VCSE Chairs and Trustees Network: Terms of Reference

1. Mission

To build and maintain a strong and diverse Chair and Trustee network in the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector of West Yorkshire.

2. Vision

A flexible network of board members (Trustees, Directors, management committee) operating at all skill levels helping West Yorkshire's VCSE organisations to govern, lead and overcome collective common problems faced by charitable organisations, community groups, voluntary organisations, and social enterprises.

3. Membership

Membership is free and open to anyone who identifies as a Board Member (see definition above) for a VCSE organisation that is registered and/or delivers over 50% of their services Within any of the five West Yorkshire Boroughs: Bradford & District, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

If there is a question of doubt over membership the network can help decide with a quorum vote – see section 9.

4. Expectations of members

Working within a network, members will be expected to contribute to meetings with relevant evidence-based intelligence and information that benefits the VCSE organisations within West Yorkshire, live the values described below and work in a collaborative way to improve the way we plan, share and shape our work.

All members are reminded to respect confidential items raised in meetings.

If members work outside of these expectations, they may be asked to leave by a moderator.

5. Values

- Be ambitious on behalf of and towards the VCSE sector in West Yorkshire
- Be inclusive and treat all partners and beneficiaries in an equitable manner
- Value people and communities
- Value partnership and collaboration
- Be open, honest and transparent
- Listen, reflect and contribute
- Be open to being challenged
- Be respectful of everyone at all times

6. Our focus and actions

Focus	Actions
1. Ensuring a well-led and diverse VCSE sector.	• Supporting our collective VCSE governance through sharing expertise, knowledge and skills • Passing skills to the next generation of VCSE Board Members • Ensuring our network is open, inclusive and welcoming • Using collective power and opportunities to 'join the dots' • Engaging external board members and change makers (at local and regional levels) to support local issues that are important to our VCSE organisations • Working in line with the Charity Governance Code
2. Peer support and networking	• Sharing good practice and learning associated with good leadership and governance • Developing leadership in governance • Buddying system for new Trustees into the VCSE sector
3. Sector strategic direction and coordination	• Identifying current and future issues facing the VCSE sector in West Yorkshire. • Sharing intelligence and insight
4. Coproduction	• Shaping our collective voice and responses to cross cutting themes • Providing appropriate challenge

7. Ways of working

The network will operate through online meetings held up to 4 times a year, supplemented through mechanisms such as email groups and WhatsApp, to maximise the opportunities for participation. WhatsApp participation is supported by a separate document to ensure it runs effectively and is compliant with privacy policies.

Promotion of the network will be through West Yorkshire Local Infrastructure Organisations' newsletters and their other communication channels (e.g. websites, social media accounts and cross-network briefings).

The aims of the meeting will be to reach collaborative and joint decisions (where needed) or to provide approaches within the spirit of generous and kind leadership. Where a single view is needed and decisions cannot be made by mutual agreement, a voting process will take place (see quoracy below). Each session will include a discussion around a topic that supports the role of members.

The network will seek to capture the diversity of the sector, its activity and the breadth and nuance of viewpoints and opinion. Focused activity will be used where appropriate to support this.

There will be collaboration with other VCSE networks where there is mutual benefit with an aim to complement rather than duplicate the work of more specialist networks.

The role of Chair will be rotated among the members and that member will be invited to bring a topic to the meeting. Whilst the network operates in an online only space, secretariat duties will be provided by a member of Community Action Bradford & District. This support includes supporting the Chair to develop the agenda, meeting management and provision of an action log alongside brief minutes.

There may be standing agenda items agreed by the membership which will be reviewed annually.

8. Support to the network

Community Action Bradford& District will support the network by:

- The Board of Community Action Bradford & District will underwrite the Secretariat costs for the network and champion the work going forward
- Organising, promoting and minuting meetings
- Supporting interactive participation channels with staff time and financial contributions e.g. Zoom accounts
- Providing a complaints process for any member of the network should they wish to raise an issue
- Circulation of all meeting agenda and papers will be by email and the WhatsApp group. We will aim to send agendas out one week before the meeting is scheduled to take place and minutes will be shared within a couple of weeks of the meetings taking place.

Members will support the network by:

- Offering support for new Chairs
- Providing venue space free of charge to host face-to-face meetings (when the need arises)
- Actively participating in the network; this includes within meetings and other communication channels
- Respecting confidentiality when requested by other members
- Offering to Chair meetings on a rotating basis

9. Quorum

Where decisions need to be made on a voting basis, trustees representing five different VCSE organisations must be present in the meeting or respond via poll/email etc.

10. Declaration of Interest

It is recognised that all participants in the network will have an interest in the area of work covered by the network, and the network will provide opportunities to make new connections, promote your work and join up activities for the benefit of West Yorkshire's communities.

It is also recognised that organisation's activities will give them specific insights into areas of need and potential solutions, and we encourage members to share these. Where however there are clear opportunities for financial gain for an organisation or individual or for preferential treatment that could be to the detriment of other VCSE organisations, a full declaration of interest must be made and no participation in any vote, decision-making or endorsement of proposals on the matter will be allowed.

Where there are opportunities for creating consortia or partnerships to bid for funds, the local LIO or another similar organisation requested by the Network will, where appropriate, engage other partners that can support transparent processes and promote opportunities to participate.