

West of England What's the Future Meeting

Bristol, Thursday 19th January 2017

Reps Report

The current state of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector across the three participating authorities was outlined. Authorities are B&NES, Bristol and South Glos. Somerset has decided not to be involved but will remain a close working partner.

Powerpoint presentations have not yet been sent out but will be available shortly. Contact VOSCUR: email. info@voscur.org

An Overview of Devolution, sharing examples of where it has been handled well and effects have been positive, was given by Robin Hambleton, Emeritus Prof of City Leadership, UWE.

Good models are provided by:

- The Greater London Authority
- Auckland NZ
- Portland USA
- Stuttgart Germany

Not all cases opted for a Mayor so we can see it is not a necessary function of devolution working well.

Unfavourable facts: Prof Hambleton underlined that:

- although there are positive aspects of devolution, there is a risk of Central Government making area specific orders that will interfere with local governance. **Local leaders will be accountable to Central Government not just to Local Authorities.** This does not happen anywhere else in the world.
- Also, using Bristol as an example, Prof Hambleton discussed that Central Government cuts to funding for the area means that the **Bristol is losing 10 x the amount in funding that it is gaining in the devolution deal.**

Visit: <http://www.westofenglanddevolution.co.uk/> for more information on the deal.

It should also be remembered that the combined authorities make a net contribution to the Treasury – so we add more to the public purse than we receive from it.

Despite the above, the general feeling was that there were opportunities for the VCSE Sector working together, in partnership.

More information will be sent out by the West of England Civil Society Partnership which will act as the voice for the VCSE organisations of the combined authorities. The West of England Civil Society

Partnership consists of 8 infrastructure organisations: Quartet Community Foundation (QCF), Voscur, Voluntary Action North Somerset (VANS), CVS South Gloucestershire, Wesport, Social Enterprise Works, The Care Forum and West of England Rural Network (WERN).