

**NOTES OF THE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION WORKING GROUP  
14 SEPTEMBER 2005 AT 10AM**

**Membership**

Councillor K Phillips (lead member)

**Officers**

Tim Challans

Carol Mason

Deb Breedon

**Apologies**

Apologies were given on behalf of Councillor Bott

**Welcome and Introduction**

Tim Challans advised that the report has been pulled together in first draft format for member's comments.

**Outline of Draft Report**

Deb Breedon outlined the report and asked members of the work group to discuss the findings for inclusion in the final draft report. The following was recorded:-

1. The work group found that the concerns of members and public had raised several areas for scrutiny to investigate and make suggestions to improve community association provision for everyone, especially those outside the core age group 13-19 identified by the government to receive funding.
2. The working group identified that there was a short fall of funding for services that fall outside the core funding for 13-19 year olds. They recognised that this was not a decrease in funding but a change made to the way funding was allocated through the transforming youth work agenda.
3. The work group identified that excellent services were being provided by some Community Associations to the community
4. The working group identified that there was variation in the quality of provision by Community Associations and also that some organisations were more accountable for public funding than others
5. The working group identified that there was a huge range of fees charged to Community Associations for use of school buildings and that there was no clear charging policy as they were all based on historic and individual agreements.
6. Members identified several examples of good provision by Community Associations in the Youth Ofsted report:-

- 7.
8. Members recognised that there is not enough funding for services such as day care
9. The work group considered the concerns of the Walsall Federation of Community Organisations (WFCO) that the change in funding may cause the collapse of the Community Association service. However there have been no closures as a result of the funding changes to date.
10. The work group met with people who work within a Neighbourhood Resource Centre. They found that listening to the way things actually operate gave them an insight into the pressures for paid workers and volunteers due to a lack of support, funding and managerial skills.
11. Members identified that there seemed to be a communication problem between Community Associations and queried whether WFCO was truly representative of all organisations in the Borough.
12. Members found that there is no single model for how Community Associations operate and that every area differs in provision of services to the community.
13. Members found that all Community Associations negotiate individual leasing agreements
14. Members found that not all Community Associations want to deliver youth work as prescribed by the government and that there had been a number of Community Associations opting out of youth work, but were continuing to provide youth activities alongside other services.
15. Members found that not all Community Associations providing youth activities receive youth service funding and that some organisations were receiving funding from elsewhere for elderly and the young.
16. Members identified that Community Associations operate as individual organisations and were relatively isolated in the community and they were concerned that they do not interact with each other.
17. They noted the number of organisations in each Local Neighbourhood Partnership area (LNP) and recognised the potential for them to work in conjunction with their LNP and the Council.
18. Members identified that CA's are not run by Walsall council and that most have Registered Charity status, some have Limited Company by guarantee status but that they all compete with each other for external funding opportunity and for service users. Members found that many CA's re-invest into their own organisation and have stronger monitoring systems in place, and that the way they are run has an impact on the

community. Although independent bodies they tend to be over reliant on Walsall Council support and funding.

## **SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES**

The issue of Community Associations and Youth provision was complicated.

Members of the work group felt that a lot of information had been gathered and considered. They agreed that a greater understanding of the issues around Community Associations and funding issues had been the result of this work.

The findings have highlighted areas of concern which the Scrutiny Panel should consider when making any recommendations.

Members felt there were still areas of concern in particular:-

Funding

Provision for 'other' Community Associations Services for elderly citizens

Communication issues in particular CA links to other CA's, LNPs and the Council.

Members also felt that the by bringing the funding gap to Cabinets attention additional funding had resulted and all CAs had been given opportunity to apply for up to £13,000 of sustainable Community funding, and all but one CA did apply.

The money has been used in most cases to develop a plan which will help them to demonstrate sustainability of the organisation and where appropriate enter into negotiation about leases.

In the long term CA's have got an opportunity to look at the way they deliver their services through business plans and examples of this can be reported back to future scrutiny panels.

Members make recommendations based on the findings of the work group

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The working group recommends that Community Organisation Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel note the work of the work group and consider making recommendations to Council

1. That the Council adopt a consistent approach to negotiating with Community Associations on a one to one basis
2. That Council note the criteria for accessing Community Development funding to meet the vision 2008
3. That Council promote a closer working relationship between Local Neighbourhood Partnerships and Community Associations and

encourage greater attendance at LNPs and participation in relevant theme groups if appropriate.

4. That appropriate quality control mechanisms are in place in all aspects of Community Association provision where Council funding is received.
5. That appropriate quality control mechanisms are in place in all aspects of Community Association provision where Council buildings are in use by CA's
6. That funding to CA's continues at an appropriate level to service provision in activities which are not covered by statutory criteria.
7. That panel receives further information relating to the allocation of £250,000 additional funding.
8. That Childrens panel be advised of the findings

Termination of meeting - 12.30