consortiums are in place to deliver local services and partnership working with commissioners is underway to consider changes and the shape of future provision.
- **Information, Advice, Advocacy and Guidance Forum**, Jackie Jeffrey – The forum has 14 members working together to deliver information, advice and advocacy services in local partnership and consortia arrangements (SPAA and CAAN). The forum has largely focused on working with adults over the last year as changes in commissioning have been adult focused but the focus for the next year is due to include consideration of changes in services for children and families and in the significant changes and challenges in the area of Welfare Reform.
- **Partners for Social Enterprise**, Mark Gibson – Mark explained the wider geographical coverage of PSE and reported that Jean Jarvis has now taken a leading role in the forum (previously Chaired by Sue Fry). The forum allows social enterprises to network, share information and offer peer to peer support and advice. The forum plays a role in the provision of support for setting up new enterprises and meets approximately four times a year. Mark welcomed others to join the Forum.
- **0-25 VCS Summit**, Sarah Thomas – Sarah explained that the Children and Young People's Summit had responded to national policy changes and developed into the 0-25 Summit. The forum has been following the local implementation of the Children and Families Act and Care Act, and focusing on early intervention and the Early Help agenda. As Chair Sarah has been working to link across children and young people's services through partnership working with Shropshire Council. Work of the Summit has covered the SEND reforms, Local Offer and new requirements for information, advice and advocacy. Sarah thanked Elaine for her ongoing work to support the forum.
- **Community Transport Consortium**, Linda Cox – Linda spoke of good news and reported that the consortium's organisations are due to be awarded the provision of new minibuses under a national transport scheme. Over the last 12 months the forum has been working with a consultant to put in place common standards, better understand pricing structures, consider new opportunities and plan for a more sustainable future. The research undertaken had been very valuable and members of the group have contributed significantly over the last 12 months.

- **Mental Health Forum**, Rachel Wintle – Rachel passed on apologies from Lilian Owens, the Forum Chair and updated on a busy year. The Forum has grown in numbers and has more recently challenged the statutory sector on a number of issues including the review of the Redwoods, some of the decisions taken by the Mental Health Trust and more recently a lack of engagement in the development of a local Mental Health Concordat. Positive developments have included work to promote the Compact with new partners and the promotion of service user engagement and involvement.
- **Visual Arts Network**, Hilary Tillyard – Hilary spoke about the work of VAN and its relationship with organisations like DASH. Hilary reported on the work taking place at the Gallery in the Market Hall in Shrewsbury and the exhibitions that have been organised. There have been improvements to the website this year and work to ensure events are well promoted. Partnership development work has also been undertaken with a wide range of groups and organisations contributing to visual arts.

Our Year, SPC and ShropShare

Lindsay Barton, Business Development Manager for Shropshire Providers Consortium, presented information for both SPC and ShropShare and passed on apologies from Claire Carter and Sarah Fishbourne. Lindsay reported that SPC had grown in the last year with 41 member organisations now working to form the consortium. Lindsay explained that she had joined SPC in January and thanked Julie Tustin for the work she had done over the past year. Key achievements include:

- Winning £559,000 worth of business since August 2014.
- The Enhance contract - which had formed a large element of the overall business portfolio. Lindsay reported that the contract had more recently been extended.
- SPCs work to deliver engagement and capacity building support to the VCS through the Big Lottery Building Better Opportunities programme.
- Training activity for SPC members due to a successful Awards for All application.
- Continued provision of back office support services.



Lindsay explained that future priorities are due to be explored further at an event on the 17th June but are likely to include:

- Working better with business, particularly the small business community.
- Building commercial awareness.
- Working to proactively seek opportunities for the VCS in local service delivery.
- Further developing work to focus on the measurement and achievement of social value.
- The encouragement of new ideas and innovations.

Lindsay spoke about ShropShare as a hub for socially responsible businesses and reported its achievements over its second year of operation. Key members include Caterpillar, Hunter Bevan, Whittingham Riddell and many more. Lindsay spoke about all the members and more information is available at: <http://shropshare.org/members.html>

Recent ShropShare activity has included:

- Member meetings on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and working with the voluntary sector:
 - Open Surgery session – Richard Ellis, Head of Social Responsibility Boots Plc.

