

Fair Shares

community time banks

EVALUATION REFRESH

FAIR SHARES GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This is the third Evaluation report I have undertaken for Fair Shares Gloucestershire. The first, published in August 2011, was a thorough, in-depth study involving interviews with, and input from, a wide range of stakeholders. It found an inspiring and energetic organisation wishing to expand their effective approach to supporting and involving people in their communities, and seeking sustainable funding to do so. The report made a series of recommendations, many concerning strengthening the internal organisational infrastructure and systems (see Appendix 1).
- 1.2. The second report, a short 'interim' one undertaken in the autumn of 2012, found an organisation undergoing rapid expansion, after the sudden influx of considerable funding. It found that attention was being given to all the recommendations in the earlier Evaluation Report, improved systems were being established, and time banking was expanding into new geographical areas throughout the county and beyond. The report noted the challenges facing the organisation through this period of rapid growth, particularly in relation to culture change and the need to imbed new systems and structures. The report was largely optimistic, looking forward to a period of positive development and change. This 'interim' report was largely based on internal interviews with staff, and the intention was to seek wider views, including from external partners, in early 2013 to produce a more complete 'refresh evaluation'. This is that report.
- 1.3. A day is a long time in politics, and likewise, a couple of months are a long time in the Voluntary and Community Sector. Fair Shares has recently learnt that one substantial source of funding, which they had believed would be on-going for a period of 3 years, is unlikely to be extended beyond March 2013. The new staff employed in 2012 have been told that their contracts will not be renewed, some existing staff are reducing their hours and the core management team is being tightened back to its former capacity.
- 1.4. At the same time the Chief Executive, Lawrence Hughes, who has been a charismatic advocate of time banking for many years, is leaving to take up new challenges. His successor, Jez Spencer is already in post, and is bringing in much-needed new skills and ideas, but this change is happening at a time of great uncertainty within the organisation.
- 1.5. In addition, the Government recently announced plans to close Gloucester Prison at the end of March 2013. Fair Shares had worked hard and effectively to develop innovative solutions to support prisoners and their families in this prison. Much of this success came from building relationships with key individuals in the local prison service, many of whom will now be reallocated to other prisons across the country.
- 1.6. These changes have had a significant effect on this last tranche of the evaluation process. The mood and morale of staff has changed, and the external reputation of the organisation has been affected. When there is a crisis, issues, which in good times have not appeared to be that important, come to the fore. Interviewees were keen to learn the lessons of the past year of "boom and bust" and there was much introspection. However, there was also a strong consensus that there is now a real opportunity to consolidate the best aspects of Fair Shares and make the improvements necessary to strengthen the organisation in the face of an uncertain future. I hope this refresh evaluation will help Fair Shares to undertake that journey to becoming a stronger and more sustainable organisation.

2. METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 2.1. Most of the information for this report was obtained through telephone interviews with staff, trustees, partners and funders. It also draws on the results of an away day, which I

facilitated with the core management team earlier in the evaluation process.

- 2.2. This evaluation is a much smaller affair than that carried out in 2011. With less time available, it is of necessity more of a general overview, and lacks some of the detail of the previous study.
- 2.3. The report is based loosely on a SWOT analysis (looking at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Quotes from respondents are in italics but have not been attributed in order to preserve confidentiality, particularly because only a small number of people contributed. A number of recommendations are included in the conclusion.

3. STRENGTHS AND IMPROVEMENTS

- 3.1. The Interim Evaluation published in December 2012 found that Fair Shares had made good progress on all the recommendations in the 2011 evaluation (See Appendix 1).
- 3.2. Fair Shares is continuing to have a major impact on participants' lives, with numbers of participants now well over 1500. The case studies included in this report are in addition to the many in the first report, and show that the core model of Time Banking continues to work extremely well.
- 3.3. Fair Shares has expanded, with new time banks established in Tewkesbury and Cheltenham, new local clusters in areas such as Lydney, and additional staff in some of the existing time banks. Participation has widened significantly because there are more staff to answer the phone, be in the office, go to meetings, respond quickly to requests, encourage participants to make requests, promote time banking and bring in new members. Fair Shares has also established a time bank in Stratford-upon-Avon and is supporting a new time bank in Oxford.

