Third Sector Reference Group (TSRG)

Minutes of Meeting

October 5th, 2.30-4.30pm (hybrid)

Present

- Stephanie-Anne Harris (S-A-H), Bruce Crawford, Helena Richards, Jonathan Ssentamu, Charlie Cumming, Kimberley Swan, Shelly-Ann Brown, Debbie McLachlan

Apologies

- Ranajit Majumder, Laurene Edgar, Steve Lawrence, Biddy Kelly, Benjamin Napier, Sarah Van Putten

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- Minutes of the September meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

- Members agreed future minutes should be concise while capturing key discussion points and actions.
- An update was provided following engagement with community transport representatives.

Key points:

- Written confirmation has been received from the Council Leader that community transport funding will sit separately from the £2.5m Third Sector Grants Programme.
- Council officers are preparing a joint report on future funding arrangements.
- The report will be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee in January 2027.
- Members agreed to maintain contact and review progress in December ahead of committee consideration.

Action: Check in with community transport representatives in December 2026 to identify any support required ahead of January committee discussions.

- **Community Link Worker Procurement**

Members discussed ongoing uncertainty regarding the future procurement arrangements for Community Link Workers.

Concerns included:

- Lack of communication regarding contract extensions beyond March 2027.
- Potential impact on existing provider organisations.
- Workforce pressures, including the absence of salary uplifts.

- Reporting requirements that are not aligned with community link worker delivery models.

Agreed Actions

- Bruce will contact Christine Laverty regarding the procurement process.
- Other members will seek clarification from Robert Smith.
- TSRG will continue to monitor developments and consider escalation if concerns remain unresolved.

3. EIJB Transformation Paper

- An update was provided by Bruce on the IJB Transformation Fund paper that was presented to the September EIJB meeting

- Members pleased that Bruce had raised sector concerns and that these had been addressed
- Approximately £5m of transformation funding remains under discussion, including collaborative commissioning and invest-to-save opportunities that may benefit the third sector.

4. Collaborative Commissioning (formally Change Management Group)

- Progress has been slower than anticipated due to staffing and administration challenges.
- Robert Smith has proposed that he assume responsibility for coordinating meetings. S-A H to discuss with other group members as it is important that the 3rd sector retain some control of this process.
- Members stressed the importance of maintaining momentum and oversight of the process.

5. Poverty Prevention Third Sector Grants Programme

Chris Adams and Elena Grant from the Council joined the meeting to provide an update on the co-production of the Poverty Prevention Third Sector Grants Programme.

- Five in-person workshops and one online workshop are planned.
- An online call for evidence opens on 12 October 2026.
- Engagement with forums, networks and communities across Edinburgh is underway.
- More than 100 organisations are expected to participate in the consultation process.

Key Discussion Themes raised by members of the TSRG:

- How prevention, early intervention and mitigation should be understood.
- The role of the third sector in addressing the causes and impacts of poverty.
- The importance of community-led solutions and capacity building.

Feedback highlighted:

- The importance of resilience, community development and locally-led approaches.
- The contribution the sector makes in filling gaps left by statutory services.
- Concerns about rigid funding models and support for core organisational costs.
- The need to balance support for small and large organisations.
- Members noted strong links between: Climate action, Community resilience Green spaces
- Poverty reduction. These themes should be considered within future funding discussions.

Discussion took place regarding whether organisations should demonstrate local knowledge, established community relationships and an Edinburgh presence when seeking funding.

Future Engagement of TSRG:

- Workshop findings will be analysed during November.
- Initial recommendations will be developed through the Steering Group.
- Early findings will be presented to elected members in December 2026.
- TSRG will receive a further update in December.

6. Third Sector Connects - event on 18th November

Members reviewed arrangements for the forthcoming event.

- Venue: Godfrey Thomson Hall, Paterson's Land, Edinburgh University.
- Eventbrite booking is available through EVOC.
- Networking will remain a significant element of the event given positive feedback from previous sessions.
- A session on the developing TSRG Manifesto for the 2027 local authority elections will be incorporated.
- Members agreed that a focus on prevention, networking and the emerging manifesto would provide a strong agenda. Public Service Reform updates were considered but not included at this stage due to ongoing consultation activity.

Action: will finalise event agenda and circulate alongside Eventbrite promotion.

7. TSRG sub-group updates:

Prevention

- Revised Terms of Reference have been circulated.
- Membership and first meeting arrangements are being finalised.
- A timeline and workplan are expected before the next TSRG meeting.

- Biddy has circulated V2 of the ToR. Discussed the points raised at the September TSRG meeting, and V2 and the first-meeting agenda (being developed) should address them.
- Regular review of the ToR is built into the group's governance.
- Biddy and Ran are meeting this month to set the agenda and timeline for the first meeting, and continuing to speak with potential members. Will keep TSRG members updated.
- Before the next TSRG meeting, aim to circulate the final ToR, the agenda and date for the first meeting, the ER register (nearly complete) and the membership list.

Adult Protection

- Further discussions will take place between relevant leads to explore links between adult and child protection approaches.

Ethnic Minorities Issues

- Consultation activity continues.
- Members are awaiting feedback from partner organisations before progressing to the next stage.

Evaluation

- Work continues on exploring how evaluation evidence held across organisations can be shared and utilised more consistently.
- An update will be brought to a future meeting.

8. AOCB

- Members discussed opportunities to engage with newly elected councillors through future TSRG and Third Sector Connect events.

9. **Date and time of next meeting:** Nov. 2nd, 2.30 - 4.30pm, hybrid