

**Minutes of Harrow Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum
Ordinary Meeting held on 30 November 2015, 10:00 – 12:00 hrs
Committee Rooms 1&2, Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2XY**

Attendance:				
Attendee	abbreviation in minutes	Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Sarah Kersey	SK	Harrow's Happiness Campaign		Forum Chair
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve		Forum Vice-Chair Minute Taker
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative		VCS Representative
Samuel Genen	SG	Harrow Law Centre	HLC	
Fran Smith	FS	Kids Can Achieve (Westminster Society for people with learning difficulties)	KCA	
Ilias Kostalas		Kids Can Achieve (Westminster Society for people with learning difficulties)	KCA	
Elizabeth Hugo	EH	Aspergers Syndrome Access to Provision (A.S.A.P. Harrow)	ASAP	
Sania Sehbai	SS	Harrow Women's Centre	HWC	VCS Representative
Cabdul Qadir	CQ	Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations	HASVO	
Russell Sutcliffe	RS	Harrow Community Farm		
Michael Buttle		Harrow Woodcraft Folk		
Brian Whitehead		Welldon Activity Group		
Robert Pinkus	RP	Harrow Patient Participation Network	HPPN	
Nigel Davis		Harrow Patient Participation Network	HPPN	
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	Forum Vice-Chair
Shanti Chingen		Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association	HEA	
Vandana Y Joshi	VYJ	Brahmin Society North London	BSNL	

Invited guests in attendance:				
Sarah Crouch	SC	Harrow Council – Public Health		
Anne Whitehead	AW	Harrow Council – Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People		
Meghan Zinkewich-Peotti	MZP	Harrow Council - Housing		
Apologies:				
Jan Irwin	JI	Harrow Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum		
Tajinder Nijjar		Harrow Citizens Advice Bureau		
Eileen Martell		HOPE Harrow		
Geraldine Gower		The Disability Foundation		
Gilly Chowdry		Homestart Barnet (the Harrow Project)		
Sumantrai Dhirubhai Desai		Asian Foundation for Help		
Baldev Sharma		Harrow Anti Racist Alliance		
Varsha Dodhia		Harrow Interfaith Council		VCS Representative
Rachel Wright	RW	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative		
Carol Foyle	CF	Kids Can Achieve (Westminster Society for people with learning difficulties)	KCA	VCS Representative

Item	Minutes	Action by whom	Action by when
1.	<p>Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>1.1 SK facilitated a round of introductions and ascertained that no one was anticipating the need to declare any Conflicts of Interest in relation to the planned agenda. AB read out a list of apologies for absence received.</p>		
2.	<p>2.1 At SK's request, a minute of silence was observed in remembrance of Keith Chilvers of Radio Harrow, Forum VCS Representative, who had sadly died of bowel cancer on 08 November. SK outlined Keith's long history within Harrow's voluntary sector. His wish had been for any funeral tributes to be made as donations to Beating Bowel Cancer, via JustGiving at https://www.justgiving.com/KeithChilvers.</p>		
3.	<p>Agenda Review</p> <p>3.1 No one expressed any desire to change the order or content of the agenda.</p>		

