

**Minutes of Harrow Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum  
Ordinary Meeting held on 01 June 2015, 10:00 – 12:00 hrs  
Committee Rooms 1&2, Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2XY**

<b>Attendance:</b>				
<b>Attendee</b>	abbreviation in minutes	<b>Organisation</b>	abbreviation in minutes	<b>Forum Role</b>
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	
Brian Whitehead	BW	Welldon Activity Group		
Deven Pillay	DP	Harrow Mencap		
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	
Gilly Chowdry	GC	Homestart Barnet (the Harrow Project)		
Jane Skelly	JS	Harrow Friends of the Earth		
Jason Bowles	JBo	HOPE Harrow		
John Hunter	JH	Crossroads Care Harrow		
Julie Browne	JB	Aspergers Syndrome Access to Provision		Outgoing Chair
Keith Chilvers	KC	Radio Harrow	RH	VCS Representative
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve		Incoming Vice-Chair / VCS Representative
Oluwaseun Ipinmoruti	OI	Third Sector Potential		
Rachel Wright	RW	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	Minute Taker
Richard McCaffrey	RM	38Degrees (Harrow Local Group)		
Russell Sutcliffe	RS	Harrow Community Farm		
Samuel Genen	SG	Harrow Law Centre	HLC	
Sania Sehbai	SS	Harrow Women's Centre	HWC	
Sarah Kersey	SK	Harrow's Happiness Campaign		Incoming Chair / VCS Representative
Steve Porter	SP	Third Sector Potential CIC		
Tajinder Nijjar	TN	Harrow Citizens Advice Bureau	HCAB	
Stuart Dashwood	SD	Carramea Community Resource Centre	CCRC	

<b>Apologies:</b>				
		<b>Member Organisation</b>		<b>Forum Role</b>
Avani Modasia	AM	AGE UK Harrow		
Pamela Fitzpatrick	PF	Harrow Law Centre	HLC	
Tony O'Hara	TOH	Carramea Community Resource Centre	CCRC	
David Phelops	DPh	Harrow Community Choir		
Eileen Martell	EM	HOPE Harrow		
Steven Williams	SW	Watford FC Community Sports & Education Trust		
Mark Gillham	MG	Mind in Harrow		
Geraldine Gower	GG	The Disability Foundation		
Rachel Chronnell	RC	Choices 4 All		
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association		
Jan Irwin	JI	Harrow Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum		

<b>Item</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>Action by whom</b>	<b>Action by when</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</b></p> <p>1.1 JB opened the meeting as outgoing Chair. She facilitated a round of introductions. Apologies were noted. With reference to the topics on the agenda, JB called for any Conflicts of Interest to be disclosed. None were declared.</p>		
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Agenda Review</b></p> <p>2.1 JB introduced the new style of agenda proposed by SK, with the Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising towards the end. There was general agreement to the reordered agenda format.</p> <p>2.2 As JB wished to take the lead on the Elections item before handing over the chairmanship to SK, it was agreed to bring the item forward to be discussed before anything else.</p>		

<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Management Board Elections</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b> JB listed the nominations that had been received – for SK as Chair; for LR as Vice-Chair; and for KC and Varsha Dodhia (VD) of Harrow Interfaith Council as VCS Representatives. SK and LR had also put themselves forward as VCS Representatives if needed, but hoped that others would soon stand separately for these roles instead. One other nomination had since been withdrawn. VD’s nomination had in fact missed the 24 April deadline for submission, but this was not felt to make any material difference as the cut-off date had been for administrative purposes only. Furthermore, because there had been fewer candidates than positions available, JB had chosen not to hold an election before this meeting anyway. So JB checked that all were happy for VD’s nomination to be accepted with the rest. She referred to the <a href="#">Constitution’s</a> provision for new Management Board members to be elected whenever required. This being the case, an initial objection from JH was overcome and there was no further opposition to any of the candidacies being considered.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> Despite there being more roles than nominees, LR insisted that an election must take place as per the <a href="#">Constitution</a>, in order for the Management Board to have any legitimacy. JB asked attendees to raise their hands if they were in favour of all four candidates taking up their nominated roles for the Forum.</p> <p><b><i>Agreed by majority: SK, LR, KC, and VD to serve as Chair, Vice-Chair and VCS Representatives respectively on the Forum Management Board.</i></b></p> <p><b>3.3</b> It was hoped that more members would put themselves forward for the remaining Management Board positions – a second Vice-Chair and up to three more VCS Representatives.