



# Aberdeenshire Third Sector Strategy Group

Strategy Document April 2019



*Working in Partnership!*



## Executive Summary

Launched April 1st, 2019, this document describes and defines the Aberdeenshire Third Sector Strategy Group's strategy for the next three years, monitored with a "light touch" annual review. The purpose of this strategy is to foster and continue significant developments in the relationship between the statutory and third sectors partners, to one that is committed to clear priorities and achievement of improved outcomes for the communities of Aberdeenshire through collaboration and joint working. This document explains the need for the strategy to be created, giving a background to the group and its recent development. It is believed that a thriving and sustainable Third Sector is the key to the future ability to service communities well and the TSSG seeks to embed the Third Sector into the design of policies affecting communities and the sector.

## Definition

The third sector is an inclusive term which is often used interchangeably with the voluntary and community sector; the not-for-profit sector; and the civil society. The term 'third sector' is used throughout this strategy to describe all organisations operating outside the formal state or public sphere that are not trading commercially primarily for profit in the market. This means charities, voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals. This definition may also include faith groups engaged in voluntary or social action,

campaigning groups, and individual volunteers. Whilst these organisations are exceptionally diverse, they share a broad common theme of being value driven, and principally invest their surpluses to further social, environmental and cultural objectives.

## Introduction & Background

As detailed in the attached Terms of reference, Aberdeenshire Third Sector Strategy Group seeks to bring intermediary organisations and the public sector together with a view to ensuring that the group is involved in strategic discussions with public sector partners. The group enables the Third Sector to become actively involved in shaping agendas rather than reacting to them and facilitates a connecting point for dialogue, discussion and influence so that the Third Sector can better shape planning and decision making in Aberdeenshire on behalf of the area's geographical communities and communities of interest.

At a local level the relationship between local government and the third sector is extremely important for example, given the role of the third sector in Community Planning Partnerships and developing the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)

It is recognised that a group is required to connect the TSI and Rural Partnership with key partners in order to ensure that the Third Sector contributes to making Aberdeenshire a better place to live and work.

The group is a partnership creating a collective voice engaging with the Third Sector and the Local Authority and other key partners. It does not itself deliver services but seeks to create an environment where Third Sector organisations can work effectively with the Local Authority and other key partners in order to fulfil their potential.

Key aims of the group include:

- The provision of a coherent, collective voice for the Third Sector and strengthen engagement between the Third Sector and Community Planning Partners;
- The creation of a place and structure for strategic dialogue with Third Sector agencies and other partners across Aberdeenshire;
- To increase the Third Sector's input in key areas of public policy in Aberdeenshire and impact on the delivery of public services;
- To increase the awareness of the impact which the work of the Third Sector has on the citizens of Aberdeenshire;

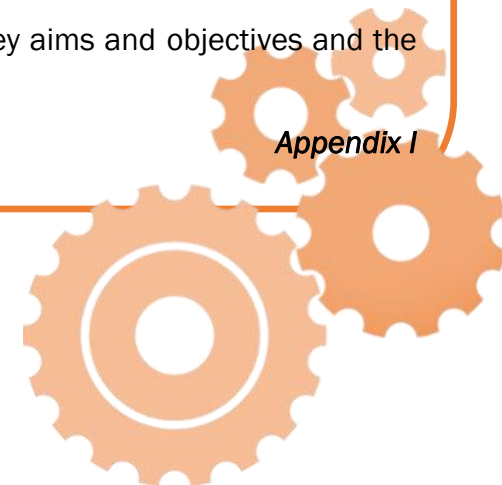
Key objectives include:

- To be a contact point for the public sector at an Aberdeenshire wide, strategic level;
- To offer mutual support through events, meetings and communications in order to have a positive impact on the lives of Aberdeenshire's most vulnerable citizens;
- To enable partnership working;

The group in its current form was established in 2015. At the end of 2016 the group undertook a "Taking Stock" exercise to clarify the direction of travel of the collective and to determine its value. Following this, work has continued to strengthen and develop a more cohesive group ensuring there are connections established with agendas outside of these meetings. The aim being to ensure that the TSSG does not operate remotely from the Partners' wider agenda but is very much a part of it.

This strategy document has been prepared in order to define the main goals the TSSG wish to achieve to meet the key aims and objectives and the approaches used to realise them.

