

## **Notes from the Local Authority Budget Briefing held for the Third Sector on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

### **Key Speaker: Stephen Phillips Chief Executive of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**

- First of possible three briefings for the Third Sector in this difficult financial climate.
- WAG announcement providing budget settlement of an uplift of 1.8% for 2010-2011 which is below Welsh national average of 2.1%, and lowest since advent of Welsh devolution.
- No real surprises. Fair settlement and spread evenly and equitably.
- In the process of setting final budget this week and special grants – information for special grants out that morning and no time to assess information, this will be circulated shortly. This is why we need another meeting in the New Year once figures have been analysed.
- The Council will be working until March on this, when the budget will be set and there is absolute certainty of level of resources beyond 2011-2012. There is no indication beyond that. UK comprehensive spending review postponed.
- CBC will be making some assumptions in its budget about future years where at best 0% uplift and at worst minus figures.
- Having said that still some opportunities to re-direct resources i.e. convergence funding where we can make better use and draw in funding – something the third sector is very good at. About 'improving on delivery – not just about money'.
- Over next few months will be updating the Council to demonstrate where savings have been made or explain why council have not made savings.

- Have a good framework and legacy to work with left by predecessor (Ken Sawyers) who had a good track record of working with the Third Sector.

***Snapshot of Q&A Session: (written as a summary not verbatim)***

Q: As the new Chief Executive what is your personal agenda on the voluntary sector – how do you view voluntary services?

A: No personal views but as Chief Executive I do have influence. However, this is a democratic system/process so here I am a servant of democratic members.

I strongly believe in partnership approach including working with the voluntary sector – which sometimes can do things much better, and in some areas are better placed.

No pre-conceived ideas – don't believe in central dictate, not a ducker of difficult decisions – will put my advice to members and it is for them to accept or reject.

Q: Transforming Older Person's Services – there is a worry that the budget will affect this area?

A: No one area will be free from this budget scrutiny but also aware at the same time to protect the most vulnerable in our communities like older people. TOPS sets out the best configuration of services, identifying maximum outcomes for older people in the area.

Right to have concerns but strategy will look at strengths and weaknesses consult on it and distil the ideas for a better service model. Can't use dwindling resources as an excuse for poorer services.

Q: Appreciate frankness and acknowledgement of third sector providing services for most vulnerable – however the impact on demand for the sector has increased.

A: Accept that demand for services will increase – not necessarily universal – diverse and different. Must look at capacity issues i.e.

children's services where pressures such as scrutiny, deficits etc increase. May need to move services around and improve joined-up thinking approaches - horizontally.

Q: Social Enterprise – can bridge the gap but will need support not necessarily money to ease links and wider working.

A: Yes – look to the council for both. If you are the best placed to deliver – want the outcomes not worried about who does it.

### **Summary of Gaynor' response:**

- This has been a really useful opportunity. Approximately 60,000 (nearly half of population of NPT) volunteer in some way.
- Partnerships will be challenged; citizens are what we all serve – important to be solution focused.
- With respect to Cymorth, the Third Sector is very involved in the review and a report will be provided.
- Opportunity for the Third Sector to draw down new monies, working with the BIG Lottery. WAG final budget includes an extra £54 million for H & S services (bringing total revenue budget to £5.798 billion) an increase of 2.6% over 09/10.
- Western Valleys SRA is important where significant monies will be going in – NPT possibly centre stage linking into such things as the C'First outcomes fund which has moved away from capacity building.
- Social Enterprise strategy will be launched end of February 2010.

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In summary, budget proposals will be ready by the end of January and going to Council in March.