

**Minutes of Harrow Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum  
Ordinary Meeting held on 26 January 2016, 12:30 – 2:30 pm  
The Lodge, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA1 4HZ**

<b>Attendance:</b>				
<b>Attendee</b>	abbreviation in minutes	<b>Organisation</b>	abbreviation in minutes	<b>Forum Role</b>
Carol Foyle	CF	Kids Can Achieve (Westminster Society for people with learning difficulties)	KCA	Forum Chair and VCS Representative
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve		Forum Vice-Chair Minute Taker
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	VCS Representative
Varsha Dodhia		Harrow Interfaith Council		VCS Representative
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	Forum Vice-Chair
Sania Sehbai	SS	Harrow Women's Centre	HWC	VCS Representative
Elizabeth Hugo	EH	Aspergers Syndrome Access to Provision (A.S.A.P. Harrow)	ASAP	
Ilias Kostalas		Kids Can Achieve (Westminster Society for people with learning difficulties)	KCA	
Brian Whitehead	BW	Welldon Activity Group		
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association		
Jan Irwin	JI	Harrow Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum		
Eileen Martell	EM	HOPE Harrow	HOPE	
Julian Saunders	JS	FirmFoundation		
Fakhira Khan		Millan Support Group		
Quinton Stowell		Harrow Street Pastors		
Carol Grant	CG	Harrow Street Pastors		
Steve Bolsover		Harrow Nature Conservation Forum		
David Williams	DW	Ignite Trust		
Dan Burke	DB	Ignite Trust		
Leonie Hanson	LH	Home-Start Barnet, the Harrow Project	HSHP	

Lukasz Konieczka		Mosaic LGBT Youth Centre		
Deven Pillay	DP	Harrow Mencap		
Vigya Nahata	VN	Harrow Women's Centre	HWC	
Yvette Brown		Harrow Foodbank		
Liz Dann		Harrow Law Centre		
Pratima Shah		Harrow Equalities Centre		
Pushpa Hargovan		Harrow Shopmobility		
Thanuja Pereira	TP	South Harrow Christian Fellowship	SHCF	

**Invited guests in attendance:**

Glen Hearnden	GH	Harrow Council – Portfolio Holder for Housing		
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**Apologies:**

Robert Pinkus		Harrow Patient Participation Network		
Mary Lauder		The Disability Foundation		
Marie Dennehy		No Second Night Out (Broadway Homelessness & Support)		
Tajinder Nijjar		Harrow Citizens Advice Bureau		
Rina Pattani		Arthritis Care		
Siva Sivapalan		The Tamil Association of Brent		
Kamal Shah		North Harrow Community Library		
Robin Webb		St Luke's Hospice		
Pritha Mukherjee		Radiate Harrow CIC		
Meghan Zinkewich-Peotti		Harrow Council		
Russell Sutcliffe		Harrow Community Farm		
David Griffiths		Bereavement Care		

Item	Minutes	Action by whom	Action by when
1.	<p><b>Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</b></p> <p>1.1 After the welcome and introductions, AB read out the list of apologies received.</p>		

	<p><b>1.2</b> CF relayed the sad news of Vera Murray-Fowler's death. Vera's many years of devotion to Harrow's voluntary sector, especially Harrow Shopmobility, were remembered by observing one minute's silence.</p> <p><b>1.3</b> No Conflicts of Interest were anticipated in relation to the agenda topics. CF called for participants to make it clear if they wished for a comment not to be minuted.</p>		
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Agenda Review</b></p> <p><b>2.1</b> CF established that all were happy with the content and sequence of the agenda.</p>		
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Housing &amp; Homelessness – Julian Saunders, FirmFoundation</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b> The meeting's main theme began with a presentation by JS. He outlined <a href="#">FirmFoundation's</a> six year history, during which it had worked with many voluntary and statutory bodies to provide a range of services for single homeless adults in Harrow, including its winter night shelter where meals were provided by volunteers. Official figures from <a href="#">CHAIN</a> (the Combined Homelessness and Information Network from St Mungo's Broadway) showed that the number of rough sleepers in Harrow had risen from six to 45 between 2009 and 2015, not including sofa-surfers etc. Eighty per cent were male. The night shelter had ten beds and had dealt with 47 referrals in 2014-15. Priority was given to those from Harrow and most were UK nationals. A drop-in service, despite not being advertised, had interviewed 105 homeless people between April and November 2015. The supported housing project at Hope Place enabled service users to move on.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> The growing homeless population was putting added pressure on Harrow's services, with an average cost to the borough of £26,000 per homeless person. For example, according to <a href="#">Homeless Link</a>, £147 was the average cost of an Accident and Emergency visit, used by 40 per cent of homeless people over a six month period. As Chair of Harrow's Single Homelessness Forum (SHF), JS stressed the massive task ahead to reduce numbers. Other VCS organisations could help by supplying volunteers or making referrals.</p> <p><b>Action: JS's <a href="#">presentation [.ppt]</a> and contact details (<a href="mailto:js@firmfoundation.org.uk">js@firmfoundation.org.uk</a>) to be uploaded to the Forum website.</b></p>	<b>JS, AB</b>	<b>with minutes</b>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Housing, Homelessness, Syrian Refugees - Glen Hearnden, Harrow Council</b></p> <p><b>4.1</b> GH also sat on the SHF. His Portfolio covered the council's statutory obligations, which were becoming increasingly difficult. A thousand families were in temporary accommodation, including 300 in bed and breakfast. This consigned them to nomadic lifestyles and was so expensive it might bankrupt the council. Regeneration efforts were not delivering enough social housing for those who could not afford to buy or rent the homes being built. Harrow's council housing stock was exceptionally small, with no capacity for crisis. Its housing department was one of only two boroughs whose borrowing had been capped under government policies, leaving it unable to replace properties lost under the Right to Buy scheme. Harrow incomes were low, whilst rents in the private sector were overheating. The council was looking at options including</p>		