*Appendix I*



## Vision Statement

*“A dynamic, purposeful and productive partnership where the Third Sector is recognised as a credible voice through a relationship characterised by mutual clarity, consistency and trust.”*

## Mission Statement

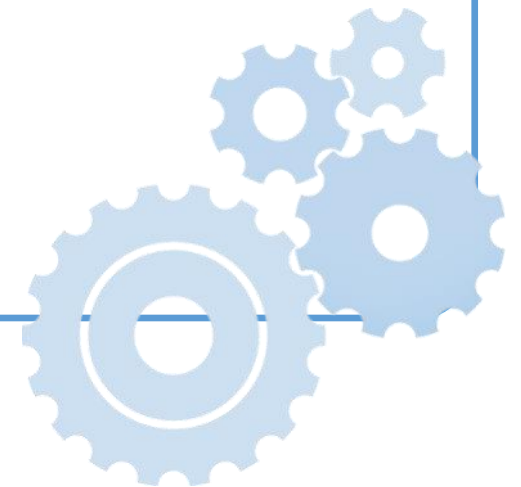
*“Aberdeenshire Third Sector Strategy Group provides a gateway to open and effective dialogue between partners to ensure it is strategically placed to play a powerful, valued and impactful role that is positioned to co-produce, design and shape policies considering the perspective of the Third Sector”*

## Target Audience

The TSSG aims to be a gateway to dialogue between organisations engaging with the wider Third Sector and the local authority which is positioned to be able to influence and help shape agendas and policy. To this end, there needs to be a multi-faceted approach to identifying the target audience. The group is keen to reach key decision-making bodies including:

- Aberdeenshire Council (policy level)
- IJB Health & Social Care Partnership
- Community Planning Partners
- Scottish Government

However, in addition, to ensure the TSSG is representative of the wider Third Sector, members need to connect and engage with other Third Sector organisations on the ground.



## SOAR

The attached SOAR matrix used appreciative inquiry to focus discussion on the Strengths and Opportunities presented and how these could be utilised to achieve the key aims and objectives of the TSSG.

*Appendix II*

## Strategic objectives:

The TSSG has two key strategic aims:

1. To ensure its members are truly linked in with the wider Third Sector to maintain credible and full representation of the sector
2. To position itself whereby the TSSG is widely recognised by the target audience as a point of contact:
  - i) For dialogue at the initial stages of Policy development concerning the Third Sector and Communities
  - ii) For potential coproduction of Policies, Papers, Plans or Strategies concerning the Third Sector and Communities
  - iii) For early consultation on change that may affect the Third Sector and Communities
  - iv) To act as a 'sounding board' to provide advice to the Target Audience on future strategies and plans.

## Short-term goals/priorities/initiatives:

### Ways of Working

If the TSSG is to lead and enthuse the Target Audience, it must build on existing good practice and ensure that they are demonstrating this across Aberdeenshire. There are meaningful relationships across the sector in many areas, providing knowledge, experience and expertise which are helping to improve the effectiveness of the Third Sector and communities. The TSSG seeks to ensure that this approach is consistently and organisationally applied across the whole of Aberdeenshire.

Work building Third Sector, Community and Public Sector networks at a local level continues to ensure a clearer landscape of support for communities which in turn seeks to ensure the best outcome for communities living and working in Aberdeenshire. Through the TSSG a series of local level themed joint working initiatives have been and continue to be developed. To date the TSSG has initiated a series of events informing and exploring the impact the Community Empowerment Act 2015 at a local level with plans to hold an Aberdeenshire wide event. This will lead onto further themes for joint working such as Volunteering and Raising Social Capital focus as an example.

## Positioning -

### Partnership Working with Aberdeenshire Council

The TSSG aims to further develop a culture of partnership working and strengthen effective working relationships between the Third Sector and Aberdeenshire Council in the shaping of council priorities, the design of policies and the delivery of high-quality services. Facilitating collaborative working and joint solutions to problems in Aberdeenshire will mean to seek to remove existing barriers to and creating new opportunities for effective engagement and partnership working. The TSSG aims to ensure that the sector's and the communities' voice is heard and understood.

To this end the TSSG aims to:

- Strengthening collaboration and generating ideas between Partners at a decision-making level by developing two-way communication routes. This will enable local intelligence to be fed in to help shape Aberdeenshire Council's understanding of need, gaps in service and the quality of services.
- Promote the value of the sector's knowledge and expertise and involving them at an early stage in policy development and service design. In particular to recognise their valuable insights into issues faced by particular client groups and communities.
- Engendering a better understanding across the council about what the sector does, the contribution it makes and the quantifiable benefits of working with the sector by creating regular networking and learning opportunities to build positive relationships between the council and third sector organisations.