</p> <p><b><i>Action: Appeal to go out with minutes and agendas for more nominations for election to the Management Board until the board is full.</i></b></p> <p><b>3.4</b> JB handed over the role of Chair to SK.</p> <p><b>3.5</b> TN asked if the Management Board VCS Representatives would be meeting with council decision makers such as the Leader and the Chief Executive, as HCAB needed to be clear about who to contact for representation and to whom those representatives would be accountable. SK had spoken to Cllr Sue Anderson (SA), Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement, who had confirmed that the council would be engaging with the Forum’s VCS Representatives. SP and JB wanted to be clear, as SA and Marianne Locke, Harrow’s Divisional Director for Community and Culture, had recently indicated to them that the Forum would not be considered sufficiently representative of the wider VCS. SK had since been told by SA that only a constituted membership group could provide official VCS representatives.</p> <p><b><i>Action: Outgoing and incoming Chairs to meet for handover discussions.</i></b></p> <p><b>3.6</b> TN wanted to know to whom the former Reps had been accountable. JB replied that they had been accountable to the Harrow Strategic Partnership Board until it ended in 2013, since when they had considered themselves directly accountable to the council itself. SG wondered how the former Reps had consulted with the groups they were supposed to represent. DP explained that</p>	<p>M Board</p> <p>JB, SK</p>	
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	<p>the unconstituted Forum had been a loose arrangement where all groups were considered members, elections had been sector wide and the Reps had arranged occasional summit events. He was worried that there would now be mixed messages and that the Forum's membership would not be large enough to give its VCS Representatives any legitimacy with the authorities. AB pointed to the Forum's <a href="#">Constitution</a>, where there was nothing to prevent its VCS Representatives from representing the views of non-members. GD added that the Forum was currently in a transition period and membership was open to all Harrow's VCS groups. He compared its representation to the electoral system, where registration was necessary in order to vote but not in order to be heard by the elected representative. He considered the Forum to be the main place to bring up the sector's issues and provide clarity for the authorities. As many groups as possible should be encouraged to join and it should not be exclusive. DP observed that representing non-members would increase the Forum's credibility. SK confirmed the intention to engage with the whole sector, give non-members access to representation and encourage them to join. SS stressed that any group should focus primarily on what was best for its beneficiaries.</p> <p><b>3.7</b> JH highlighted that SA's portfolio did not for instance cover all responsibility for health matters. The Forum must also engage with other Cabinet members and council departments. KC advocated researching each councillor's specific remit. LR had a copy of SA's responsibilities, which for example made specific mention of the Community Sport and Physical Activity Network (CSPAN) but did not include anything about the Forum. LR asserted that all non-profit groups such as health and fitness, environmental and tenants' associations should be represented by the Forum. At a recent meeting with LR, however, the Council Leader had indicated that these groups should deal directly with the relevant portfolio holder and not via the Forum, which he had said should be concerned only with SA's remit. TN reported that HCAB's needs concerned all aspects of the council's work including housing, benefits and many others that did not fall under SA. DP agreed that all portfolios were relevant to VCS. RS suggested keeping SA as the Forum's prime council contact who should refer representations to the relevant person. He was keen to have the sector's views heard regarding the Localism Act, which the council had so far ignored.</p>		