CASE STUDY 1

'John' (not his real name) moved to Cirencester a few months ago in order to get away from a life of drugs and make a fresh start. He found formal volunteering opportunities too daunting, so his first stepping-stone to change was when he started to get involved in the South Cotswold Time Bank in August 2012. At first he helped occasionally with a bit of gardening for other members of the Time Bank. Gradually he became more and more confident and involved. Six months later, he is busy for 39 hours a week. He volunteers with Cirencester Town Council three days per week, helps once a week at the Green Gym (an NHS supported project) and also holds the fort at the Bingham House's (a museum and gallery) information point on a weekly basis. All his volunteering hours are credited through the time bank. He has recently enrolled on a course to learn skills for environmental work, and the time bank is helping him learn to drive – an essential ability if he is to get a job in this field.

- 3.4. Some time banks are helping participants to identify collective needs and have a voice. For instance, in Lydney, participants helped to carry out surveys to map need, and the time brokers are now supporting them to campaign for a new bus shelter and a road crossing.

- 3.5. Participants are getting involved in fundraising for their local time banks – for instance in Coleford participants are planning an open-mike ‘Joke-athon”, and a stint at bag packing at supermarket.
- 3.6. Time banks are delivering innovative projects such as Helping Hands, through which practical help is provided to people coming out of hospital, improving recovery rates.

CASE STUDY 2

A woman participant with multiple health problems and restricted mobility lives on her own with her dog. She was able to contribute by sticking on labels to envelopes. Her garden gate was broken, so her dog escaped from her garden, which she found very upsetting. Fair Shares was able to find a participant to mend her gatepost. This small action made a big difference to her well-being.

- 3.7. The time banks have increased partnership and project work with organisations in their patch. The Stroud time bank is working with Open House to develop a cross-generational food and cooking project, involving young people in supported accommodation and senior members of the time bank. The Cirencester time bank has developed a good relationship with several local GP practices who are now encouraging patients to become participants. In Lydney, the time bank works with a sheltered housing scheme to organise coffee mornings that bring together participants both from the housing scheme and from the wider community. In Tewkesbury, the new time bank has developed a good relationship with the adult social care team who are now referring vulnerable people that want to contribute to their community; they are also working with the community safety team to involve young people in revamping a skateboard park. These examples show the strength that Fair Shares has in bringing other organisations together to do things differently, acting like a hub for partnership working.
- 3.8. Around 250 voluntary and community organisations are joining the new time banking organisation database, which will be launched in May. This will encourage organisation-to-organisation exchange of time, skills and resources. The development post to undertake this work continues until September, and it is hoped that by then the model will be well established and sustainable within the existing resources of the organisation.
- 3.9. Fair Shares has set up its first social enterprise – a charity shop in Stonehouse – which is also providing a new way to involve participants and galvanise local support. This successful venture is expected to soon be generating income for the organisation.
- 3.10. The work with Gloucester Prison had been going from strength to strength, with the first Category D prisoner to work in the community from that prison being placed in the Stonehouse Charity Shop. An innovative mentoring scheme to support prisoners on release was also being developed. Relationships with Ley Hill and Easton Park prisons are being developed, in the hope that much of this good work can be carried over to these prisons once Gloucester closes, and there is also a good chance that bike workshop may move to Ley Hill. The work with prisons is one of Fair Shares’ key strengths – it’s unique selling point. Fair Shares has built on its expertise in this field by offering consultancy support to projects in other areas of the country. They are providing arms-length support to two prisons in Weymouth who are looking to develop the first prison-based time bank in the UK.

