

**Minutes of Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum meeting held
on 15 Sep 2014, 10:00 – 12:00 hrs**

Venue: Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, Committee Rooms 1&2

Attendance:				
Member	abbreviation in minutes	Member Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Steve Porter	SP	Third Sector Potential CIC / Capable Communities		Forum Chair / VCS Representative
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow	VAH	Meeting Minute Taker
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve		
Julie Browne	JB	Aspergers Syndrome Access to Provision (A.S.A.P.) in Harrow	ASAP	Forum Chair / Co-opted VCS Representative
John Hunter	JH	Crossroads		
Raksha Pandya	RP	Mind in Harrow	MiH	
Rachel Wright	RW	Voluntary Action Harrow	VAH	Meeting Minute Taker
Stuart Dashwood	SD	Carramea		
Avani Modasia	AM	AGE UK Harrow		VCS Representative
Gilly Chowdry	GC	Homestart Harrow		
Alan Voda	AV	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	
Sarah Kersey	SK	Harrow Community Radio		
Cllr Sue Anderson	SA	Harrow Council (Community, Culture & Resident Engagement Portfolio Holder)	HC	
Deven Pillay	DP	Harrow Mencap		VCS Representative
Amrita Thapa	AT	National Gurka Vetran Association		
Motikar Tithapa	MT	National Gurka Vetran Association		

Apologies:				
Member		Member Organisation		Forum Role
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport		
Varsha Dodia	VD	Harrow Interfaith Council / Namaste Care CIC		
Carol Foyle	CF	Kids Can Achieve		VCS Representative
Ash Verma	AVE	Harrow in Business	HIB	
Julie Cosgrove	JC	The Disability Foundation	TDF	
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association		
Geraldine Gower	GG	The Disability Foundation	TDF	
Jan Irwin	Jl	Harrow Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum		
Eileen Martel	EM	HOPE Harrow	HOPE	
Nigel Long	NL	Harrow Association of Disabled People	HAD	
Tony O'Hara	TOH	Carramea		

Item	Minutes	Action by whom	Action by when
1.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies		
1.1	SP welcomed everyone & opened the meeting with introductions. JB stated that although she also works for Harrow Mencap but was attending in her capacity as a co-opted trustee of ASAP.		
1.2	SP asked if anyone had received any apologies. These were noted as above.		
2.	Approval of Minutes of VCS Forum meeting on 28 July 2014		
2.1	JH had not had access to the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd June 2014. In the minutes it had JH's name in recorded as commenting on Mike Howes reference making a mess of the funding (Item 3.3 of VCS Forum Minutes dated: 02.06.14). JH stated this is an unfortunate mistake and not what he had meant and this wasn't meant as a criticism and shouldn't be seen as one. JH went on to say Mike Howes isn't responsible so shouldn't be held to account for		

	wasting money. JH stated a lot of money is being spent on advocacy. JH requested SA take his concern that a lot of money is being spent on advocacy back to cabinet.		
3.	Matters Arising		
3.1	On item 3.2 & 3.3 (Matters Arising), JH asked who takes responsibility for co-ordinating the advocacy role across the borough as there was a lot of money being spent on advocacy. AM clarified this was about the Advocacy Terms Of Reference, HAD was invited to attend this meeting to clarify but wasn't been able to attend. AM clarified the money also includes Healthwatch Advocacy. JH said it is illegal to use the name 'Healthwatch' with Advocacy. AM stated she had meant Health Advocacy.		
3.2	On item 3.4 (Matters Arising), JH didn't understand this item and why there was special mention of Flash Musical. AB clarified this was a reference to Under 1 Sky. JB said the minutes should be sent round after the meeting. AB clarified this has been done. SP clarified the minutes do get sent round but on average only 30% of individuals open the relevant e-mail.		
3.3	On item 4.1.2 (Rep Elections), SP informed the forum that the original database was sent to Big Society Funding (the consultants working on the future of the forum) from Ealing CVS. This was passed onto SP who set a system for individuals to come off the list / update information. A number of individuals made changes. This list was then passed onto VAH to use for VCS Forum communication. VAH have since updated it.		
3.3.1	AB stated requests have gone out to update organisations' information but only 1 individual has completed this.		
3.4	On item 4.1.5 (Rep Elections), SP informed that various discussions are ongoing and a summit is being planned.		
3.5	On item 8.1 & 8.2 (Integrated Care), JH stated how the spending of resources on integrated care can lead to a conflict of interest for those organisations that have council contracts. Relevant organisations should be declaring conflict of interest at these meetings.		
3.6	On item 8.2 (Integrated Care), SP clarified the relevant information was sent out HCA newsletter.		
3.7	On item 10.10 (Call for VCS Member on Cabinet), SP clarified there is some money available (£240 per annum) for this role and asked SA to confirm. SA clarified this was correct (and the amount may be slightly higher). JH was alarmed a VCS rep could attend a meeting and receive a substantial allowance. SP referenced this should be		