<p>4.</p>	<p>Harrow Council’s Health & Wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>4.1 Following on from her discussions at the Forum meeting in July to input to Harrow’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and other work linking together all bodies concerned with health and wellbeing, SC distributed a newsletter featuring the resulting strategy (Draft Health & Wellbeing Strategy). Using the analogy of a bowl of fruit salad to illustrate the relationship involving the Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Healthwatch, the Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) and others, SC told of the research that had been undertaken into many factors, such as lifestyles, deprivation, green space, housing and employment. The four objectives – start well, live well, work well and age well – were not centred on specific groups or issues, but were based solely on needs. Five themes had emerged, such as building up communities and improving access to services. These could bring together many partners including education, police, employment, health and social services. SC gave the example of a mental health initiative by Harrow Public Health that had involved employment services. EH asked whether adults with autism would qualify under this initiative. SC said that the current scheme was for those with identified mental health needs only, but that eligibility might change in the future. AW pointed out that those with autism could be accepted if they also had other qualifying conditions. SS told of the barriers experienced by HWC when trying to connect up its family and language services with the Job Centre. Engaging with public agencies needed to become much quicker and less tedious for VCS organisations if partnerships were to be successful.</p> <p>4.2 SC asked attendees to reflect on the planned strategy and contact her with any queries or comments. She needed to know what actions were required to meet the objectives, in order to put forward an action plan for approval by the HWB next March. She was looking for suggestions about ways to collaborate on the priorities and fill any gaps in the plan. AW added that, although no extra resources were available from the council, encouraging the sharing of skills between organisations would lead to partnerships that were more equal.</p> <p>Action: Any ideas or comments about VCS engagement with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy to be discussed with SC, sarah.crouch@harrow.gov.uk.</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>March</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Health & Wellbeing VCS advisory sub-group</p> <p>5.1 After the appeal at the last meeting for candidates to put themselves forward for the role of VCS non-voting advisor to the HWB, several people had expressed an interest. SK, RP and JI and had met with AW as planned to discuss the envisaged responsibilities. It was considered too wide and onerous a brief for one volunteer to manage, so it had been decided not to proceed with electing an individual to the role. AW had accepted this and, although no conclusion had been reached, the suggestion was that an advisory sub-group of the Forum could be set up to communicate with the HWB, hopefully avoiding an overwhelming amount of paperwork for each member of the group to read. As Chair of the HWB, AW described it as an exciting board, including the CCG, Healthwatch, the Police etc., but without any funds. It met up to six times per year, plus extra developmental meetings. AW saw the potential for VCS involvement, in flagging up gaps and overlaps, working together for example with social services on issues such as children’s mental health or older people, and levering in funding from sources not available to the council.</p>		

	<p>5.3 RP, SS, FS, EH agreed to take part in the advisory sub-group. SK hoped that JI would join them. SC confirmed that she was also willing to participate.</p> <p>Action: Health & Wellbeing advisory sub-group to form, and recommend ways for the VCS to feed in to the HWB.</p>	<p>RP, SS, FS, EH, SC, JI + others</p>	<p>before next meeting</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People</p> <p>6.1 As Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People, AW explained that cuts to her department's budget meant it was currently able to provide services only to those with needs classified as critical or substantial. No funds were available to meet lesser needs. Throughout AW's long history in the public sector, the emphasis had always been on making savings. Soon however, council funding would be reduced to zero, driving councils to find ways of actually making money instead of just saving it. Already Harrow was successfully marketing its services, for instance its legal department and a lettings agency. Under Adults and Older People, 95 percent of service users now had personal budgets, which they could spend as they chose instead of having to accept day care and transport arrangements provided by the council. This presented VCS organisations with new income stream opportunities by offering activities and care. AW therefore urged members to become more commercial. SS contended that it was not easy for a charity to commercialise, but it could help its service users to save or make money, as in the case of HWC's stitching courses for women. AW could see ways to expand such courses to generate income for the organisation itself.</p> <p>6.2 SG asked for details of the budget cut figures. AW replied that Adult Social Services had been reduced by £18m, from £54m to £36m. SC confirmed that Public Health's budget had also been reduced, to £9m, so it could focus only on essentials like sexual health, substance misuse and smoking. Referring to a recent inquest at which Harrow's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) had been criticised, SG queried how it was possible to comply with the Care Act whilst decreasing expenditure by a third at a time of increasing needs. AW admitted that, although the council would continue to meet its statutory obligations, it would not really be to a satisfactory level. There was no wriggle room to obtain more money as long as Harrow's government grant remained so unfair at £159 per person below the London average. The answer was not an extra payment, but a more realistic calculation for Harrow's settlement from the government. Meanwhile, Harrow's council budget was the most economically managed in the whole of West London. Harrow CCG, which funded CAMHS, was critically under resourced too. Even recently introduced changes allowing councils to retain 100 percent of their business rates would not help Harrow because so many major companies were leaving the borough.</p> <p>6.3 RS wondered to what extent the Planning Department was involved in helping to meet public health outcomes. For example, the mushrooming of betting shops in deprived areas affected poverty levels, and fast food outlets being permitted close to high schools were contributing to unhealthy eating. SC pointed to efforts being made to work with fast food chains near schools, and welcomed the regeneration of the Grange Farm estate where poor housing was leading to poor health. However, RS saw no commercial sense in building more homes to house more people at a loss of £159 each against the government grant, with no corresponding increase in jobs or income, thereby increasing</p>		