	<p>entering the private lettings market itself, planning to purchase 100 existing properties, building a further 100 in available infill sites, using modular constructions and potentially making council land available for up to 1000 more homes. GH had been trying to negotiate a better deal for Harrow with the Housing Minister, Brandon Lewis.</p> <p><b>4.2</b> CG questioned how any expected influx of Syrian refugees would affect the situation, recognising Harrow’s history of welcoming newcomers from overseas. VD gave the example of Ugandan Asians. GH said that Harrow was going through the process of determining the number of Syrians to be accepted under the national quota, which would only add to the pressure.</p>		
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Housing &amp; Homelessness Discussion</b></p> <p><b>5.1</b> DP asked about the diversity of FirmFoundation’s service users. JS said that about ten per cent had mental health, alcohol or drug dependency issues, which increased the risk of recurring homelessness and the need for support workers. There was quite a spread of diversity. Those with no recourse to public funds were most often from Eastern Europe, with some from Somalia.</p> <p><b>5.2</b> VD asked if there was any link between the homeless and GPs. JS confirmed that homeless people could use any GP, and that FirmFoundation had a relationship with St Peter’s Medical Centre in West Harrow.</p> <p><b>5.3</b> In view of the links between housing and health, VD wondered how the VCS could best help the situation. GH initially said the sector could do nothing until new sites were ready and people were settled in new homes, although there was an educational role to play in speaking up for new developments where there was local opposition against building, for example on sites like car parks. DP emphasised the sector’s desire to share a strategic, partnership approach to this single issue that had so many impacts on its service users. SS pointed to the potential emotional support offered by organisations such as HWC, if only more information could be made available about people’s options. DB and DW were thinking of the effects on ‘families’, however they were defined, and the underlying feelings of isolation. JI highlighted the real life stories about clients’ needs that the VCS could bring to negotiations.</p> <p><b>5.4</b> GH then saw some extra advantages in welcoming VCS efforts. DP suggested the council engage with religious organisations, some of which might have assets that could be used, and also with local entrepreneurs. GH spoke of potentially creative ways to use bonds. He had to admit that the council was not currently making the best use of what the VCS could offer.</p> <p><b>5.5</b> LR drew attention to a <a href="#">Homelessness Inquiry</a> by the Communities and Local Government Committee, on which sat Harrow East MP, Bob Blackman, who JS said had found supportive of the Harrow Night Shelter. The deadline for submissions to the inquiry was 08 February. JS was happy to co-ordinate a response from local VCS groups.</p> <p><b>Action: Facts, figures and stories for input to the CLG Committee’s Homelessness Inquiry to be sent to <a href="mailto:js@firmfoundation.org.uk">js@firmfoundation.org.uk</a> for collation and submission.</b></p>	<p><b>JS and all interested parties</b></p>	