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Meeting Ground Rules and Members' Code of Conduct</b></p> <p><b>4.1</b> Copies of a draft Code of Conduct, including Meeting Ground Rules, were circulated to all. SK asked everyone to read and comment on them, for approval at the next meeting. Sticking to these rules and protocols about behaviour would avoid a repeat of a situation that had occurred after the last meeting, where PF had attended as a representative of HLC and had conveyed the organisation's stance in a discussion about Harrow Council's proposed VCS Non-Executive Member on Cabinet. Another attendee had subsequently complained about her behind her back to the council's Labour administration for not toeing the party line as a Labour councillor. Such underhand behaviour by Forum members would not be tolerated because the Forum must be seen to be independent and its members should be able to freely express their organisations' views without fear of recriminations from outside.</p> <p><b>Action: Draft documents to be read by all and proposed for adoption at the next meeting. Any questions or suggestions for amendment to be sent to SK. <a href="mailto:kerseysarah@gmail.com">kerseysarah@gmail.com</a></b></p>	<p><b>Forum members</b></p>	<p><b>next meeting</b></p>

<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Forum Membership Application Form and Procedure</b></p> <p><b>5.1</b> Membership Application Forms with Draft Membership Guidelines were circulated to all. SK explained that keeping formal membership records would give legitimacy to the Forum’s claim to represent many organisations. As outlined in the <a href="#">Constitution</a>, each member group must appoint a named person to represent it, who could ask a colleague to deputise for them in their absence. In response to a question from DP, it was agreed that a deputy’s name need not be specified on the application form, to allow some flexibility. LR pointed out that someone else from within the organisation must authorise the application, to be sure that an individual had the group’s consent to act on its behalf. DP suggested a change to the form’s wording about the position of the countersignatory. It was agreed to change this on future versions.</p> <p><b>Action: Wording on the application form to be changed to read “Signed by some else in your organisation such as Chair, Chief Officer or Committee Member”</b></p> <p><b>Action: Membership Application Forms to be completed, countersigned and returned by all organisations wishing to be Forum members.</b></p> <p><b>5.2</b> LR referred to an action point from January’s meeting, about the potential use of the Harrow Community Network (HCN) online directory (<a href="https://www.harrowcn.org.uk">https://www.harrowcn.org.uk</a>) as a basis for the Forum membership database. As promised, RS and LR had met to discuss this with RW, who had produced a document exploring the possibilities and questioning whether group representatives’ contact details should be publicly accessible or not. RW described how organisations’ names, descriptions and postcode were automatically public, whereas addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses could remain hidden. The general feeling was that individuals’ contact details should be visible only to Forum members. DP was concerned about data protection. LR and RS assured him that this was not an issue with the non-personal nature of the information collected on the membership application. Confidentiality was covered by a statement that details given would be used for Forum membership purposes only. JH asked for clarification about the ownership and purpose of HCN. RW described it as an independent directory owned by VAHC and developed in partnership with Agile Ventures, using publicly available data from the Charity Commission. KC was keen to see HCN used as a way for Forum members to share information on a central system. The Management Board would consider the options.</p> <p><b>Action: RW’s document about the use of the HCN system for Forum membership purposes to be circulated to all members. <a href="#">VCS Forum using HCN</a>. Comments and questions to be invited and fed back to the Management Board, with a presentation about HCN to be given at the next meeting.</b></p>	<p>LR</p> <p>Forum members</p> <p>RW</p>	<p>straight away</p> <p>as soon as possible</p> <p>by next meeting</p>
<p>6</p>	<p><b>Forum Programme</b></p> <p><b>6.1 Volunteers Week Picnic – Sunday 07 June.</b> SK shared details of a picnic to be held in celebration of volunteers, following a suggestion by VD, <a href="#">Volunteer’s Week Picnic</a>. All were encouraged to attend and invite their organisations’ volunteers.</p>		

