

**Minutes of Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum meeting
Held on 16th March 2014 at 10am-12pm
Venue: Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, Committee Rooms 1&2**

Attendance:				
Member	Abbreviated in minutes	Member Organisation	Abbreviated in minutes	Forum Role
Steve Porter	SP	Third Sector Potential and Capable Communities		Forum Chair & Voluntary & Community Sector Representative
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow	VAH	
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve		
John Hunter	JH	Crossroads Care Harrow		
Amel Rahmoune	AR	Capable Communities		
Carmel Brown	CB	Relate North West London		
Cabdul Qadir	CQ	Somali Education and Cultural Association and Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations	SECA & HASVO	
Eileen Martell	EM	Harrow Offering Parents Encouragement	HOPE	
Sarah Kersey	SK	Voluntary Action Harrow	VAH	Voluntary & Community Sector Representative & Meeting Minute Taker
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport		
Leonie Hanson	LH	Home-Start Barnet		
Sania Sehbai	SS	Harrow Women's Centre		
Shaista Jabeen	SJ	Harrow Women's Centre		
Veena Banerji	VB	Harrow Community Transport		
Varsha Dodhia	VD	Harrow Interfaith Council		

Apologies:		
Member	Member Organisation	Forum Role
Deven Pillay	Harrow Mencap	VCS Representative
Avani Modasia	AGE UK Harrow	VCS Representative
Jan Irwin	Harrow Women's Centre	
Pamela Fitzpatrick	Harrow Law Centre	

Item	Minutes	Action By Whom	Action by When
1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>1.1 Members in attendance introduced themselves and new members were welcomed.</p> <p>1.2 SP requested that item number 4 on the agenda for the meeting be moved to become item number 6. Members agreed to move the item.</p>		
2.	<p>Approval of Minutes for VCS Forum meeting on the 18th November 2013</p> <p>2.1 LR asked why there were no attendees listed on the minutes. SP answered that the attendees list was lost and that he apologises to the forum for this. SP informed members that Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH) would be taking on the task of minute taking from now.</p> <p><i>Action: Members agreed that the minute taker must ensure that a clear record of attendance must be collected and included in the minutes.</i></p> <p>2.2 Members agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting held on the 18th of November 2013.</p>	VAH	At Forum meetings
3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>3.1 On Item 3 (Debate on the CVS) SP said that this would be covered under the debate on constituting the forum.</p> <p>3.2 On Item 4 (Premises) SP updated the meeting that Reps did have a meeting with the council leader. SP said that Third Sector premises and high impact volunteering will be discussed at the Chief</p>		

	<p>Executives meeting.</p> <p>3.3 JH asked what is high impact volunteering. SP answered saying this is volunteering needs that are wider than just individual organisations.</p> <p>3.4 SP went on to explained the problems with the Do-it database which Volunteer Centres use for volunteer brokerage. SP said that there is a website being specifically purpose built for volunteering in Harrow. EM asked how this is being developed. SP explained that Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH) has been developing a directory of voluntary and community groups in Harrow and this area for advertising volunteering opportunities would be an additional development. AB explained further that the directory was called Harrow Community Network (HCN) and the information in the directory is information which is already in the public domain and groups will have the opportunity to get a login and update their own organisation's information. He also said that the website was currently in a beta stage which meant people could view the site while it is still in development. AB gave the website address www.harrowcn.org.uk for groups to look at the directory. SK explained that the directory has been in development over the past year and that there had been opportunities such as at the launch of the Third Sector Strategy and at the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum in November 2013 for people to try the system and give feedback and people can continue to give feedback. JH asked who will be moderating the directory. SK said VAH would moderate it.</p> <p>3.5 SP said that there was also a third sector support services website being developed also. CB commented it would be helpful if there was a minutes archive for the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum on the new website.</p>		
<p>4.</p>	<p>Information Items</p> <p><u>4.1 Harrow Third Sector Support Services</u></p> <p>SP explained the background to this item saying Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS) had ran support services for voluntary and community groups but closed due to financial irregularities in 2011. Harrow Council contracted neighbouring Councils for Voluntary Sector (CVS); Hillingdon Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS), Ealing Council for Voluntary Services ((ECVS) and Community and Voluntary Sector Association Hammersmith & Fulham (CAVSA) to provide interim support services. There was a number of groups from within the forum who wanted to see the contract brought back into Harrow. This led to the development of a consortium of local organisations which has become a Community Interest Company (CIC) to be able to bid for public sector contracts. This CIC is called Harrow Community Action (HCA). In 2013 there was a large</p>		