- 3.11. The reputation of Fair Shares has increased nationally through the development of its consultancy work. It is in a position to consider growing an income-generating consultancy arm. Fair Shares has also become high profile with a range of service providing agencies “because statutory bodies suddenly realised that the model could help them”. The concept of time banking is starting to be taken on board by commissioners such as those in Public Health.
- 3.12. Internally, systems, processes and management capabilities have improved. There are now better systems for recruitment and staff support and the organisation is working towards Pqasso standards. A new time banking software package has been developed to record assignments and provide up-to-date monitoring information. Marketing is much improved, with all time banks using the same branding and information. Standardised templates have been developed for such things as writing a case study. Internal and external communications have improved.
- 3.13. Financial management is improving, bringing better clarity on funding streams and better financial monitoring. Apart from the potential loss of the one large funding stream, which had funded the expansion, the underlying financial position is stronger than in previous years, with recent successful bids bringing in around £50,000.
- 3.14. Team working has improved, with monthly team meetings now really valued by all staff interviewed, and stronger relationships developing across the time banks. This has in part been driven by the need to support new staff, and in part by the delegation of core management functions, such as marketing, to staff members based in time banks who are now working with colleagues across all the other locations.
- 3.15. The Board of Trustees has attracted a couple of new members with helpful skills, and is starting to play a more strategic leadership role.
- 3.16. Finally there is a strong sense that the organisation is ‘riding the storm’. Everyone recognises that time banking is a really good and unique concept, that provides an excellent tool to deliver on such current agendas as Asset Based Community Development. At its core, time banking works at a very local level, improving people’s lives, involving them in their communities and establishing strong social networks based on the skills and abilities of individuals. There may be problems with funding, but the brand is still strong.

4. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

Sustainable Funding

- 4.1. The key challenge identified through the evaluation is the need for Fair Shares to find a sustainable funding model. Respondents felt that the organisation had grown too fast and too much, and that this growth was clearly proven to be not sustainable. *“The existing business model has outlived its time. It is no longer realistic to base it on expansion.”* *“We shouldn’t have expanded just because there was money available.”* There was a consensus that the organisation needs to consolidate at a smaller size, rather than pursuing a growth strategy, and to concentrate on its strengths. However, *“going back to the way we were before”* was not considered an option for a variety of reasons – *“the bit that has never worked is the financing of it”*; *“the present financial model is not sustainable and will not work into the future”*.
- 4.2. The organisation has been built on a model of applying for a multitude of funding pots, many of which are small, short-term, one-off and linked to specific project work. Funding for the core work – for each time bank office staffed by one or two time brokers – has become increasingly harder to find. One person described the funding model as *“being on a hamster wheel”*.
- 4.3. Project funding, especially when linked to specific targets, pulls the time brokers away from their core work of recruiting participants and organising assignments. *“We’re constantly having to do new projects because of the funding and then don’t have the time and funding to do the basics”*. *“Stringent targets lead to quantity not quality and don’t leave enough time for new participants”*. Often, the funding requires targeting certain groups of people such as older people or people with mental health problems, leaving little time to work with others. *“Tewkesbury Time Bank has developed lots of work with young people, but their funding for next financial year focuses on the terminally ill”*. This targeting of funding skews the membership profile, making it hard to recruit non-vulnerable people without complex needs. The result is an imbalance in skills and abilities within the time bank. A time bank works best when it has *“a balance of people who can contribute more”* and its membership reflects the make up of its local community.
- 4.4. The present development model for establishing new time banks is also going to be really hard to fund into the future. It entails *“lots and lots of development work – building knowledge, relationships and partnerships”* through which potential projects can be developed; and working with individuals to get them to articulate their needs and so generate assignments. *“It takes a long time to get people involved”*. The time bank in Tewkesbury has had the equivalent of 1.5 full-time staff working since September 2012 and in 4 months has signed up 18 participants. It is working hard to develop projects with partners such as Rooftop Housing Association and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust who will offer time-credited volunteering opportunities for participants. In the context of long-term funding, spending time on the building blocks in this way is clearly what is required, but with short-term funding it is a challenge to sell to funders.
- 4.5. More fundamentally, many respondents believe that the existing model of funding will no longer provide sufficient income to keep even a reduced organisation going, largely because of external changes in the priorities of public bodies and grant givers. *“You can no longer make the case that it’s a great idea and people will fund it”*. *“Even though the public sector think time banking is brilliant, they won’t provide funding any more for what they do”*. *“Anything reliant on funding from the public sector is incredibly*