- Taking an Environmental Approach to Social Responsibility – Deb Cairns, E4Environment.
- Demonstrating Impact – Dr Pamela Robinson, University of Birmingham.
- SME as Citizen (Open Meeting) – Tom Levitt, Sector 4 Focus.
- Charity Challenge – in-depth support for ‘winning’ voluntary sector organisation Impact Alcohol and Addiction Services.
- A Team Challenge – a team from Morris & Co undertook a warehouse challenge at In-Kind Direct.
- Volunteers week events – providing pro-bono support to VCSA member organisations on topics including IT, human resources, legal advice and social media.
- Dragons Den – support for 4 VCS Assembly members from ShropShare ‘dragons’.

Working Together: Change and Transformation

George Candler, Director of Commissioning at Shropshire Council spoke about the Council’s development of its Commissioning Strategy and the work undertaken with Shropshire VCS Assembly to inform the development of the Strategy. George highlighted the aim to have a mixed approach to commissioning and the application of commissioning practice at personal, community, area based and countywide levels.



George spoke of the challenges the Council has faced and will continue to face. Phase 1 of savings has totalled £86 million with a further £80 million to save in Phase 2. The way Local Government is funded is changing with significant reductions in the Revenue Support Grant awarded to local authorities from central government. Further cuts are modelled until 2020 and will result in £40 million of cuts. Shropshire Council will understand more after the announcement of the Government Budget on the 8th July.

Shropshire Council is keen to promote collaborative commissioning and work effectively with the voluntary sector and other partners. George provided the example of CAAN (Community Advice and Advocacy Network). This delivery partnership developed as a result of the Council’s commissioning of adult information, advice and advocacy services. Providers and commissioners worked together to understand the financial challenges being faced and to maintain diversity within the provider market. George explained that there are new opportunities to undertake collaborative commissioning and spoke about the handyperson service.

Other themes within commissioning include joint working across Health and Shropshire Council’s provision of health and care services. An example of joint work includes the Integrated Community Service, bringing together Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and other workers. First piloted in the Shrewsbury area the project has grown to ensure as many people as possible are supported to live independently within their own homes once they leave hospital.

George touched on changes at the national level including the move to devolve power from central Government. The devolution agenda is seeing the establishment of combined authorities and although this has largely focused on city areas there now seems to be an appetite for a rural/ Shire approach. Clive Wright is working on Shropshire’s behalf to explore options with neighbouring areas. The role of the combined authorities is around economic growth and infrastructure for businesses. The Local Growth Fund will also see a focus on housing and there will be a need to diversify the economy and for Councils to operate to new business plans. George spoke about the partnership work that had taken place in February to bring partners together to look at Shropshire’s

future and explore new ideas such as the production of green energy. Community resilience is a key feature of discussions.

George spoke about the work the Change Group had been undertaking. He spoke about the obstacles some VCSE organisations had faced when the introduction of contracts had caused payment to be made in arrears rather than in advance. VCSE organisations often do not hold the reserves to manage payment in advance. The Change Group had worked to recommend changes to the Council's financial rules to allow VCSE organisations to negotiate payment in advance with commissioners. The Change Group has also undertaken work to promote the inclusion of VCSE organisations in the development and design of new projects and ways of working. The Group provides the forum for early discussions and brings representatives of adult and children's services from Shropshire Council together with representatives from the VCSA Board.

George described some of the challenges that would be faced in the next 12 months. He asked VCSA members to help the Council with its work to manage public expectations and communicate that it will not be possible for the Council to deliver the services it has provided in the past. Things will be different and the importance of collaborative working should not be underestimated.

The Economy and Community Resilience

Jenny Rouse from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) introduced herself and spoke about the work CLES undertakes as an independent think tank. CLES aims to reduce inequality and poverty through its activity and undertakes research, consultancy activity and work at a local level with contacts including Local Authorities, consortiums, VCSE organisations and other bodies. CLES looks at what works on the ground and as a result its approach is broad and brings together the social, economic and environmental elements that form local economies. CLES also produces the New Start magazine.