	7.5 CF reported that the Board was continuing to work on its own policies and procedures, and was progressing plans to open a bank account.		
8.	<p><b>Health &amp; Wellbeing Advisory Sub-group</b></p> <p>8.1 VD and SS had been in touch with members of the newly formed group. JI said she had not meant to be part of it. DP was willing to join it. Describing the new Sustainability and Transformation Plan, for the Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health, as place-based, VD said it was due to be finalised by June. In west London, where boroughs overlapped, it was not so easy to do as in some more distinct authorities. It would impact on the whole VCS, including parks groups and others not primarily concerned with health. DP was looking for ways to adapt and restructure it by feeding VCS priorities into the agenda. VD and SS wished to encourage co-design and offer the sector's help. A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was being led by the council's Sarah Crouch. CF called for measures to be joined up. She spotted a recurring theme in that the council and others were missing a trick in not more fully involving the VCS.</p> <p><b>Action: Information and ideas on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan to be sent to VD or SS.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Definitive dates and actions to be communicated to members.</b></p>	All  VD	by June  when known
9.	<p><b>Third Sector Strategy Update</b></p> <p>9.1 AB confirmed that the current <a href="#">strategy</a> was due to expire this year. VD explained that it had been the product of a working party led by Steve Porter, after the demise of Harrow Association of Voluntary Services had left Harrow without an infrastructure organisation. DP added that it had been endorsed by the council. AB felt it important to update the strategy, now that the VCS infrastructure included the Forum, HCA, VAHC, TSP, Capable Communities and the Young Harrow Foundation. He favoured conducting a joint survey exercise by email. DP saw that the strategy update should only be undertaken in conjunction with the Voluntary Sector Review, as the two could not be considered in isolation. CF recommended more in depth coverage at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>Action: Update of the Third Sector Strategy to be discussed with Cllr BK.</b></p>	CF	before next meeting
10.	<p><b>VCS Forum Representative</b></p> <p>10.1 AB advised, in the absence of offers to fill the VCS Representative vacancy, nominations would remain open. TP expressed an interest, for SHCF.</p> <p><b>Action: VCS Representative nomination form to be sent to AB.</b></p>	TP	as soon as possible
11.	<p><b>Membership Applications</b></p> <p>11.1 AB had received four new applications for Forum membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harrow Association of Disabled People <i>represented by</i> Bill Phillips</li> <li>• Flash Musicals <i>represented by</i> Terry Revill</li> <li>• South Harrow Christian Fellowship <i>represented by</i> Thanuja Pereira</li> <li>• The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust <i>represented by</i> Ellis Banfield</li> </ul>		

	<p><b>11.2</b> The first three were accepted without question, but it was suspected that the RNOH NHS Trust was a public sector body like any other NHS Trust. AB asserted that all membership criteria had apparently been met on its application, as it was the charitable arm that used volunteers.</p> <p><b>Agreed: Three new members to be accepted.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Eligibility of RNOH NHS Trust to be investigated.</b></p> <p><b>11.3</b> AB announced that Radio Harrow had appointed Charles Biggie as its new nominated representative.</p>	Management Board	before next meeting
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Forum Members' Offers and Wants</b></p> <p><b>12.1</b> LH distributed details of a job vacancy for a senior co-ordinator at HSHP.</p> <p><b>12.2</b> EM distributed details of HOPE's services and workshops.</p> <p><b>12.3</b> AB asked for links to members' offers and wants to be sent to him.</p>		
<b>13.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2015</b></p> <p><b>13.1 Accuracy</b> – The minutes were agreed as a true record.</p>		
<b>14.</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>14.1</b> – Item 9.2. The meeting heard that EH had made some progress towards arranging the 'speed dating' session, possibly to be held for half an hour immediately prior to the next meeting.</p> <p><b>Action: Details to be circulated via AB when firm.</b></p>	EH, AB	before next meeting
<b>15.</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>15.1</b> CF was sorry the joint community event at KCA, envisaged last year, had been delayed due to her absence. The idea was to be revisited and might possibly take place around a Forum meeting on a Sunday in June. SS suggested that VN could help to arrange it, as she was an experienced events organiser.</p> <p><b>Action: Community event arrangements to be progressed.</b></p> <p><b>15.2</b> BW was upset that GH's presentation on homelessness had been so negative and party politically critical. Eager to hear the other side of the story, BW suggested inviting Bob Blackman to speak at a future meeting.</p> <p><b>Action: Bob Blackman to be invited to address the Forum, possibly one with the related theme of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigration.</b></p>	CF, VN  CF	before next meeting  before next meeting
<b>16.</b>	<p><b>Dates of future meetings</b></p> <p><b>16.1</b> The next meeting was planned for Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016 from 7.00 to 9.00pm at Harrow Civic Centre unless otherwise advised.</p>		
	<b>Meeting closed at 2.30</b>		