## Key Performance Indicators

The outcomes of this strategy would aim to present a stronger voice, presence and visibility for the Third sector in Aberdeenshire through:

- Strong cohesive local networks resulting in:
  - \* Less duplication
  - \* More collaboration
  - \* Filled gaps
- More contribution to local/national policies
- More services/departments approaching TSSG for input at early stage of policy
- Improved representation, networking and influencing
- TSSG recognised as a mechanism to advocacy for number of other Third Sector Groups/ Organisations
- Increase in financial leverage brought into the area by groups
- Success spread more evenly across the 'Shire'
- Community groups clearer about who does what and who can help them
- Consistent representation & "buy in" from partnerships – ARPF, CED, CLD, AVA, CP
- A stronger working relationship between ARPF & AVAA through a defined, clearer sense of purpose which strengthens the relationship between the strategic partners
- Better defined networks and information routes
- More clarity about how Third Sector organisations can contribute to the identification of service gaps and influence the achievement of better outcomes using their innovation within the current financial climate





## Team

### THIRD SECTOR INTERFACE

Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA) is Aberdeenshire's Third Sector Interface providing a single point of access where community groups, voluntary organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and individual volunteers that make up Aberdeenshire's diverse and vibrant Third Sector can find the support and advice they need.

As one of 32 Third Sector Interfaces across the whole of Scotland, AVA offers services in 4 key areas:

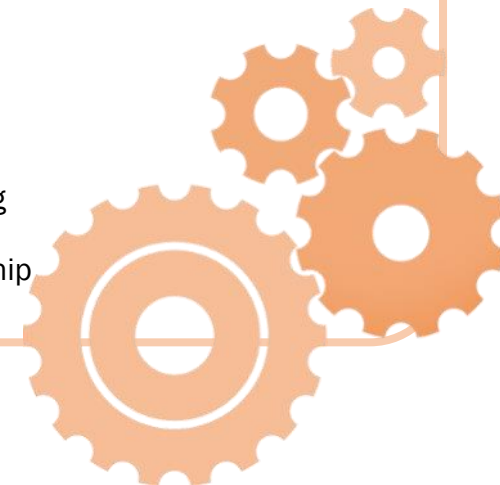
1. Supporting volunteering
2. Supporting local and national third Sector organisations that operate and deliver services within Aberdeenshire
3. Promoting Social Enterprise and helping it to develop and flourish
4. Providing an active and informed connection between Aberdeenshire's Third Sector and the various Statutory Agencies and Public Services Providers around the Community Planning table.

### RURAL PARTNERSHIPS

Rural Partnerships in Aberdeenshire emerged in the 1990s as independent organisations. They have organically developed across Aberdeenshire to become products of, and intrinsically part of, their communities. They have evolved to reflect the needs of geographical communities and have developed extensive knowledge and expertise to fulfil their core purpose of helping to build stronger, more sustainable, communities.

They work together as the Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships Federation and contribute to the Community Planning Partnership at all levels. They have the scope to do more to support agencies in their work with communities and key areas of their work include:

1. Helping communities develop prioritised action plans
2. Supporting and encouraging community led projects, particularly those with economic development outcomes
3. Facilitating engagement and involvement between communities and statutory agencies
4. Building capacity for groups and individuals involved in projects, mentoring and assisting groups to source funding
5. Contributing as a partner on Local Community Planning Groups and Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership



# Aberdeenshire Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG)

## Terms of Reference

*Appendix I*

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## **CREATION OF THE GROUP**

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## **STRUCTURE OF THE GROUP**

The key purpose of the group is to provide a means of engagement between the Local Authority and Third Sector organisations. It is a means for strategic leadership across the sector, and across Aberdeenshire on behalf of the sector. This is done through partnership and collaboration.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP**

- AVA – Chief Executive Officer
- Rural Partnerships – Head of Operations from each of the 6 Rural Partnerships
- Aberdeenshire Council – Area Manager Banff and Buchan; Community Economic

Development Coordinator; Community Learning and Development

## **OPERATIONS**

- The group will meet 6 times a year.
- The Secretariat and the Chairmanship will be divided between the TSI and the ARPF to be rotated on an annual basis unless all parties agree to retain the status quo over a period of time for reasons of continuity and momentum.
- All members will publish the minutes and agendas on their respective websites. Minutes will also be sent to the Community Planning Partnership Board for information.

- Other officers and partners will be invited to attend as necessary.
- The ambition is to agree decisions by consensus, however, should a vote be necessary the Federation of Rural Partnerships will only exercise one vote.

## **Introduction**

SOAR Analysis:

*“A strategic planning technique which helps organisations focus on their current strengths and opportunities and create a vision of future aspirations and the result they will bring.”*

We used the SOAR model as in contrast to SWOT analysis, the SOAR model uses appreciative inquiry to focus the discussion on what is known to work, rather than internal weaknesses or perceived threats that might not eventuate.