<p><b>6.2 Forum Working Groups</b> – Organisations with common themes, such as carers, mobility or the environment, had approached SK with a view to working together on specific topics. DP pointed to time constraints which might stop members attending multiple meetings. LR said that working groups would not necessarily mean attending more meetings, as members could interact online and in other ways. AB called for existing networks to feed into the Forum, such as VAHC’s Trustee Network and its Safeguarding Forum. LR was enthusiastic about a working group around the environment and sustainability, and perhaps one for campaigning groups to get together. SK asked if anyone else would be interested in such topics and JS said she would be. SS was interested in women and migrant family issues, and engaging more informally with young people and schools. RS suggested linking into citizenship lessons, where pupils studying homelessness had not been permitted to leave school premises to do research. This might present opportunities for VCS groups to visit and present information.</p> <p><b>6.3</b> Warning of further council spending cuts to come next year, DP identified key strategic issues as the Health &amp; Wellbeing Board (HWB) and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. JH shared DP’s concern that, despite its big responsibility, the HWB had not met due to lack of agenda items. The Forum should be able to exert some influence. DP had raised this issue before and realised that part of the problem lay with the way the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the council were working together. He believed there was now a commitment to put this right, and suggested the forum engage with Cllr Anne Whitehead, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People. TN suggested that the Forum’s Management Board should design a programme that aligned with three or four of the council’s own strategic priorities.</p> <p><b>Action: Cllr Anne Whitehead to be invited to the Forum for discussions</b></p> <p><b>6.4 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)</b> – DP gave an update on attempts by Harrow’s Public Health department to engage the public and the VCS. He described the JSNA as a compilation of evidence from different sources, including the council and CCG, used to decide on priorities. DP had suggested ways to include the VCS and been promised that this would happen.</p> <p><b>6.5</b> SK had made contact with the council’s Carole Furlong from Public Health. JH clarified that Harrow and Barnet councils shared the same Public Health department, with Andrew Howe as its Director. TN had asked the department for information but had received no response. DP suggested she contact Sarah Crouch or Carol Yarde, with whom he had been dealing. TN was keen to co-ordinate discussions and contacts together with other groups if possible.</p> <p><b>6.6 September Networking and Community Information Event</b> – SK announced that Carol Foyle, of Kids Can Achieve, had offered space and staff time to run an autumn event open to the public where groups could also find out more about each others’ activities. More assistance would be needed to organise the day. AB and KC offered their help.</p> <p><b>Action: Sarah Kersey or Carol Foyle to be contacted with offers of help, <a href="mailto:kerseysarah@gmail.com">kerseysarah@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:cfoyle@wspld.org">cfoyle@wspld.org</a></b></p>	<p>SK</p> <p>AB, KC and any others</p>	<p>by next meeting</p>
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<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Offers and Wants</b></p> <p><b>7.1</b> SK introduced this item as a chance for groups to request or offer items or services. For example, HCT were looking for a somewhere to use as a base. GD confirmed this, adding that it was also looking for volunteer drivers and that it offered transport to community organisations. <a href="mailto:admin@harrowct.org.uk">admin@harrowct.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>7.2</b> KC announced that Harrow Community Radio and Radio Northwick Park had now merged to become <a href="#">Radio Harrow</a>, whose aims included being a voice for Harrow through audio and video. It was open to any community group to promote their activities and events, and RH could provide an opportunity to promote the Forum itself. <a href="mailto:keith.chilvers@radioharrow.org">keith.chilvers@radioharrow.org</a></p> <p><b>7.3</b> SS told of HWC's offer of legal support for women. <a href="mailto:saniatmax@hotmail.com">saniatmax@hotmail.com</a></p> <p><b>7.4</b> AB described a project that VAHC were launching, for young people to start their own community and social enterprises. Monthly incubator hubs would be held around Harrow. Anyone should get in touch with him if they were working with young people or interested in helping to develop the project. <a href="mailto:alex buckmire@voluntaryactionharrow.org.uk">alex buckmire@voluntaryactionharrow.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>7.5</b> GD promoted an event being run by Harrow Recreation Ground Users Association on 07 June. <a href="mailto:miccia@btinternet.com">miccia@btinternet.com</a> or <a href="mailto:j.galbraith@ucl.ac.uk">j.galbraith@ucl.ac.uk</a></p> <p><b>7.6</b> SG gave information about HLC's service for young people needing advice on education or the Community Care Act. <a href="mailto:info@harrowlawcentre.org.uk">info@harrowlawcentre.