	<p>dependency on the council. AW insisted the new homes would ease existing overcrowding.</p> <p>6.4 RP praised Harrow CCG's relationship with a historically creative VCS, but admitted that it did not deliver results because its mindset did not match that of voluntary sector groups. It had come to feel like a battle in which grassroots enthusiasm could be lost very quickly through cheap talk with no action. There had been no investment in HPPN's volunteers who had saved a lot of public money. Communications had not been fast enough or professional enough, and this would have to change relationships with the VCS were to be more effective.</p>		
<p>7.</p>	<p>Member Networking</p> <p>7.1 During the networking period, attendees were encouraged to get to know their fellow members and share their thoughts on how their organisations could engage with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy discussed.</p>		
<p>8.</p>	<p>VCS Representatives' Meeting with Harrow Council CEO and Leader</p> <p>8.1 SK explained that the council's CEO, Michael Lockwood, had arranged to meet with the Forum's VCS Representatives on 03 December, but that his office had now cancelled this meeting. The Forum's Management Board had already resolved to set the agenda of these meetings, and had submitted two items for discussion. One was to request the council's plans for future engagement with the VCS, including a detailed timetable for all relevant upcoming consultations. The other was a call for a clearer map showing information about processes for the sector's involvement in health and wellbeing matters. It was not known what the CEO and Leader would add to the agenda. They were expected to reschedule the meeting for January. If Forum members wished to raise issues to be taken up with the council, they should feed them to the VCS Representatives via the Reps' Surgery sessions, which were bookable via the Forum's webpage at http://bit.ly/HVCSFS or by calling 020 8861 5894.</p>		
<p>9.</p>	<p>Forum Plan for 2016</p> <p>9.1 SK circulated a sheet of planned Forum meetings from January to May 2016, at varied times and venues with appropriate members' information stalls during the networking sessions (Meeting Plan). In the light of increasing homelessness, Housing & Homelessness would be the theme for 26 January. St Mungo's Broadway, Firm Foundation, Street Pastors and housing associations would be invited, and the council's Alex Dewsnap had been asked to speak about Harrow's plan for accommodating Syrian Refugees. In March the planned focus was Disability & Carers, with Harrow Association of Disabled People, the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality & Wellbeing plus information from Harrow Carers and Healthwatch. In May, the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Crime & Community Safety could be approached to address an Environment & Regeneration theme.</p> <p>9.2 SK appealed for interest in holding stalls and ideas towards other themes for the future, such as immigration and community assets. AB identified funding as a key topic, whether as a meeting theme or something that needed to be discussed outside of regular Forum meetings. RS foresaw that groups' costs for renting council premises would increase. There was support for GD's</p>		