<p>consultation of the Voluntary and Community Sector about the support services they needed. HCA bid for Harrow Council's Harrow Third Sector Services tender and won the tender. Three HCA consortium members applied within HCA to be involved in the delivery of the tender and all are now delivering the contract for Third Sector Support Services. Capable Communities, Voluntary Action Harrow and Big Society Funding are all delivering the Third Sector Support Services contract. Services include; capacity building service, fundraising support, peer to peer support, monthly training sessions, coordination of the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum, HCA and Harrow Community Network and volunteer brokerage. There is a requirement in the contract to bring £1 million worth of funding into the borough. There will be a funding cafe, bid writing help, SP will provide 24 half days to help individual groups with funding applications.</p> <p>4.1.1 JH asked about monitoring and conditions for the £75k the council has given to HCA. SP said that there are many outcomes and that he is more than happy to make this available to people.</p> <p>4.1.2 SP explained that volunteering was not included in the tender and that this is not currently being paid for by the Harrow Council tender but there is an aim by HCA to develop a Volunteer Centre in the borough. EM asked if some of the £1 million could be used to develop a Volunteer Centre. SP said that it would be used to develop a Volunteer Centre.</p> <p>4.1.3 VB asked for clarification that if Harrow Community Transport wanted to recruit volunteers should they contact SP. SP confirmed organisations who are seeking to recruit volunteers should contact SP at Capable Communities.</p> <p><u>4.2 Hardship Fund Grant Programme</u> SP said that Harrow Council is asking VCS groups to apply to the hardship fund if they have community projects for people who need to understand the welfare reforms or need help accessing services. For example need help with childcare costs or advocacy. Information sessions will be held at the Harrow Civic Centre on the 18th of March from 6-7pm and 21st of March from 3.30pm-5pm. The deadline for the grant applications is the 24th April at 12pm.</p> <p>4.2.1 JH said funding should go directly to people in need.</p> <p><u>4.3 Small Grants Appeal Panel</u> SP said that Harrow Council had requested for an advisor to the small grants appeals panel. The panel will meet on the 8th of April at 2pm. VD said that she was the advisor last year and she thought the process was well done. LR asked what the advisor's role is and can they say anything. SP said that the role is to observe the process and</p>	<p>VD</p>	<p>8th April</p>
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	<p>at the end of the meeting the Council will ask if the process was fair. SP said when he did it a few years ago he said he didn't think it was fair and told the council why at the meeting.</p> <p>Action: Forum members in attendance nominated VD to attend Small Grants Appeals Panel as the VCS Advisor.</p> <p>4.3.1 SP said that an issue has also been raised with reps about Outcomes Based Grants being paid late, in some cases late by a quarter. He said reps would like to find out from other groups if they are experiencing the same problem. EM said HOPE has struggled with late payments from the council for some time. SP said that he has contacted Kashmir and she had explained the process internally. SP said he told Kashmir that there is a need for the council to be clear about the process so organisations can plan for delays. SP ask the forum members in attendance if reps could go back to the Council with these issues and say that it is against the Compact Agreement. Members in attendance agreed.</p> <p>Action: Reps to raise delays in payments of grant installments as a Compact complaint and report back to Forum.</p> <p>Action: All forum members to inform reps if they are having difficulties with Harrow Council grants installment payments.</p>	<p>VCS Reps</p> <p>Forum Members</p>	<p>2014</p> <p>Next VCS Forum Meeting</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>John Lyons Trust</p> <p>5.1 SP explained John Lyons Trust (JLT) has been trying to give money to groups in Harrow. They are currently looking to give £30k to provide infrastructure support to the sector to provide capacity building support to help development of youth organisations. He explained that JLT won't give money to a Community Interest Company which HCA is. They will only give money to a registered charity due to their own grant-making conditions.</p>		
<p>6.</p>	<p>Constituting the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum</p> <p>6.1 SK distributed to members in attendance a one page document with pros and cons of constituting the forum. She explained that the forum has been a reference group set up to feed into the Harrow Strategic Partnership which has now disbanded, a constitution could be the voice of the sector stronger and formally connect other forums such as the Advocacy Forum and the new Advice Forum, that with a constitution the forum could be eligible to apply for funding to develop the forum to be an effective voice for the voluntary sector but that constituting would also need more commitment of time from members to make it successful, which is difficult in current climate.</p> <p>6.2 SP asked members for their views on whether the forum should</p>		

