

Minutes of the VCSE Strategic Partnership Meeting

Held on Monday 12th May 2025
at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Robinswood Hill
Country Park, Gloucester GL4 6SX

In Attendance:

Tom Beasley (TB) – Active Gloucestershire
Chris Brown (CB) – Forest Voluntary Action Forum
Sally Byng (SB) – Barnwood Trust
Matt Lennard (ML) – Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance
Vicci Livingstone-Thompson (VLT) – Inclusion Gloucestershire
Lucy Moriarty (LM) – Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Apologies:

Pippa Jones (PJ) – Create Gloucestershire

Guests:

Jill Parker (JP) – Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance
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Minutes by:

Karen Matthews (KM) – Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance

The meeting commenced at 2:32pm

1	Welcome and apologies	ACTION
	Apologies had been received from PJ who was unwell. Apologies were accepted.	
2	Commissioning	
	A virtual meeting had been held in the morning attended by the VCSE Strategic Partnership, Siobhan Farmer (Director of Public Health at GCC), and Rob Fountain (Head of Strategic Partnerships at the Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance) to discuss the findings from Rob's recent report on commissioning in Gloucestershire. During the meeting it had been suggested that a roundtable meeting be held with Siobhan Farmer, Ann James (Director of Children's Services), Rob Ayliffe (Director of Policy, Performance and Governance), and Benedict Leigh (Director of Integration) along with other key personnel from GCC's legal and procurement teams to explore some of the issues raised within the report in greater detail. Will Chapman (Associate Director of Prevention & VCSE Partnerships) from the ICB would also be invited. The group discussed their experiences of the meeting, with the following points being raised: - it was administratively more efficient for GCC to give out fewer, larger contracts rather than manage lots of smaller ones. This could be mitigated by giving out a greater number of multi-year grants, which were rarely used.	

	- Recent examples, such as the Children and Family Hubs commissioning, showed huge disparities in service delivery but all suppliers were likely meeting the terms of the contract. It was felt that better contract management was required. - The Big Lottery and would be running a pilot on commissioning in Gloucestershire. The VCSE Strategic Partnership should be involved in that conversation. - There was a view that the ICB had a higher risk tolerance than GCC due to their structures. - It was suggested that a collective risk assessment for commissioning contracts be undertaken with VCSE sector representatives, since a lot of risks were not being captured. - Collaborate CIC had been appointed as the learning partner for the Short Breaks commissioning and could be used to facilitate the roundtable discussion.	
	ACTION: JP to speak to Rob Fountain about the proposed roundtable session, who should facilitate and who else should be invited.	JP
3	Big picture	
	ML summarised the county's position following the county council election results being announced on the 2nd May 2025. Overall, the Liberal Democrats had not quite achieved an outright majority but were very close to it. - On the 21st of May, Gloucestershire County Council would agree their cabinet. - 11 Reform party seats had been secured in the county, making the party the second largest in council. - In terms of Local Government Reorganisation, three models had been discussed with the preferred options seeming to be a single unitary authority surrounding Gloucester city, or a "doughnut." It was felt that this might change under the Liberal Democrats, with the possibility of an east/west divide, with the west under a Reform-led council. - The ICB was facing a 58% spending cut with a quick turnaround. CEOs from the Southwest ICBs had met during the previous week with the CEOs of the Alliances meeting the following week. It was likely that the restructures would result in centralised back offices, and strategic management functions staying in-county. It was suggested that the group should do some work with the VCSE sector around handling the disruption, including how to hold difficult conversations, managing change and how to disagree. 3:15pm TB joined the meeting. ML noted that he was included in the induction programme for new CEOs at GCC and the ICB, and for new cabinet members. There was a discussion around the group's engagement with new councillors and how this could best be done. It was suggested that some shared assets (presentations, reports etc) could be made available which	

	group members could access to ensure a consistent message when engaging with politicians.	
4	Reappointment of ILP Reps	
	JP drew the group's attention to the ILP representatives coming to the end of their first term, and asked what process the group wished to follow for appointing reps for a second term. It was noted that the reps were unlikely to expect to go through a full recruitment process to continue for a second term. It was also noted that, with the changes taking place within the ICB, some stability in the ILPs would be beneficial. ACTION: JP to ask existing ILP reps if they wish to continue for a second term.	JP
5	Meetings with MPs	
	SB had met with Max Wilkinson (Member of Parliament for Cheltenham) who had been a borough councillor and had a good knowledge of grassroots organisations in Cheltenham. It was suggested that the Constituency Support Manager for Alex McIntyre (Member of Parliament for Gloucester) could be contacted to ascertain whether a meeting of the staff teams of the county's MPs could be held alongside the VCSE Strategic Partnership to discuss pertinent topics (such as the welfare reforms). ACTION: LM to discuss the possibility of a meeting with MPs' staff teams with the Constituency Support Manager for Gloucester.	LM
6	For-profit companies and volunteers	
	It had been raised that profit-making organisations within Gloucestershire, who were tendering for public sector contracts, were using volunteers, and the legality and fairness of this had been questioned. After some discussion it was acknowledged that profit-making organisations utilised volunteers quite frequently in a number of industries, and it was for individuals to make the decision about where they volunteered. It was suggested that the Go Volunteer Glos platform could have clearer messaging when a for-profit organisation placed an advert for volunteers. 4:00pm – LM left the meeting.	
7	VCSE Strategic Partnership elections	
	JP notified the group that just one nomination had been received. ACTION: ALL to promote the VCSE Strategic Partnership elections via their networks.	ALL

8	Updates	
	a) <u>Glos Health & Care Partnership</u> TB summarised that, due to the lack of an overall majority in council, a short “procedural” meeting had taken place with another scheduled. The partnership currently had no chairperson. There was a discussion about the possibility of a member of the group standing for the vice chair position. The group were in support of this. b) <u>Clinical Programmes Board</u> A meeting had taken place on the 1st of May. VL-T summarised as follows: - There was likely to be funding available to VCSE sector organisations to support heart health. - There had been a spotlight on palliative care, with most access requests coming from white middle-class people. A proposed solution was that more work might be done alongside VCSE sector groups working with diverse communities. ACTION: VL-T to feedback to CB on whether the heart health funding was linked with the existing blood pressure funding. c) <u>EAC&I</u> Rosanna James (Director of Improvement and Partnership at GFT) had attended an EAC&I meeting to talk about Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs). ACTION: JP to clarify the number of INTs in the county. It was agreed that a session with Rosanna James should be scheduled for the 2nd of June meeting, which would take place with ILP reps in attendance. Gemma Artz (Interim Chief Delivery and Transformation Officer at the ICB) would also be invited to join. ACTION: JP to invite Rosanna James and Gemma Artz to the 2nd of June meeting.	VL-T JP JP
9	Notes of the previous meeting	
	The notes from the previous meeting were unanimously approved. The action had been completed.	
10	Any other business	
	There were no items to discuss.	
	<i>The meeting concluded at 4:35pm</i>	

	Times and dates of next meetings Next meeting: 2.30pm 2 June 2025, venue Inclusion Gloucestershire	
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Acronym Key	
EAC&I	Enabling Active Communities and Individuals
GFT	Gloucestershire Health & Care NHS Foundation Trust
ICB	Integrated Care Board
ICP	Integrated Care Partnership
ILP	Integrated Locality Partnership
INT	Integrated Neighbourhood Team
CQC	Care Quality Commission