	discussed as part of the relevant agenda item (6).		
4.	Election for chair		
4.1	SP introduced the 2 people to stand: JB & CF. SP stated that CF was still interested in being chair and had sent her apologies due to serious illness. SP stated the opportunity had been sent out and the main responsibilities that are involved are working with VAH around communication.		
4.2	AB stated due to CF sickness he should read out a statement on her behalf.		
4.2.1	AB read out the statement from CF – “Carol Foyle has worked in the voluntary and community sector for over 30 years and has a broad range of experience including charring groups and forums. She is committed to see more collaborative working in the borough as well as ensuring everyone has a voice that can be heard.”		
4.2.2	JB has been working in the Voluntary Sector in Harrow for 20 years, became rep 10 years ago and has been chair in the past. JB stated she is pleased to be back in Harrow and wants to continue to serve.		
4.3	AB distributed & collected voting slips.		
Notes	<i>Cllr Sue Anderson left the meeting</i>		
4.4	SP introduced the Gurka Association whilst AB was counting the votes. The group which are based in Harrow are trying to support their own community of elder people who are settling in the UK but don't understand English. SP is working with the group to develop them to meet the needs of their community.		
4.5	AB announced JB elected as Chair.		
4.6	SP formally handed over as Chair.		
4.6.1	JH passed on thanks to SP thanks for steering the group through a difficult time with humour and tolerance.		
4.7	From this point on JB chaired the meeting. Request to add conflict of interest on agenda.		
4.8	LR requested date of the next meeting is included on the agenda of the meeting.		
Action	<i>AB to add date of next meeting and conflicts of interest to new agenda.</i>	AB	

5.	Constituting the Forum		
5.1	SK explained that the Constitution Working Group (CWG) have had 3 meetings. AB stated SK, LR, GD, VD, AV, and AB had been part of the CWG.		
5.2	RP stated Mind in Harrow disagree with constituting the forum in light of cuts and adding to bureaucracy. SK questioned what bureaucracy was being added and how would they prefer the forum to be representative. RP stated they had attended an event with Council about the cuts. In the meeting the options were biased but there are departments who are cutting budgets and not meeting targets. MiH thought the VCS Forum should be challenging the council.		
5.2.1	<p>SP agreed on the issues raised about the cuts and stated there would be discussion about it further on the agenda. SP gave a brief history as to why constituting the forum was being proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason 1: The VCS Forum was allied to Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP). This has been disbanded so we are not adhering to their governance. The forum needs a structure to replace the governance previously provided by the HSP • Reason 2: HCA can't apply to certain trusts due to being a CIC – this will provide another way of applying for funding. 		
5.3	SK said the VCS Forum has been in decline for three years. VCS groups don't know what it is for, why they should come, or even understand there are VCS reps. SK believes unless the VCS Forum has written aims groups won't come. SK stated she believed more people will be interested in coming and the VCS Forum in its current form doesn't represent the voice on behalf of the voluntary sector.		
5.4	RP felt we should be challenging cuts not making more stuff to do.		
5.5	SK recapped the forum doesn't have to be a funded organisation. AM said it was not clear that it isn't a legal body. SK discussed the difference between incorporated and unincorporated organisations and that it wasn't about funding. It was about letting people know why to come.		
5.6	JB proposed: The forum adopt the constitution and review over the next 6 months.		
5.7	RP reaffirmed MiH disagree and want to see more effectiveness in the group in campaigning. SK requested MiH look at it and come back with suggestions		
5.8	DP explained how he was originally against constituting the forum but has since changed his mind. Saying change is needed to get the		