Jenny spoke about the current drive for economic growth. She played a video for the audience filmed in the 1960s in which Robert Kennedy speaks about the limits of growth. He explains that GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has its limitations. The economy is created by people, powered by people and is for people. Backing up the messages in the speech Jenny explained that a strong economy should produce a high quality of life within environmental limits. There is economic growth at the moment but many people are seeing their quality of life reduce and there is a greater divide between the wealthy and those on low incomes. The cost of living is rising and the ONS wellbeing scores have been static for the last 3 years. Inequality is increasing and there are cuts to services.

Jenny explained that GDP was introduced with warnings that it has its limitations as an economic indicator but over the years that message has been lost and along with GVA it is now the dominant indicator of economic success. There is also a current belief in trickle down economics where any investment is seen as a positive development. There is a focus on attracting large international companies and wealthy overseas investors but often that wealth fails to produce a trickle down for local economies and instead increases the cost of property, meaning local people cannot afford to live within the areas they were born and raised. Jenny spoke about the need to ensure that growth is inclusive and based on what individuals and communities need.

Jenny spoke about the CLES model in which the economy is seen as 3 main parts: commercial, public and social. The resilient communities approach requires looking at a place as a whole. Within that model the public sector is viewed as the economic steward and lead for the

development of local relationships. The commercial theme covers employment, payment of the living wage and financial inclusion issues. The social theme involves a clear understanding of the local needs and support and the role of the VCSE in working closely with local people and communicating their needs. Jenny provided some example scenarios of how the three elements can come together, bringing different strengths and knowledge, to generate economic improvement.

Jenny spoke about case study examples in Manchester, Oldham and Preston. In all areas the work has meant bringing the different sectors together to better understand need and develop shared values and ambitions. There was examples of how commissioning had changed to focus on economic value and generate local benefits. Jenny spoke positively about what she had seen in Shropshire and the strength of local cross sector working. She suggested that the local focus should remain on co-design, co-delivery and co-evaluation and that partners should work together to think in systems.

Handover of Chair

Jackie explained that she had completed her 2 years as VCSA Chair. She spoke positively about the experience and thanked all the people who had supported her in the role including the VCSA Board and forum members. Jackie then thanked people for their help with the Annual Assembly including Mike Howard (audio visual), Steve Murphy (photos), David Fairclough (voting machine) and Johnathan Ansell (help with the hearing loop). Jackie thanked public sector colleagues for their involvement in the VCSA despite the challenges being faced, and the VCSA Team for their work.



Jackie reminded the audience of her speech 2 years ago when she had spoken about what can be achieved through collective effort. Jackie included photographs of the amazing models that have been built in Welshampton made from wooden pallets. Working together, Jackie's home community have been able to build structures they would never thought possible. Jackie encouraged the VCSA members to strive for similar achievements. She spoke about a recent experience in which a little boy had asked her if she was Doc from 'Back to the Future', how it may be useful given current challenges to have a time machine. Jackie spoke about the superhero Shadow and how his powers may be helpful as she takes on the role as Shadow Chair supporting the new VCSA Chair.

Jackie then introduced Rachel Wintle as the new Chair of the VCS Assembly and Chris Child as the new Vice Chair.

The Year Ahead: Priorities for 2015/16

On behalf of the VCSA Rachel thanked Jackie for all her hard work as VCS Chair and presented her with cards, a gift and flowers. Rachel also thanked Jackie for agreeing to stay on in the role as Shadow Chair to continue some of the work started and to allow for a smooth transition and additional support.