	<p>suggestion to invite the Portfolio Holder for Finance. RS noted that topics for sports and leisure groups were missing from the plan.</p> <p>9.3 EH admitted a lack of awareness about the work of other Harrow charities. She suggested a ‘speed dating’ kind of event for members to get a clearer idea of each other’s activities and create a greater sense of identity for the Forum. RP asked whether a ‘who’s who’ of Harrow’s VCS was available. SK said that the list of Forum members on its website was a starting point, and flagged up VAHC and Harrow Community Network’s database (https://www.harrowcn.org.uk) as good sources of information on organisations, and that Mind in Harrow also maintained an online directory of groups. News of any further useful directories could be sent to AB for distribution with the minutes. SG wanted to know if any groups specifically represented refugees, and was pointed to Harrow Refugee Forum and Harrow Equalities Centre.</p> <p>Action: ‘Speed dating’ session to be arranged for Forum members to understand more about each other’s organisations.</p>	EH	next meeting
10.	<p>Election of new Chair</p> <p>10.1 SK explained that she was resigning as Chair of the Forum as she was taking up a new job and moving to Wales. Current VCS Representative CF had been nominated to replace SK as Chair. SK called for further nominations. There were none so SK asked if all present we happy for CF to take over as Chair.</p> <p>Agreed: CF to take on the role of Forum Chair until the next elections.</p>		
11.	<p>Membership Applications</p> <p>11.1 AB distributed a list of 24 new a applications for membership received since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrow Interfaith Council <i>represented by</i> Varsha Dodhia • Namaste Care CIC <i>represented by</i> Ratan Hirani • Radiate Harrow CIC <i>represented by</i> Pritha Mukherjee • Aspergers Syndrome Access to Provision <i>represented by</i> Elizabeth Hugo • Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations <i>represented by</i> Cabdul Qadir Mohamed • Age UK Harrow <i>represented by</i> Avani Modasia • Harrow Domestic and Sexual Violence Forum <i>represented by</i> Jan Irwin • Welldon Activity Group <i>represented by</i> Brian Whitehead • Relate London North West <i>represented by</i> I Ewan Malcolm • Ignite Trust <i>represented by</i> Dan Burke • Afghan Association Paiwand <i>represented by</i> Ahmad Farid Mall • Harrow Nature Conservation Forum <i>represented by</i> Stephen Bolsover • St Luke’s Hospice (Harrow & Brent) Ltd. <i>represented by</i> Robin Webb • Harrow Offering Parents Encouragement (HOPE Harrow) <i>represented by</i> Eileen Martell • The Scouts Association <i>represented by</i> Keith Savage • 10th Pinner Brownies <i>represented by</i> Nicky Jayson • North Harrow Community Library <i>represented by</i> Kamal Shah • Bereavement Care <i>represented by</i> David Griffiths 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Disability Foundation <i>represented by</i> Mary Lauder • Middlesex Tamil Academy <i>represented by</i> Sugirthakala Gobiratnam • Harrow Patient Participation Network <i>represented by</i> Robert Pinkus • Harrow Woodcraft Folk <i>represented by</i> Mick Buttle • Mosaic LGBT Youth Centre <i>represented by</i> Lucasz Konieczka • Asian Foundation for Help <i>represented by</i> Sumantra Desai <p>Agreed: All new applications received to be accepted as members.</p> <p>11.2 This brought the total number of signed up members to 39, which was considered to be a very good level of support in such a short time.</p>		
<p>12.</p>	<p>Forum Members' Offers and Wants</p> <p>12.1 SS offered an information session about the work of HWC. SK asked her to advise the Forum of the date and details of the session when available. SS also offered meeting space on behalf of the Harrow branch of Metro Bank.</p> <p>12.2 AB drew attention to a request from regular Forum attendee Stuart Dashwood who was looking for a job.</p> <p>12.3 GD appealed for volunteer drivers for HCT, either using their own vehicles or HCT's minibuses, for which training could be provided.</p> <p>12.4 JM asked everyone to support the future of Harrow Arts Centre. HEA's petition to keep it open had now reached 6,000 signatures. In January the council was due to decide on the latest plans put forward by Cultura London.</p> <p>12.5 On behalf of the Friends of Headstone Manor Recreation Ground, RS requested volunteers to help plant an excess of donated spring bulbs.</p> <p>12.6 FS confirmed that KCA were planning to go ahead with the long awaited networking and community information event in January. She would make the details available to the Forum when known.</p> <p>12.7 VYJ announced BSNL provided activities for elders, including speakers and exercise classes for older people.</p> <p>12.8 EH said that ASAP needed a hot desking facility twice a week for a couple of hours. AB suggested trying the Carramea Community Resource Centre. ASAP was able to provide charities with free training about autism.</p> <p>12.9 SK reminded members that their offers and wants could be posted on the Forum website for all to see and share, at http://harrowvcsforum.org.uk/questions-offers-wants.</p>		
<p>13.</p>	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2015</p> <p>13.1 Accuracy – Item 3.3, JM corrected the sentence to read that Healthwatch was a source of information on health and social care services. At item 8.2, AB had submitted all seven listed membership applications for approval, not just five as stated. With these corrections, the minutes were approved.</p>		