vulnerable and insecure”.

- 4.6. The challenge therefore is to *“diversify the Income base”*, reducing the proportion of grant aid and the dependency of funding streams which are drying up or which create such instability within the organisation. Alternative approaches are covered in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

Strategic Plan

- 4.7. Another major issue highlighted is the lack of a strategic plan for the organisation. *“Historically we have not had one - we have been working on a status quo basis”*. *“The strategy was expansion – build, put in a second tier, develop more time banks”*. But *“Expanding without a strategic plan was foolhardy”*. *“With hindsight we should have had more of a strategic view on how to allocate the new funding”*. Fair Shares needs a plan that is realistic and can *“reshape the organisation to something sustainable”*, and that also looks at where the organisation wants to go, providing clarity about *“our core purpose and core objectives”*, *“where do we want to go as an organisation”* and *“what is realistic in the long term”*.
- 4.8. This is a challenge, because there are differing views on *“the right business model”* and on how to go forward. One view is that Fair Shares should consolidate and strengthen its core business working very locally with people in their communities. The organisation has tried to *“get too complicated”* and has *“tried to take the concept into areas where it doesn’t fit”*. This view sees the strength of the organisation lying in building relationships and social networks at a very local, community-based level. This may require looking at very different models for sustaining this work *because “who’s going to pay for what we want to deliver, and if we don’t get funding, how are we going to move forward?”*
- 4.9. There is recognition that going very local of necessity requires coping with fewer resources *“We need to be realistic about how many staff a time bank can sustain”*. Respondents talked about coping with fewer staff, maybe only one time broker for each locality. They also questioned whether an office base for each time bank essential was essential. *“You don’t need an office. Instead time brokers could go to the library a few hours per week, so long as it’s regular locations and people know they can come along”*. In the past, much of the fundraising for individual time banks has been undertaken centrally within Fair Shares, and there is a view that now *“each time bank should be supported to be more sustainable on itself”* generating income through *“social enterprises, donations.”*
- 4.10. Another view is that the future lies in developing the infrastructure and capacity of the organisation to compete successfully for contracts. This is about *“developing county-wide for strategic value”*. Although many acknowledge that the organisation lacks the culture, systems and management infrastructure to manage significant contracts at the moment, *“We’re not ready to bid for contracts yet”* some see getting these in place is a priority for the future. This route would involve *“seeing how Fair Shares meets other organisation’s priorities rather than preserving core independence”*. *“We need to be clear about who’s needs we are meeting and then see how this meshes with what funders are looking for, who’s potentially funding this and what are their requirements and then put together a business case and a proposal”*.
- 4.11. Some people expressed a view that the organisation could pursue both these visions in tandem. *“We are not going to change the way we work to fit the priorities of service providers – if there’s potential and it’s right for us then we can go for it...we could be*

doing more good for our participants if we take up opportunities, but we need to consider each individual opportunity as it comes". "Doing the right thing for the community got them where they are now. Doing it because people will pay for it is the new challenge"