	<p>Forum accepted by CCG – “need to have something to sign up to”. DP was unsure about the Forum making bids, saying it should be about the voice, representation and campaigning. DP suggested we could have subgroups to tackle things like campaigning. DP cautioned that the Forum must be very careful about the details and he will support constituting as the VCS Forum needs to have good governance especially regarding the council.</p>		
5.8.1	<p>JH stated the last point was helpful and the conduit is positive. JH voiced concerns of what we would be representative of. JH made the statement “We are provider bodies – this should be priority.”</p>		
5.9	<p>JB stated whatever the VCS Forum agree with, a constitution needs to be agreed by the group.</p>		
5.10	<p>AB queried whether or not the attendees are going to talk about the constitution, stating the document changes quite a lot of things and there are practicalities to consider such as change of reps. AB explained we need a date otherwise will be talking about it for a long time. AB referenced its position, specific clauses that affect HCA (Item: 6.g.) and what the deadline for adoption is.</p>		
5.10.1	<p>JB answered by suggesting we should review it every 2 months. AB queried if the VCS Forum is adopting the document. DP said the VCS Forum need to review and discuss at the next meeting. JB asked if it can be talked about for 1 hour at the next meeting. AB informed no one had got back to the Co-ordination Team with any detailed concerns or queries and he had asked for feedback. AB stated AM had contributed to the first draft document which was sent and comments had been incorporated into the document.</p>		
5.10.2	<p>DP informed he does not think the issue about being constituted is up for debate. JB wanted to update herself on the history. JH informed he had concerns due to the complex issue around finance and paying people. JH was unsure what is being suggested or implied.</p>		
5.11	<p>JB asked if AB can send out as a single item. AB said he could but was disappointed about it. JH confirmed he was unhappy about the finance aspect. JB asked to move onto reps update and come back to the document.</p>		
Action	<p><i>AB to send round Draft VCS Forum again and the next meeting’s Agenda 1 hour will be spent discussing the document.</i></p>	AB	
5.12	<p>AM advised the agenda remains flexible as there might be something else which is needed to be discussed.</p>		

6.	Update From Reps		
6.1	SP stated, the reps meet with SA. SP informed SA it is important to consult with the voluntary sector before their minds are made up. SP raised the concern that a number of group's payments from HC have been delayed.		
6.2	SP stated the VCS Reps discussed with Cllr David Perry (Leader, HC) about putting someone forward onto cabinet. SP asked does the VCS Forum want to do this and what will this mean? JB informed that reps asked for job description to be created, but these have not been received. DP informed it is in the administration's manifesto to work closely with VCS. The role has vast potential, enabling a voice to be part of decision making process. When a VCS rep was brought onto the grants panel as an advisor it was very successful and might be a similar role. DP felt it was important to lay down some do's & don't and clarified not all was clear around conditions. It is the VCS Reps view that; the sector needs to decide who is appointed, and to provide a Job Description, it must be clear it's not about promoting individual organisations but the whole sector, a confirmation of what the skills are and the process of election. It could be like electing the VCS reps going to all mailing list or through the forum.		
6.2.1	JH questioned if the role on offer was a voting member on cabinet. DP clarified this is an advisory role not a voting role. LR asked if only one position on offer. DP confirmed VCS Reps think this is, but are not sure.		
6.2.2	JH asked what happened to democracy. If there is going to be an Advisors' position everyone will want to sign up and be on to represent their organisation. There needs to be clear separate roles. JH claimed the process was rubbish, crazy, must be stopped and leading towards bribery. JH referenced the CAB who had received a substantial amount which was not referenced in cabinet papers. JH thought charities are not campaigning organisations. JH believes the VCS Forum need to get back to basics, to what the people of Harrow need. JH referred to the amount of money sitting round the table saying this is a redundant group that should be disbanded. JH thought providers could get together about.		
6.2.3	JB reminded this is something being offered, we haven't decided to accept. SK asked if the Carers Trust did not lobby the government. JH was unsure if they do. AM asked what the concern is about. JH answered it was the belief the whole sector can be nominated to represent the whole sectors and all focus should be on the beneficiaries. JB stated she is sitting here to represent the groups, if there are concerns then please say.		
6.2.4	SP restated what is being asked is someone to come along in a non-voting capacity? That person can't be a rep or someone who has		

	<p>been involved with the council in the last 5 years. LR queried why can't this be a VCS Rep. DP answered this is coming from Cllr David Perry. The VCS Reps are asking for them to clarify and send them details.</p>		
<p>6.2.5</p>	<p>JB said that the individual could end up not representing the sector</p>		
<p>6.3</p>	<p>SP stated HC have to cut £75 million, and are providing options for consultation. SP asks if there is another way forward. SP wondered if the sector should be more involved in providing solutions such as delivering services differently. SP asked what is the need or outcomes. SP said in the HC consultation there is a pie chart but doesn't break down the services in detail this sets up a hierarchy of need without providing the details. SP asked what can the VCS do? The VCS offer trust, flexibility and cost cutting, with the weaknesses; lack of capacity, expertise (big contracts). SP thinks a combination of businesses and business development agency could offer a solution. SP stated the VCS will need to engage with the council and suggest the consultation is flawed, and not just about saying they are wrong but they need to provide positive examples of collaboration.</p>		
<p>Notes</p>	<p><i>Minute Taker Changed RW to AB</i></p>		
<p>6.3.1</p>	<p>SP would really like to look at volunteering. This comes from response from HC that have responded they want the help of volunteers to cope with cuts. SP does not think this is a huge motivating factor or much response. SP was thinking of putting a more positive spin which involves working with the voluntary sector. SP asked if we could work cross sector work together on the whole aspect of volunteering to be able to use VCS skills to ensure the people involved are getting something out of it in an attempt to achieve the same thing. SP proposed an idea for a volunteer focus. SP stated he had met with member of HCA to see Nick Hurd MP (NH) who has been interested in trying to get interest from Nesta for a new volunteering approach which is around high impact volunteering which is based on Cities of Service which has been going around the States for quite a while now and has been hugely successful. The idea is to have a strategic vision about volunteering so we are able to deal with volunteering in the VCS and statutory sector for the right reasons that are addressing the things the VCS worked out together, but also in a way that recognises the motivations and support volunteers need in an organised fashion. If HCA are getting some interest from Nesta and some funding comes with that it can ally to the volunteer centre that HCA is looking to apply for to set up. SP wanted to see if as a sector anything could be done about volunteering now so that when meeting with HC there is something on the table immediately. SP sees Northwick Park Hospital as a potential opportunity as they are dealing with pressures of other A&E and departments closures so is having to deal with a lot more. SP stated there is a need in Harrow for</p>		

