Appendix:
A FUTURE VOLUNTARY SECTOR CENTRE FOR CARDIFF
NOTES OF A FACILITATED CONVERSATION
5TH MARCH 2007
Hosted by Voluntary Action Cardiff at Oxfam Cymru

Present: Keith Roberts (Race Equality First, Proud Capital Vision Board member and conversation facilitator), Barbara Natasegara (Safer Cardiff and Compact Representative), Allan Herbert (SRCDC and Compact Representative), Peter Trevett (VCS), Claire Cartwright (Home Start and Compact deputy representative) Ravi Vedi (VAC), Vina Patel (VAC), Lizzie Kenyon (VAC), Kate Phillips(VAC), Adnan (Communities First Support Unit) Apologies: Tony Hendrikson (Communities First Support Unit), Sybil Williams(Pedal Power), Professor Phil Jones (Cardiff University)

Aims:
To have the opportunity to focus and share:

- Dreams for the voluntary sector in Cardiff
- Stories of the voluntary sector at its best
- Positive energy as a resource for taking things forward

What have you found good about being part of the voluntary sector in Cardiff?

- Networks of people
- Passion for people.
- Perseverance / Commitment/ a voluntary sector drive
- Personal Motivation.
- Shared Vision
- Making more of a difference
- Participatory working
- Emphasis on equalities
- A more human approach– linked to the ways we work
- Agility
- Creativity
- Things are possible / “can do” approach
- Risk taking in ways that statutory partners cannot
- Thinking outside the box

Building on these experiences, what are your ideas for a Voluntary Sector Centre for the city?

- A city centre one-shop stop for key voluntary sector support – capacity building, volunteering, engagement in policy and planning
- It would be about transformation rather than gradual development (which would be new!)
• It would represent a Think Tank for the voluntary sector in Cardiff
• It should have satellites and/or be a hub with intentional outreach
• It should offer incubation units to smaller organisations
• A centre for ordinary people – degree of space for people not just organisations– shop/ café /life/ arts/ IT access, a porous building + not an office block.
• It should have a training room
• Social Enterprise should feature
• Focus for policy development and lobbying
• Accessibility / visibility – easy to walk to and into
• Some outdoor space
• Welsh language aspects in Cardiff / Community Languages / Culture / Cardiff Communities
• A building that reflects voluntary sector values
• It should reflect the Compact and house officers of statutory partners too

Who needs to be housed in a new Voluntary Sector Centre and where it should be?
• There was one view that the Centre should be for local organisations (Cardiff and the Vale) and that organisations should have “earned the right” to be housed there
• There was another view that so long as key organisations were present, it should then be open to any voluntary and community organisation that wished to be included
• The benefits of VAC and VCS being housed together were highlighted; as were the benefits of REF and CVCDP being housed together; and the benefits of all four being together plus other key development agencies
• VCS has no choice other than to have a city centre location
• Whilst the CRI site would be appropriate for many voluntary and community organisations, it was felt that the infrastructure agencies and the vision discussed today did not fit with the CRI site as we currently understood it
• It was recognised that a city centre base is not appropriate for many Cardiff voluntary organisations, which have a ward or neighbourhood focus

What are the broad benefits of such a Centre to the voluntary sector?
• An opportunity to landmark the voluntary sector for Cardiff and make the city proud of its voluntary sector; a way of addressing voluntary sector obscurity; greater strength would result from the voluntary sector being in the building
• More visible and accessible support to the voluntary and community sector in Cardiff
• More effective and economic way of combining some services, a shared infrastructure and future growth
• An opportunity to develop and represent expertise and bodies of knowledge – e.g. community development, participation, volunteering etc - there is no need to keep reinventing good practice!
• Offering more services in more space
• Helping networking and the cross fertilisation of ideas across the sector; increase professionalism and quality
• Confidence / building / strength/ learning for the voluntary sector
• Allows for spontaneous interactions as well as more structured ones
• Support flow of information and intelligence both ways between the voluntary sector and statutory partners
• Would address a series of problems / threats with existing accommodation arrangements.

What might be the disadvantages of such a Centre?
• It might appear not to be inclusive for non-formally organised.
• The development of elitism or cliques
• A question about the added value of a new Centre to the people of Cardiff – is it really worth it?

What are the benefits of such a Centre to Cardiff as a whole?
• Links to Proud Capital Vision – it will help to deliver the Community Strategy and provide a key component of the citizen engagement strategy
• Links to the Compact (which we want to set the standard for Wales)
• Could provide a focus for some regional partnership working because many voluntary organisations have a Cardiff and the Vale remit
• A focus for the new equalities agenda
• It would represent putting the community at the centre of the city
• It is doable
• The really “Big One” – UK – Euro
• Helps to promote the Cardiff Brand – diverse, energetic, forward looking, exciting
• Would help with public and private sector partnerships - a part of the jigsaw of what a successful city needs
• The value of the journey – citizens’ engagement.
• Vote winner? – promoting citizenship and engagement in a visible way
• People wandering in / out / through and would engage people in volunteering who hadn’t necessarily thought of it previously
• Open / porous space that invites people in and offers facilities and services

Taking it Forward
Circulate notes to the group and Paul Orders MM
Feedback to the Voluntary Sector Compact MM
Link to the Proud Capital Vision Forum MM/KR/CW
Meet with Paul Orders for reality check MM and others
Ensure links are made to the LHB re CRI  
Broaden engagement with the voluntary sector  
Explore models elsewhere  

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