- 4.12. Others feel that the contracting approach causes *"Tension between the need to promote and defend the ethos and values, and the need to develop systems to meet commissioners' requirements"*. They are concerned that contracting might pull Fair Shares into areas where they should not be. Already some funding seems to be taking them into *"social work rather than community work"* which *"requires a skills set that the staff don't have"*.
- 4.13. These differing views of where the organisation should be going will need to be resolved through the process of producing the strategic plan over the next few months, providing clarity for the next year and beyond. *"We need to have a dialogue across the staff, board and participants about the future direction of time banking"*

Management issues

- 4.14. Respondents identified a range of issues to do with the management of Fair Shares where they felt improvements should and could be made.
- 4.15. **Skills.** People questioned whether the organisation had the right skills to go forward. *"The organisation has done well to get so far but now needs new skills."* Identifying the skills needed was considered a priority. Some people felt that what was needed was better leadership and business skills. *"We need someone who is more business driven and can think strategically."* Others felt that the key was to make better use of skills already within the organisation. *"There are a lot of people in the organisation who have the skills and background we need."*
- 4.16. **Internal management and communications.** Many people talked about the need to improve internal systems and put in core processes, such as financial management systems, and recording and monitoring. *"We need to get better at recording and selling what we do – everyone throughout the organisation needs to be doing this"*. *"We need to get everything that's in Lawrence's head written down"*. The recent challenges have also shown the need for processes such as risk management and contingency planning. There is a sense that decisions are often made in haste in response to changing circumstances, and that *"what if"* scenarios have not been considered or planned for. *"This isn't the first time we been in this situation"*. Internal communication could also be improved – staff felt that the recent problems had shown up weaknesses in communications systems with staff.
- 4.17. **Reputation management and external communication.** Respondents felt that regular communication with the funders was vital, and that their present problems were as a result of weakness in this area. There was also considerable concern that the recent difficulties were impacting on the reputation of the organisation - *"Information has dribbled out and rumours are going round"* - and that managing that reputation through better external communications could improve the situation. It was important to communicate externally as well as to resolve issues internally. *"When major problems happen to an organisation you need to look outwards and not hunker down"*. During the past year, external partners expectations have been raised because of the additional work carried out by the expanded organisation. Staff felt that they had not received sufficient guidance on how to deal with these expectations, which may not now be met. *"Have they thought as to how they will manage withdrawing from work where they have*

raised expectations of partners and participants?"

- 4.18. **Trustees.** Several respondents mentioned the need for a stronger Board of Trustees. *"It's their responsibility to provide strategic direction and they haven't done so."*

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

5.1. Once Fair Shares has agreed on their strategic direction, the organisation could address the issues raised above in a number of ways. This section looks briefly at some of the possibilities and some of the risks associated with these possibilities. The ideas all came from participants, and are not put forward in this report as recommendations. More work is required by Fair Shares to evaluate each option properly:

5.1.1. **Minimising the cost of each time bank.** For instance, each time bank could be reduced to the equivalent of one time broker, supported by volunteers or sessional and project staff. Alternatively, a team of time brokers could cover a wider area, for instance combining Tewkesbury and Cheltenham into one team. If staff each had a portable laptop and mobile phone they could be more flexible and not so office-bound. However, time banks work best when there is sufficient staff capacity to build relationships, support participants and encourage exchange of skills and time although *"once these are established we could run (aspects) from elsewhere"*. A lot of people suggested that instead of having their own offices, time banks could operate out of other bases. *"We don't really make good use of the office"*. Suggestions included working from home; having a desk in another organisation's office; hot desking; being based in a bookshop; being in the library at set regular times each week so that participants can drop in; combining a base for time broking with a social enterprise, such as the Stonehouse Charity Shop. Most people felt that having some kind of local base is key, because it provides a presence in the community and participants can drop in easily. *"We need somewhere where it's social and people can come in and chat"*