	<p>be constituted or not. VD said that we need a structure to support ourselves and gave an example of a VCS network in Barnet. JH said unless we have a way in to the public sector groups and committees we don't have influence. JH said Deven Pillay attends the Health and Wellbeing Board on behalf of the forum but the forum doesn't get a report back from him. SS said there is a need for support but also good intentions and expertise can make the forum work. CB said she felt strongly that a network of people is important and a constitution could be a good thing and would be an advantage if funding could be found to pay someone to develop the forum. GD said if we don't constitute then the Voluntary Sector will be eroded further and we might as well pack up and go home if we don't constitute. AR said it needs to be organised well. LR said that there are two kinds of governance documents, a Terms of Reference which the forum has in the form of the objectives from the HSP and she felt that this group needs a constitution. VD said that a forum is a loose name and that a network is stronger. CQ said he supports the organisation of the forum.</p> <p>6.3 SP said currently in Harrow we have HCA as a CIC. Reps engaged in talking to politicians and senior officers. JLT wants to give money to a registered charity. LR said that she didn't think the forum should be incorporated. SK said people might not know the difference between incorporated charity and unincorporated association. CB ask can't the forum be part of HCA. SP said that at HCA there had been lengthy discussion about this and that HCA directors felt that the forum should lead itself. CB said invite people to be trustees, people take the role of trustees more seriously different to just turning up to the forum as a member.</p> <p>6.4 JH brought up the issue of insurance and said this needed to be considered.</p> <p>6.5 SK suggested a working group of forum members could be created to work on developing a constitution for the forum. VD said a working group is a good idea. SP said that there seems to be consensus that the forum should be constituted but in what form? SK said this could be a job for the working group to look at. LR said a working group being organised is ok but before this happens the minutes and pros and cons document should be distributed to those on the forum mailing list so we can get some agreement with existing members to take this forward. Members in attendance agreed with this suggestion.</p> <p>Action: An email to be sent to current members of the forum to invite them to send their thoughts on constituting the forum and if members responding are in favour then members should be invited to join a constitution working group.</p>	SK	Next HCA Newsletter
7.	Any Other Business (AOB)		

	<p>7.1 JH referred back to SK mentioning that there is an Advocacy Forum (para 6.1) being held but how come not every organisation providing advocacy services is invited. VD agreed this is a problem. SK suggested the chair of the Advocacy Forum be invited to the next VCS Forum to give information update.</p> <p>Action: Advocacy Forum to be invited to come to present to the June VCS Forum.</p>	SP	
8.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>2nd June 2014 10am - 12.00pm at the Civic Centre Committee Rooms 1&2</p> <p>Dates, times and venue for Voluntary and Community Sector Forum Meetings for 2014:</p> <p>28th July 2014 10am - 12.00pm at the Civic Centre Committee Rooms 1&2 15th September 10am - 12.00pm at the Civic Centre Committee Rooms 1&2 24th November 10am - 12.00pm at the Civic Centre Committee Rooms 1&2</p>		
9.	<p>Meeting closed at 12.25 pm</p>		