

Please see below feedback from SCVS in relation to the above.

As the infrastructure body supporting voluntary and community action across Swansea our focus is 3rd sector but we do have close links with Community and Town Councils.

- The role and value of community and town councils in Wales

From a third sector perspective, town and community councils are a key intersection between the communities they serve and public sector governance. They have the potential to be vehicles for action on issues that matter in local communities in a bespoke way that would be far more challenging to achieve from a higher tier of governance. Every community is unique in its needs and priorities, and town and community councils should be the natural body to gather information on those needs and priorities and act upon them.

As part of this one would expect a close relationship with third sector organisations delivering in local communities to ensure the most efficient and effective provision. Sadly, in our experience, the majority of cases, this is not the case. There is a lack of coproduction between the councils and local third sector providers, and where there is a link it is more often than not because of a personal link between an individual councillor and a third sector organisation rather than an integrated local plan.

Part of this may be caused by the rather unusual place they occupy in the political geography where they have many of the features of a third sector organisation (unpaid, volunteer led organisation, ability to access some third sector funding) and yet they sit in the public sector with their own governance support through One Voice Wales. When it comes to areas such as organisational governance (non-council specific), funding and policies, there are frequently gaps between third sector benchmarks and actual council positions, notably in areas such as safeguarding and fundraising.

- Whether the sector is fit for purpose in an evolving local government landscape

The apparent move to combine areas, increasing the geographical coverage of councils at this tier and reducing the overall number, goes against the grain of the USP of these councils. What a non-local may see on a map as an area easily covered by one council may in fact be a combination of very different communities with differing needs that are not best represented by a single body. The hyper-local needs are often key issues for communities that are best understood and solved at the hyper-local level. Any issues with the delivery of these councils needs to be solved through development of the bodies, not replacement and aggregation.

One key area where there is a specific development need, mentioned previously, is in the ability for community councils to successfully apply for funding, where they are eligible to apply. Far too often we become aware of poor applications submitted by community councils that are turned down due to the lack of quality of application.

As public sector bodies, there is a grey area re where support with these sort of enquiries can be accessed. One Voice Wales has a governance focus, CVCs have expertise in funding and other development issues- but as Councils are not 3rd sector organisations, many Councils miss the opportunity to access free application support offered by organisations such as CVCs, nor do they engage in accessing funding intelligence provided by CVCs. Town and community councils should be the catalyst for breaking silo mentalities and bringing together local stakeholders to ensure effective and efficient delivery on key needs, not acting in silos themselves.

Overall, to deliver on the potential that town and community councils offer from a third sector perspective, the following needs to be addressed:

- Acknowledgement of their role as a catalyst for action in their communities in genuine coproduction with other stakeholders including third sector organisations operating in the area.
- A much greater emphasis on the importance of skill and professionalism in the area of accessing funding.
- A greater willingness to work with organisations who can provide support to them – and an exploration of where this sort of support can best be accessed / who is best placed to offer development support.
- A commitment to meet third sector benchmarks in key governance areas vital for securing funding, notably around safeguarding.

Your faithfully

Amanda Carr

Amanda Carr

Director / Cyfarwyddwr

Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS) / Cyngor Gwasanaeth Gwirfoddol Abertawe (CGGA)

Tel / Rhif Ffon: [01792 544001](tel:01792544001) / [07791 668966](tel:07791668966)

Email / E-bost: amanda_carr@scvs.org.uk

Web / Gwe: www.scvs.org.uk

membership / aelodaeth

*Third Sector organisation providing benefit in Swansea?
Apply for free SCVS Membership here.*

*Sefydliad Trydydd Sector yn darparu budd yn Abertawe?
Gwnewch gais am aelodaeth am ddim yma.*