5.1.2. **Going more local.** One idea put forward is for time banking to go "hyper-local". Time banking's strength comes from being *"based locally, staffed by local people, talking to local people"* and knowing all aspects of a locality well. Small time banks based in a market town or other natural communities (rather than at district level) might be sustainable on much less income, which could be raised very locally. A very local time bank could identify the community mechanisms in that locality to support it and make it sustainable. A very part-time time broker, supported by local volunteers or an existing community-based group, would have more knowledge of, and be able to build on, local existing networks. Fair Shares could do some work to identify what the minimum requirements of such a model would be. This would help with *"going to where people already are in gardening clubs, faith groups or whatever, and introducing time banking along side what people are already doing"*. Working at the hyper-local level could be more effective at establishing relationships and social support. *"If there are several people who all live in one street or one area they could get together or set up activities"*. Local community-based organisations could take the lead in developing time banking in their community, with support from Fair Shares centrally. This hyper-local model is challenging and risky – would such local time banks be able to provide sufficient support to vulnerable participants? Would local funding be forthcoming? How would the relationship between the centre and these very

small time banks work?

- 5.1.3. **Centralising some functions to reduce costs.** Some functions could be combined in order to save costs. *“There is no central purchasing function – we all buy stationary separately”*. More use could be made of the head office to store bulky materials or equipment, and some services such as information services could be centralised. Instead of struggling to find resources for eight local time banks, all needing their own infrastructure, Fair Shares could become *“a central organisation which facilitates a very local model”*. It could have a couple of expert time brokers at the centre, providing support and advice to small local time banks running as satellite services, independently in communities, or within other community organisations.
- 5.1.4. **Using volunteers more to support the organisation.** Some respondents expressed the view that volunteers could be providing more support. Volunteers could help with administrative tasks *“helping to stuff envelopes and helping in the office more”*; and with fundraising activities *“participants are creative – they are great knitters, artists, jam makers – and we could have an area selling goods and promoting time banking”*; or volunteers could assist time brokers *“other organisations have a rota volunteers to do reception duties”* and *“getting a couple of volunteers to help one or two days a week would really help”*. However, there was also a strong view that paid staff are essential. *“You couldn’t run it on volunteers because the thing that makes time banking appealing is that it’s flexible and you’re not committed to regular times”*. *“We offer the most informal route into volunteering – formal volunteering can be too scary”*.
- 5.1.5. **Developing new models of volunteering.** The Fair Shares model for volunteering is a significant strength and a unique selling point – it challenges concepts of volunteering that have been around for a long time and have not moved on. *“Their model of volunteering is at the forefront of thinking.”* Fair Shares has tended to see itself as working alongside traditional volunteering, but by more actively promoting their model as a challenge to traditional approaches, they could open up funding opportunities. Another idea is that they could generate income by helping to develop employer-supported volunteering, linking to the Corporate responsibility agenda. They could work with statutory or business organisations to develop a “help in kind” model to support voluntary and community groups, charging for their development support. For instance employees could provide human resources help and expertise to voluntary organisations. Public sector organisations could see this as a way of supporting voluntary and community groups when money and grant aid is short, and they themselves would benefit from the widening of skills and experience of their employees. Time banking could provide a good model on which to base this kind of employee-supported volunteering.
- 5.1.6. **Setting up more social enterprises to generate independent income.** Several of the time banks can see an opportunity to establish a social enterprise in their locality as a means of sustaining their time bank. *“Retail combines an opportunity to generate income and is a great place to organise from”*. In Cirencester there could be an opportunity to establish an Internet café, possibly in the Abbey grounds, as there is a real gap in the town. *“It could be a pop-in for youth, provide Internet use, be a community café, act as a Fair Shares hub. It could use volunteers and provide work experience to students. I think it could turn a good profit.”* In Gloucester there are opportunities to find a social enterprise for an old toilet block. In the Forest there could be an opportunity to partner with a

local Housing Association to help run a community café and get a share of the profits. However, investment of staff time and money is required to set up a social enterprise, and they do not always generate a profit. *“Will we get to saturation point in terms of charity shops and cafés?”*