	<p>13.2 Matters Arising – Item 4.1, SK was expecting Frank Anti from Harrow Equalities Centre (HEC), Alex da Costa from Harrow Refugee Forum and the council’s Alex Dewsnap to contribute to the Forum meeting in January.</p>		
<p>14.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>14.1 AB advised that he would be imminently sending out the monthly newsletter from Harrow Community Action (HCA), and details of hate crime awareness training being organised by VAHC in conjunction with HEC. He hoped in due course to be able to separate the HCA mailing list from the one used by the Forum.</p> <p>14.2 AB confirmed that Radio Harrow had been asked to appoint an alternative representative to the Forum to fill the vacancy left by Keith Chilvers’ passing. If their delegate was not prepared to serve on the Management Board as a VCS Representative, then nominations would be invited from members to fill the VCS Representative role.</p> <p>14.3 GD drew attention to the next meeting of the council’s Parks Forum on 16 December at 7.00pm at the Civic Centre. Recently set up to bring together park user and friends’ groups, it would be discussing Harrow’s proposed Events Policy, which was considered by many community groups to be excessively commercial and likely to discourage community events due to high costs and restrictions. LR would have preferred to see any such grouping formed as a sub-group of the VCS Forum rather than under the control of the council. The Council Leader had told her that he wished community groups concerned with the environment, open spaces, sports and leisure activities to be kept away from the VCS Forum, but members present considered this unreasonable when it was constituted to represent the whole of the sector. GD and LR encouraged relevant organisations to attend the Parks Forum meeting and make their views known. GD felt sure that the badly thought out Events Policy would be returned to the drawing board in the New Year, when councillors would realise that it had been hurriedly put together by officers intent on maximising council revenues with no understanding of the voluntary sector’s use of public spaces. He and LR urged all groups to read the proposals and feed their responses into the consultation at http://harrow-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/traffic_and_parking/draft_events_policy/events_in_harrow_policy.</p> <p>14.4 On behalf of all members and the whole sector, GD led praise for SK’s many years of effort for the VCS in Harrow. Members joined him in thanking her for her guidance, for being instrumental in constituting the Forum and for chairing it so effectively. She would be much missed. Well done and good luck!</p>		
<p>15.</p>	<p>Dates of future meetings</p> <p>15.1 The next meeting would be on Tuesday 26^h January 2015 from 12.30 to 2.30pm at the Lodge, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA1 4HZ.</p>		
	<p>Meeting closed at 12.15</p>		

Glossary

CCG	<p>NHS Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the GP-led organisation responsible for planning and buying (commissioning) many of the health services needed by the people who live in Harrow. It is made up of all 34 GP practices in the borough and its vision is to work in partnership to ensure local residents receive high quality, modern, sustainable, needs led and cost effective care within the financial budgets available. Its overarching purpose is to improve the health and wellbeing of the local residents of Harrow by commissioning a sustainable model of high quality health care within the resources available.</p> <p>www.harrowccg.nhs.uk/about-harrow-ccg</p>
Healthwatch	<p>Healthwatch is the new consumer champion for health and social care in England. There are 152 Local Healthwatch organisations in England. Healthwatch Harrow was set up by Harrow in Business to make sure you can influence and challenge health and social care services in Harrow. Healthwatch Harrow will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and signposting to help people choose and access services. • Signpost people to independent complaints advocacy so that people can, if they need to, complain about services. • Provide information about people's views and experiences of health and social care to make sure they are taken in to consideration when services are planned and delivered. <p>Its objective is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give children, young people and adults a powerful voice • ensure their collective views and experiences are heard by those who run, plan and regulate health and social care services. <p>http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/100010/health_and_social_care/812/healthwatch_harrow www.healthwatchharrow.co.uk</p>
HWB	<p>Harrow's Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) is a multi-agency group which brings together the Council, NHS Commissioners, GP Commissioners and the voluntary sector to focus on improving the health of Harrow residents. Its purpose is to provide leadership and direction across agencies that deliver services to improve the health and wellbeing of the residents in Harrow. Chaired by the Leader of Harrow Council, it is the executive body responsible for agreeing what the needs of the local population are, promoting integration and supporting alignment and joint commissioning.</p> <p>www.harrow.gov.uk/info/100010/health_and_social_care/499/health_and_wellbeing_board</p>
JSNA	<p>The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a strategic set of documents that contains a range of information for commissioners, planners and senior managers across statutory and partner organisations. These documents work as a tool to identify the health, wellbeing needs and inequalities of the local population. These elements are used as a format to improve current and future service developments. It is a national government requirement that local authorities and CCGs work in conjunction with each other and with stakeholders to establish the needs of the local community.</p> <p>www.harrow.gov.uk/info/100010/health_and_social_care/130/harrow_s_joint_strategic_needs_assessment</p>