The output from a SOAR analysis can be a set of actions that leverage strengths and opportunities to strive for shared aspirations with measurable results.

## **The SOAR**

Members of the TSSG and some frontline team members took part in an “Away Day” in May 2018. The focus of the day was to reflect on the internal relationships of the organisations who form the TSSG and explore ways to strengthen and develop a cohesive network on the ground and to foster trust and collaboration between the member organisations. One of the outcomes from the day was the necessity to prepare a strategy document and key in developing that strategy is the need to understand who our target audience is and how we ensure this unique arena is recognised by that audience. The SOAR exercise was preceded by some discussion around the question, “Who is our Audience?” It was largely felt we would like to reach Aberdeenshire Council at the decision-making level and Community Planning Partners and perhaps the Joint Board of Health & Social Care and Scottish Government. The following matrix contains a summary of the comments that were captured (comments in red represent challenges or negatives):

## **Comments**

The information detailed in the below matrix has been collated from the group’s original responses. There was a degree of validation during the exercise, however the next step will be analysing the data to help shape the strategic way forward.

## Strengths – What do we do well?

*Key assets, resources, capabilities and accomplishments*

- Gets people in 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Group to know one another
  - \* Know equivalents in other group
  - \* Build trust
  - \* Peer support
- Getting point of group across to outsiders
- Not historically good at working together & improvement patchy i.e. some areas better than others
- Knowledge of wider policy context and political environment
- Ties to national organisations e.g. Scottish Government, Land Fund Lottery etc
- AVA/ARPF both have large memberships
- Rural Partnerships- good working relationship
- Gives a Collective Voice on occasions- could do more
- On the ground knowledge of communities and trust
- Lots of specialist knowledge within group members
- Large portfolio of contacts.
- Capacity of Board Volunteers particularly for RP & AVA
- We cover the whole of Aberdeenshire
- Key Players involved – CED, CLD, Area Manager, CPP, AVA and ARPF
- Record of achievement and outcomes – ARPF (20 years of AC funding support)
- Developing Third Sector Charter was a good model (result unclear)

## Opportunities – Circumstances we can build on: *To effect positive change, influence, achieve best outcomes for communities*

- Joint working – council, AVA, ARPF, wider partners:
  - \* Police
  - \* NHS
  - \* HSCP
  - \* SFRS
- Membership of Community Planning Group
- Third Sector “proofing” – sense check processes/policy
- Proper participation from first/early stages
- Influence & inform decisions/policy relevant to Third Sector
- Better joined up working can support better outcomes for communities
- Use it as a regional Third sector Voice to influence national policies
- Possible link into wider civic society (possibly through new annual conference event)
- Legislation driving agendas towards citizenship and communities doing more → support agencies need to argue to be supported
- Does it really “represent” the wider 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. How do we have consistency – do we represent or share knowledge of the sector?
- Budget cuts – austerity – trying to do more with less – less support from other agencies
- Short-termism of funding – year to year funding from Government down
- How do we attract/reach wider Third Sector to avoid inequalities?
- Influence Scottish Government – early stage of policy making

## Aspirations- What is the Vision for the Future?

- A clear reporting (influence?) mechanism to a committee in the council – and who else?
- A forum to explore issues, co-design solutions and then feed them back through the reporting structure
- The council and other bodies e.g. H&SCP, recognise the value of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector
- Third Sector has increased contribution to make Aberdeenshire a better place to live and work
- Direct influence with key people within council & CP Partners
- Recognised as a consultative body for the Third Sector
- Well established, cohesive group with strong communication links & peer support
- Sharing our individual strengths & Knowledge so that the best person works with a group on their project/issue
- TSSG to have a strong identity and seen as a key component in working groups & other boards e.g. CP Exec/board, HSCP, IJB
- Recognised at a national level as a model of good practice

## Results -What tangible outcomes & measures would demonstrate we have achieved our goals/vision?

- Strong cohesive local networks
    - \* à Less duplication
    - \* à More collaboration
    - \* à Filled gaps
  - More contribution to local/national policies
  - More services/departments approaching TSSG for input at early stage of policy
  - TSSG has seat on appropriate boards – who?
  - TSSG recognised as a mechanism to advocacy for number of other Third Sector Groups/ Organisations
  - Increase in financial leverage brought into the area by groups
  - Success spread more evenly across the 'Shire'
  - Community groups clearer about who does what and who can help them
  - Started development of the Third sector Charter
  - Community Empowerment events over the entire Shire area
  - Consistent representation & "buy in" from partnerships – ARPF, CED, CLD, AVA, CP
  - Better working relationship between ARPF & AVA
- Some local changes in terms of future working across all supporting groups locally