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>7.7</b> SP drew attention to the council's Small Grants Programme. The deadline for applications was 15 June. Capable Communities was running training sessions on completing the forms. <a href="mailto:steve@capablecommunities.co.uk">steve@capablecommunities.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200208/grants/1042/small_grants_programme">http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200208/grants/1042/small_grants_programme</a></p> <p><b>7.8</b> SD advised of meeting rooms and office facilities available for groups to use at CCRC. <a href="http://carramea.org.uk">http://carramea.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:advice@carramea.org.uk">advice@carramea.org.uk</a></p>		
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015</b></p> <p><b>8.1 Accuracy</b> – The minutes were approved.</p> <p><b>8.2 Matters Arising –</b></p> <p><b>2.2.2</b> JB had not spoken with SA about engaging the sector, Equalities Impact Assessments or Service Level Agreements (SLAs). DP stated that there had been no need to follow up on these because the consultation was now over.</p> <p><b>2.2.4</b> JB had not contacted HLC for more details. SG now clarified HLC's inability to remain a member if the Forum was represented on the council's cabinet, because this would give rise to a conflict of interest and compromise HLC's independence according to the <a href="#">Solicitors Code of Conduct</a>. HLC would be deemed to be party to the decision making process, rendering its solicitors unable to challenge any Cabinet decisions. This particular conflict did not apply those who were not solicitors and did no case work, as was the case with HLC's Chief Executive Officer PF's role as a councillor. Other organisations should check their own codes of conduct. JH remarked that anyone from an</p>		

	<p>organisation with a council contract would have a conflict.</p> <p>DP warned against making any assumptions that the proposed Cabinet position would be selected via the Forum. There was further discussion about the merits of the offered Cabinet post. GD commented that it was not yet clear what was required or how someone would be chosen.</p> <p><b>2.2.6.2</b> JB had not taken any action on the protocol around multiple roles. LR said much of this would now be covered by the Members' Code of Conduct.</p> <p>SK would discuss the matter further with the Management Board if necessary.</p> <p><b>3.5</b> AB confirmed that the Charity Commission Guidance <b>on</b> Local authorities as charity trustees had been circulated with the minutes of the last meeting.</p> <p><b>3.6.32</b> AB confirmed that the documents about the proposed cabinet post had been circulated with the minutes of the last meeting with an invitation to submit comments, questions, and lists of the pros and cons of the proposal. Feedback received had been handed to SA at the 18 April Summit. SP added that notes from the Summit had been sent out via the <a href="#">HCA newsletter</a> to everyone on its mailing list. GD praised the Localism presentation by the council's Mike Howes.</p> <p><b>4.2.2</b> and <b>4.2.3</b> LR had made the requested changes to the VCS Representatives' role descriptions.</p> <p><b>4.2.5</b> and <b>4.2.6</b> JB and AB had sent out the agreed documents in readiness for Forum elections.</p> <p><b>5.1</b> JB and DP had sent out new letters about council cuts and consultations.</p>		
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>9.1</b> RS recommended planning all future Forum meetings a full year ahead instead of just to the end of the calendar year.</p> <p><b>Action: Future Forum meetings to be planned</b></p> <p><b>9.2</b> SK drew attention to the Harrow's Heroes awards for volunteers, which were now open for nominations. Information was available to download from the council website: <a href="http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200213/harrow_s_heroes">http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200213/harrow_s_heroes</a> or in hard copy from <a href="mailto:Jasbinder.Baddhan@harrow.gov.uk">Jasbinder.Baddhan@harrow.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>9.2</b> GD thanked the outgoing Reps on everyone's behalf and asked for this to be recorded.</p>	<b>M Board</b>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Date of next meetings</b> to be held from 10am to 12pm at Committee Room 1 &amp; 2, Harrow Civic Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27th July 2015</li> <li>• 28th September 2015</li> <li>• 30th November 2015</li> </ul>		
	<b>Meeting closed at 11.55</b>		