- 5.1.7. Expanding the **consultancy and training arm**. Fair Shares has now got considerable experience in providing consultancy and arms length support. For instance it is helping to establish a time bank in Oxford. There is potential to expand and charge for these services. In particular, there is now real expertise in the organisation around work with prisoners and prisoners, as shown by the work being undertaken in Weymouth. A report of their work at Gloucester Prison is being written and could be used to demonstrate this expertise and to expand this area of work. The risk is that, with a reduced core team, staff resources will be drawn away from managing the Gloucestershire projects.
- 5.1.8. **Working closer with other organisations**. Fair Shares could concentrate more on helping other organisations to develop time banking within their organisation, rather than setting up independent District-based time banks. Ideas included seeing whether an organisation like GARAS would be interested in setting up a time bank for refugees and asylum seekers. The opportunity for bidding for money in partnership with other organisations could also be further explored.
- 5.1.9. **Improving the organisational infrastructure**. Most people agreed that getting the systems right was a basic prerequisite for a stronger organisation. This included having clearer financial systems and having a central server *“so we don’t have to chase reports and everyone knows when they’re due, who’s responsible”*. Some people felt that Fair Shares should be concentrating on developing a strong infrastructure and systems in order to be more able to bid for and manage contracts. *“They need to decide on what is the value they’re providing and to whom, what’s the business model required to deliver this and then what’s the infrastructure to support that business model.”* The organisation should define the role and benefits of a central management function and then concentrate on putting what’s required in place. *“Some of the culture will have to change”*

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. This evaluation report was carried out at a time of flux within Fair Shares. It has found a fundamentally strong organisation, going through a period of introspection and self-questioning. In the circumstances, this is very positive – it would be much more worrying to find an organisation defending the status quo. Challenging times present an opportunity to rethink the values and purpose of an organisation, to go back to the core and rebuild and come out stronger than ever. And the impression gained through this evaluation process is that this is just what Fair Shares will do. The concept of time banking is still exciting and relevant and makes a meaningful difference to people's lives. Building on their expertise in delivering this unique model, Fair Shares have every chance of a successful future.
- 6.2. This evaluation report cannot answer the questions that Fair Shares is asking itself nor can it tell the organisation what to do. Instead it has tried to highlight some of the issues and some of the ideas for the future, and to identify the priority areas for action:
- 6.2.1. Fair Shares should take sufficient time to decide where it wants to go. *“We don't want to be pressured into making decisions in the short term – we want to consider what's best.”*
- 6.2.2. Developing a medium and long-term strategy for the organisation is now a priority. This needs to be developed through an inclusive process that values and involves all staff, the trustees, participants and stakeholders.
- 6.2.3. The transition from a larger organisation to a smaller one should be carefully managed, with thought given to supporting staff, rebuilding the team, risk management, managing expectations and maintaining relationships and reputation.
- 6.2.4. In particular, communication with funders should be improved during this difficult period.
- 6.2.5. A much more structured approach to sustainable funding needs to be developed, based on a clear vision and business model for the organisation. Whether that model is going hyper-local, contracting for services or developing more of a strategic role is for Fair Shares itself to decide.
- 6.2.6. Fair Shares should continue to steadily improve its internal systems and processes, ensuring good communications throughout the organisation and support to staff. Systems for demonstrating impact and value are essential.

APPENDIX 1 – PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATION REPORT AUGUST 2011.

1. Time brokers should be more proactive in getting participants to ask for help.

Additional staff have helped to address this by proactively contacting participants. Sustainability of approach will now need to be addressed.

2. Clearer guidance is needed for new participants so as not to raise expectations that cannot be met.

Additional staff have helped here, but again, the sustainability of this approach will need to be addressed.

3. Fair Shares should develop a central marketing strategy to support the projects to reach new participants and new audiences.

Addressed by work of marketing manager. Good branding and marketing materials have been developed.