Rachel spoke about the time ahead and introduced the priorities for the coming year. A count at the break had allowed an indication of the audience's priorities to be obtained. A more final count with all responses is shown below in order of importance (the top priority is first (16) and the least popular at the end):

	Priority
16	Identify solutions to current challenges and develop positive proposals for new ways of working.
11	Raise awareness of changes in volunteering and explore new ways of working to value, and make the best use of, Shropshire's volunteer workforce.
9	Represent the Forums and undertake joint forum working when issues are shared.
3	Work to understand the commissioning landscape and how different ways of commissioning fit together.
5	Extend and develop partnerships to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Rehabilitation Company • Schools and academies • University Centre Shrewsbury
1	Obtain evidence and demonstrate impact a) communicating the work of the Assembly and b) providing evidence from the wider VCSE sector.
12	Focus on collaboration within the VCSE sector and continue working across the Marches LEP area to build new relationships.
4	Work to better understand changes at the local level including the development of Governance Boards and local commissioning.
2	Work together to form and communicate a clear identity for the VCSA so others better understand the VCSA and the VCSE sector.
13	Work in partnership with others to focus on understanding and addressing inequalities in health and wealth.
8	Raise awareness of new policy and its impact at the local level (for example, the Care Act and Children and Families Act).
10	Represent the wider membership, maintaining communications and encouraging member involvement and feedback.
7	Work to influence change and positive improvements for communities of interest. In particular around transitions.
15	Work with SPC to explore forms of investment including new forms of social investment and out of area opportunities.
14	Champion all age collaboration and challenge ageism.
6	Extend the Compact to additional VCSE partner organisations (particularly across all health bodies).

Rachel spoke about some of the key changes of the last year or so and the need to build new relationships with schools and academies, the Community Rehabilitation Company (an important partner in the area of criminal justice) and the new University Centre Shrewsbury. Rachel provided some examples to illustrate how important it is for the VCSE sector to build relationships and how developing an understanding can help to overcome challenges and practice that is not in line with Compact working. She also highlighted independence as one of the sector's strengths.

Rachel encouraged the VCS Assembly members to feedback their comments and concerns and to work with the Board to ensure the VCSE is well represented. Rachel also asked for feedback from the audience and the voting machine was used to gather views on a few key questions. The responses are included in the following table.

Rachel brought the event to a close and invited Chris Child to start the mid day mile for Workplace Challenge week.

Question	Question answer					Total voted
	Yes, very	Yes, partly	Not sure	Not particularly	Not at all	
Are you happy with the priorities outlined for next year?	13	20	8	1	0	42
	25	14	5	0	0	
Over the last year have you been kept well informed by the VCS Assembly?	25	14	5	0	0	44
	12	20	11	0		
Do you think the VCSA supports close working with public sector commissioners?	12	20	11	0		43
	29	4	9			
Do you feel able to access networks and support through the VCSA Forums of Interest?	29	4	9			42
	24	19	0	1	1	
How informative has the VCS Annual Assembly been?	24	19	0	1	1	45
	15	24	3	2	0	
How would you rate this year's Annual Assembly?	15	24	3	2	0	44

Diversity Monitoring Chart Feedback

18 responses were received and are recorded below. This data goes into Shropshire Council's annual service user diversity report. The form confirmed that completion was voluntary and that data would remain anonymised.

Age	
10-15	0
16-19	0
20-29	1
30-39	2
40-49	2
50-64	12
65 to 79	0
80 to 84	0
85 and above	0
Prefer not to say	1
Disability	(where recorded)
Learning disability	0
Mental health	1= with below
Physical disability	1= with above
Sensory disability	1
None	12
Prefer not to say	0 4 did not answer

Gender	
Female	16
Male	1
Transgender	0
Prefer not to say	1
Religion or Belief	
Please write in the box	5 Christian 2 Agnostic (1 of Christian heritage) 1 Humanist
Prefer not to say	2 2 did not answer; 2 recorded not applicable, 4 indicated "none"
Ethnicity	
(Census categories plus additional options)	
Asian/Asian British	
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Any other Asian background, please write in the box	0
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British:	
African	0
Caribbean	0
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please write in box	0
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	
White and Black Caribbean	0
White and Black African	0
White and Asian	0
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background, please write in box	0
White:	
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	14
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
Any other white background, please write in the box	2 (1 British/American; 1 Scottish/Irish 50:50)
Other ethnic group:	
Any other ethnic group, please write in the box	0
Prefer not to say:	
Please write in the box	2 did not answer

