

Chairman's Report

Last year, I reported on the setting up and embedding of the newly merged organisation and indicated that we would be seeking increased internal efficiencies and working hard to develop new services. I am pleased to say that much progress has been made and I will briefly cover some of these areas.

But firstly, we strongly believe that an effective Board or management committee is essential for every organisation in our sector and we have worked hard to be a role model in this respect. I wish to pay tribute to our trustees who have prepared for and then attended our meetings regularly, and to our Chief Officer and staff who provided excellent briefings for us. We have established and routinely reviewed our annual business plan and performance measures to ensure we have been focused on delivery of our targets. We have created 'Board champions' so that we are well informed on external developments in our key strategic areas. We now have a clear marketing strategy, and more recently, engaged senior leaders from the Public and Business Sector in an advisory meeting at Crewe Hall where we were grateful to receive both considerable challenge and support for our work. We held events in 'Trustee Week' last year to encourage some of your Board members/trustees with success stories and best practice from member organisations.

Before I move on I wish to pay tribute to one of our trustees, John Taylor, who died so suddenly earlier this year. John was Chair of Crewe Voluntary Action for around 6 years, He was a core member of the task group that worked to form the new CVS and had supported us so reliably since merger. His ability to overcome difficulties and to remain so optimistic has been an inspiration to us all. He will be sadly missed.

Like many of our member organisations, our Chief Officer and key staff have put much effort into preparing grant applications and bids, chasing ever decreasing pots of money. This has been essential as funds are needed to sustain our work supporting you, our members. In parallel to this we have increased our own use of volunteers.

A highly successful celebration of volunteering was held in 2011, sponsored by the PCT. We will ALL have to ensure that the image of volunteering continues to be raised as we work to encourage more and more individuals from our community to give of their valuable time. Having a positive and satisfying experience is critical improving this image.

Last year I reported that the CVS had a new role in developing and facilitating the 3rd Sector network (which is known in Cheshire East as the Congress). Much progress has been made. Representatives from our sector have been appointed and trained, many of you have been engaged in consultations with Health authorities, Cheshire East Council etc. and we have ensured that your voice has been heard where it matters.

Our communication processes have been much improved with regular e-mailings, an up to date website and the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. We are still working hard to update and extend our membership database. This is an uphill task as officials, contacts and even names of groups change so frequently!

I could report on so many areas that you as members see as the CVS's essential services such as helping new groups establish themselves, training events, governance guidance, grant advice, and sometimes providing advice on just about anything. But you know much of this already and can find more details in the Look Back report provided today. Just 2 requests from me.... please keep letting us know what you need to help your group deliver its mission and secondly.... keep recommending us to other Community and Voluntary groups in Cheshire East.

In summary, we have consolidated our internal processes, maintained good governance and extended our services in the second year of the new CVS. The merger has proved itself a success as indicated from the considerable feedback we have received. Increased efficiencies are apparent in the accounts that you can find on our website, new services are being developed by Caroline and her enthusiastic team and we have every confidence that we can support you and all the other groups throughout Cheshire East so that together, we will be a more vibrant voluntary & community sector able to cope with what will clearly is now and will continue to be a very challenging time for us all.

Finally, our heartfelt thanks from the Board to all staff, volunteers, funders, and yourselves, the members, in supporting us through the last, very successful, year.

Thank you

David Priaux

Chairman of CVS Cheshire East

