Item:	**N/A**
Purpose of Document:	**To contribute to the Worcestershire Voices evolution process for the VCS in Worcestershire**
Action Required:	**For consideration**
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Meeting Date:	5th March 2016

Background

Following yesterday's meeting of the WV group I thought I would put down a few ideas on the development of the conference and a suggested format for the development workshops which will contribute to the conference and the wider issue of where the VCS in Worcestershire will be in 2020 and beyond.

Conference Purpose and Structure

I believe we did highlight a purpose for the conference yesterday and there are a number of objectives which we can achieve.

The overall aim of establishing a possible vision for the VCS to aspire to over the coming years is both positive and relevant given the changing times we are in and is well illustrated by the NCVO report and others published. It is the national PEST analysis which should form the backdrop of the conference, together with a linked analysis of how that PEST analysis 'plays out' in Worcestershire.

I think that a SWOT analysis of the Worcestershire VCS would also be relevant to highlight our current position.

Both of these analyses should be marketed as enabling VCS leaders (Trustees, CEOs and community organisers) to recognise the issues facing them and encourage them to think how they will deal with these issues which are likely to influence them.

This would probably make a good plenary session.

I think the second part of the conference should be more interactive and should focus on key aspects of VCS work as we discussed yesterday, namely Volunteering; Organisations; Interfaces (Representation); and Communities;

I think the above four elements could be worked up to a Stage 1 level in workshops over the spring and summer to a point where brief presentations could be made to enable the audience to discuss the content and engage with the further development of the thinking of each.

My view is that the Plenary will need to be 1- 1.5 hrs. That would enable a keynote and two, or three more focused presentations on the PEST and SWAT and what the implications may be. My view is that these need to be worked up by a group. I think this also allows you to have keynote speaker who might attract one or two people (although I am not sure why!) and can present very generic stuff ether around the VCS, or on the national PEST and possibly any national VCS SWOT information which is available.

I think the **workshops** could run in two blocks (encouraging the organisations and groups who attend to send two people) and that they should run for 1.5 hrs each to enable people to contribute.

You should always allow some time for networking at such events and a coffee and lunch break usually enables this. My suggestion is that one block of workshops is run after coffee and the other after lunch enabling those who need to get away can do so having contributed to at least one workshop session.

09.30hrs Registration
10.00hrs Plenary
11.15hrs Coffee
11.45hrs Workshops (Session 1)
13.00hrs Lunch
13.45hrs Workshops (Session 2)
15.00hrs Plenary to Close the event and outline Next Steps

The above will provide the audience with a number of benefits:
It will stimulate local leaders to consider their organisations/groups in the context of the wider environment in Worcestershire.
It should challenge them to contribute to the development of the 'thinking and shaping' of the local VCS in the next few years.
And it will help them to recognise the role of WV and engage more with WV.

I would sum this up as posing a question: Are you fit for the future? If you have a mind like mine you could link it to a much better known phrase like Going 'Back to the Future' playing on the idea that the VCS environment **may** look more like the 1940s in 5-10 years' time than it does now!

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The Workshops prior to the Conference

If it is agreed that the four elements we discussed yesterday should be worked through further then I agreed to organise these in some form if you wish me to.

This will need to be done over the spring, summer and early autumn, ready for the conference in November. If the conference is vetoed, then the workshops could still go ahead if we wanted to pursue the development of the VCS in other ways but we may need a re-think of exactly what that would be.

My view is that they will really only be 'worked up' as a 'first proposition' or 'aunt Sally' for the groups at the conference to 'kick around' and start another phase of evolution.

For me, the purpose of these workshops is to begin an engagement, that needs to continue over the next few years, and which will move through a number of phases.

Phase 1: A recognition of what our purpose is and where we are now.
Phase 2: An evolutionary understanding of where we wish to get to.
Phase 3: The development of a toolkit and route map for getting there.
Phase 4: A recognition that we need to engage and by working collectively be more effective.

I am sure there are other objectives which others will have to contribute to the above.

Specifically I suggest that the four initial groups need to highlight where we are now (probably using a SWOT analysis) and where we think this element of the VCS will be in 5, ten and fifteen years from now.

This will inform the discussion at the conference workshops at a local level and inform the WV wider understanding of what the VCS in Worcestershire might look like, or they want it to look like, with some ideas on how we might achieve it.

The workshops need to be quite focused and I already asked a few people if they would contribute more fully to starting and guiding the process. I would suggest that we publish a discussion paper for each which people will be asked to discuss and evolve a secondary discussion proposition for the conference workshop.

If it works, we should get some commitment from the participants to continue with an engagement on evolving the thinking around the themes and possibly even expand the themes to address the phases above?

I appreciate that commitment from the VCS is difficult to get and so I will plan on only having about 8-10 people at each workshop over the next few months to work up a discussion paper. I suggest the format of a two- three hour session with perhaps a 'virtual' secondary session to test the conference workshop paper is acceptable.

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Timescales

I have two thoughts on timescales. Firstly I think we should consider the overall issue as a journey which will take at least a couple of years, perhaps even three to five years. We should be clear about this and the reasons why. I think the PEST analysis highlights this very effectively. Change occurs slowly in reality in such environments and we should get people to recognise that they need to do something but not everything overnight. On the other hand we need them to recognise the need to start the change and work on it in an evolutionary way some of the time. I think that should be a message at the conference so people begin to realise they need to commit long term.

If November is the date set for the conference then I think we could fit one session of each workshop in between now and then. I suggest:

May: Volunteering
June: Organisations
July: Interfaces
August: Communities

(although the order will be dependent on the availability of the workshop 'leaders')

Leaving September and October to 'polish up' the propositions to go to the conference for discussion.

I provisionally asked Derek to 'lead' on the Communities work; Richard Q on the Interface workshop; and I thought Gary might do the Organisations one. I am happy to do the volunteering one and will ask Cat if she could contribute. We may wish to ask others to co-lead if you think their skills are relevant.

I will undertake to organise the meeting dates and venues. We will need to ask others to attend and contribute to the workshop to evolve the propositions and hopefully this can be done by the WV sub group. I am assuming we are likely to get just three or four together at any workshop over the summer but we need not be restrictive.

I doubt I have covered everything at this stage, but hopefully it has given you some ideas and a contribution.

Philip Talbot