

Bradford District Assembly Conference 2011

The second Assembly Conference was held on Thursday, 17 February 2011 at the Hilton Hotel, Bradford. 157 people from a wide range of community groups, voluntary and infrastructure organisations and statutory services attended.

Notes from Caroline Schwaller

Assembly Conference 2011 – presentation

Caroline gave an overview of her role as Chair of the Assembly Steering Group (ASG) and of the structure of the ASG and Forums.

Highlights:

1. ASG developing a growing relationship with the Council
2. The Assembly is a focal, central hub, a huge range of organisations and communities are involved (via communication and information databases)
3. People are involved in the strategic partnerships as forum and Assembly representatives
4. Information disseminated via the Assembly website and weekly email bulletins
5. The VCS Statement (copy in packs)
6. The Cuts workshop (10 Dec 2010)
7. Letters to council and invitations to MPs
8. Annual event and forums throughout the year
9. Programme of meetings with the council arranged through to March 2011 (began in Jan 2011)

Key Issues to report:

1. BDP Governance Review
2. Community based budgets
3. The Cuts

- Flavour of relationship
- Letter to PM
- Average under 10% and further next 2 years
- Will review decisions / EIA
- Transitional arrangement
- Back to basics based on – change not extinction and reviews of how things are done

Assembly Steering Group's Challenges include:

1. Ensuring a wide constituency and involvement (join/use the forums)
2. Communicating – please help
3. Keeping up the pace in rapid negotiating positions (trust / leadership)
4. Ensuring EIA is done properly

Assembly Conference 2011 – feedback

Questions / comments / actions for the ASG to consider:

1. Culture Forum needed
2. Monitoring
3. Reports on our talks / meetings
4. More BCB interviews
5. Poverty and exclusion - keep it high on the agenda
6. Governance Review
7. Include more information about the forums in the packs next time, particularly meeting dates.
8. Reps – how do we take issues to them (too many meetings)
9. Communication – HWB / blogs – notice boards (people not on internet), promote through networks and face to face.

Equalities Forum approved – membership and implementation of TOR

Forums need to push out info that is meaningful so people can decide if 'its for them'.

Stronger Communities Partnership Board; notes of the report to the VCS Assembly John Hill

Representing the VCS Assembly has been a great privilege this last year. Amongst the key challenges and achievements have been:

EDL March

The StCB were committed to ensuring that the proposed march did not negatively impact on community relations in the district, and the response on the day was a tribute to the planning of the partners as well as a clear demonstration of the strength not just of VCS organisations but of the communities we work with.

Volunteering

A number of discussions were held about the importance of volunteering, including presentations by Dave Forrest of Volunteering Bradford. The links were made to the 2011 Year of Active Citizens, and again the contribution that VCS organisations can make, particularly to supporting vulnerable people to become active citizens.

Equality Impact Assessments

The issue of EIAs has been raised on more than one occasion, and VCS representatives have lobbied for these to be used consistently, widely and effectively when planning the future of services.

In addition, I have participated in several related groups:

Partnership Development Group

Although currently not operating, this group did some significant work in preparing for Big Plan II. The plan is not 'dead', and the importance of an outcomes-based plan is recognised along with the contribution the VCS can make to delivery.

Compact Implementation Group

The Compact is an increasingly important tool in our discussions with commissioning partners, and this group has worked towards ensuring that it is a meaningful

document. Commissioning managers were recently reminded of the importance of ensuring that their decisions were Compact compliant.

The Year Ahead

The on going Governance Review means that it is unclear whether or not StCP will continue in its current form. The case is being made that this is a crucial pivot for the VCS in terms of demonstrating impact and outcomes, so it will be important to ensure that an appropriate alternative place to make these points exists.

[Presentation by Robert Beard \(NAVCA\) - The Changing Policy Landscape](#)

[PDF Report by Robert Beard \(NAVCA\) - The Changing Policy Landscape](#)

[Presentation by Mick Charlton & Dave Forrest - The Year of Active Citizens](#)

Feedback from evaluation forms

157 people attended the conference, 61 people completed an evaluation sheet.

Everyone who gave feedback felt that the conference provided a good networking opportunity and there was a great mix of people who attended from a wide variety of groups and organisations

There was positive feedback about the presentations and in particular Robert Beard's talk about the Big Society which was very popular. Some people would have liked more time allocated to discussion around the Big Society and the Year of Active Citizens.

The first part of the conference, which looked at the Equality Act and Equality Impact Assessments, was less well received and people felt the instructions for the workshops were unclear and confusing. However, some useful information was gathered by this exercise and the Assembly Steering Group will be feeding this back to strategic partners.

It was clear that there were a lot of strong feelings about the Government cuts and about new Government policies affecting the VCS. Unfortunately some people felt that part of the open discussion was hijacked by personal agendas and became overly politicised, rather than staying as an arena to focus on more positive solutions. In response to this the Assembly Steering group will discuss the possibility of a recall event to explore some of the issues raised.

Unfortunately a lot of people were unhappy with the venue and flagged up a number of issues including poor catering, a cold room and unclean toilets. The hotel's PA system was also a problem on the day to the extent that a second system was brought in by CNet which worked fine.

All of these issues were reported back to the hotel and we will seek alternative venues for future events.

In conclusion a lot of useful and positive contributions were made by attendees on the day. People expressed the desire for more regular open events such as this and there was talk of holding a recall conference to look at some of the issues raised.