4. Fair Shares should develop a plan to integrate time banking into communities more effectively, so as to impact on community well-being.

This is underpinning the approach e.g in Tewkesbury. Working with Forest of Dean District Council and with the Barnwood Trust to develop integration of time banking into community development, ABCD approaches and Learning Sites.

5. Fair Shares should concentrate on methods of development, such as clusters in rural areas, which support building cohesive communities.

This approach is now operating successfully in the Forest of Dean.

6. Fair Shares should seek funding to employ a development worker to expand their work with organisations and services.

Development worker post funded through Transforming Local Infrastructure and employed till September 2013. The focus has been to set up an organisational time bank, rather than to develop better partnerships between Fair Shares and other organisations

7. Fair Shares should develop a strategy for informing and engaging organisations and service providers, including encouraging organisation-to-organisation assignments. The strategy should identify incentives for organisations.

Being undertaken by development worker. 250 organisations will be part of a database encouraging organisation-to-organisation exchanges.

8. Fair Shares should seek funding for a pilot project to identify a large service provider with whom to test an approach to integrating time banking into the fabric of the organisation.

Exploring possibilities – nothing definite yet. Unlikely to happen now that staff numbers will reduce.

9. Fair Shares should continue to seek partners with whom to tender for contracts, by including time banking as a methodology to deliver contract outcomes.

Joint funding bid made to NOMS. Working with Barnwood Trust and their ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) approach to change commissioning to acknowledge importance of community assets, which would then open up more opportunities for bidding.

10. Fair Shares and Gloucester Prison should develop a written agreement outlining roles and responsibilities on each side. Both partners could then use this as the basis for further development and sourcing funding.

Greatly improved relationship (although not written) with Gloucester prison based on a clearer understanding with the Governor, and work on mentoring and category D prisoners - although Gloucester prison is now closing.

11. Fair Shares should develop it's own vision for taking the prison work forward, and use this to inform further discussion with HMPS in Gloucestershire.

Better understanding with Ley Hill prison, although formalised vision not produced.

12. Fair Shares should consider pulling together the other Voluntary and Community Organisations who work with Gloucestershire Prisons to look at areas of joint interest and joint working.

Working closely with other organisations such as the Nelson Trust, Info Bus and Shannon Trust.

13. Future projects should be developed in closer partnership with other organisations or services who already work with the defined client group that will benefit from the project.

Helping Hands (previously the Rest Assured Project) now has close links with Age UK and GP practices, and is working much better as a result.

14. Fair Shares should develop guidelines for engaging and working with young people.

Although there are no formal guidelines, good progress has been made in involving young people at the City Farm and through intergenerational work in Stroud.

15. Fair Shares should undertake a review of existing projects such as Time for Families and Rest Assured, to capture the learning and build on this to help with taking the projects forward and with developing new projects.

North Cotswold is providing a lead on this.

16. Management leadership is needed to develop common systems and processes to deal with recruitment, recording, communications, monitoring, evidencing impact and other areas, drawing on good practice internally and from other time banks.

A new post has helped to put a range of systems in place, and Fair Shares is working towards Pqasso accreditation. This might be at risk with the imminent loss of staff. HR consultants are providing on-going expertise.

17. A system for staff appraisal and development should be established.

This was being developed, but will have to be reconsidered now that the management team

is shrinking.

18. Fair Shares should consider sharing out management tasks more amongst existing staff.

Done—marketing and IT functions taken on by time brokers.

19. Efforts should be made to recruit more trustees with relevant skills.

Two new trustees recruited with relevant skills.

20. Trustees should play a greater role in supporting the organisation and taking it forward.

Starting to play a greater role e.g in HR matters and in providing strategic direction, but further improvement needed.

21. Fair Shares should use this Evaluation report to help develop a revised vision and plan for future development.

Some good work has been done, for instance at an away day, but progress has been slow.

APPENDIX 2 – LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS EVALUATION

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