	<p>residents to find out where they can get access to their healthcare and at what point do they go to their GP, Walk-In Centre or A&E. SP thinks there should be a focus on the voluntary sector working with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and HC, and a communications strategy should get that message across to benefit all members. SP believes this will have knock-on effects on VCS as the amount of time spent on basic information giving will be cut down for example home care, supporting people and contracts with the council will decrease. SP asked the Forum for permission to create a strategic vision for volunteering for that particular area to show cost savings can be made in a collaborative way. SP thought this would give an added opportunity to talk about all of the other areas.</p>		
<p>6.3.2</p>	<p>SP opened for questions. JH stated Cllr Dave Perry had said there are 137 VCS organisations registered in Harrow and they cost us (the taxpayer) £3.2 million. JH went on to say those organisations might be a suitable to do the volunteering. JH stated that as a resident and a taxpayer in Harrow he would be very resentful that he could be regarded as exploiting people who wish to volunteer and focus should be on employment taking into account Harrows worrying unemployment figures. JH summarised that he opposes the suggestion and from a practical point of view it will be hard to do because of the come and go nature of volunteering. SP responded he is looking for the VCS Forum to agree in principle that he should start the work.</p>		
<p>6.3.3</p>	<p>AV was stunned this was even being considered. Due to the lack of capacity, no governing body and no volunteer centre it is difficult to expand volunteer activities. AV stated HC will always make cuts and questioned if HC will be funding the VCS to take this on. SP answered that HCA are applying for funding for the volunteer centre and this scheme was looking at Nesta funding to assist with development. SP claimed there are volunteers having difficulties finding placements and this has been a problem for a number of years. AV responded if SP thinks he can create a project and get funding for it then fine. AV asked what research has been done on numbers of groups and social value created. AB responded that the research hasn't been done. AV stated they (HCT) want to see a body that represents the people via the groups that are helping them that is fighting for social value. AV reaffirmed if it is just about funding then fine. SP stated that there was no need for him to go and apply for some money that he can get a project together the emphasis is on working differently with the cuts.</p>		
<p>6.3.4</p>	<p>AV felt there was no co-ordinated infrastructure, in other boroughs there have been halls of people attending these meetings. AV said he got involved in drafting the constitution for the VCS Forum because it will allow real information about the sector. DP agreed there is a gap that has been partially filled by HCA reiterating it is not the role of HCA to campaign to HC and this is why the Forum has to</p>		

	<p>take it on. AV questioned if VCR Reps really represent the sector saying there is massive gaps of service provision, strengthening the sector, co-ordination and collaboration. AV reaffirmed the VCS Constitution is needed to do this work and HCA has its part to play.</p> <p>6.3.5 AB outlined that the HCA bid which is going in is not to set up a traditional Volunteer Centre but to support disadvantaged residents. JB said one of the most successful volunteering projects in Harrow is the Independent Visitors project which is fantastic and survives on volunteers. JB thought the VCS is guilty in not offering volunteers the right support or opportunities. AV thought if there was a Volunteer Centre they might be able to do some work on this even if it was limited. AB commended Sue Bush (who runs the Independent Visitors Project) for having managed the project well and thought her volunteer management and research skills was one of the reasons for this and thought the focus should be on building these skills to achieve long-term outcomes. JB felt the VCS need to make it easier for people to access volunteering. SD said one of the problems was VCS Groups do not have the resources to train volunteers especially when there turnaround time is so quick. AV said there is an obvious need for a Volunteer Centre from day-to-day activities at the Lodge.</p> <p>6.3.6 SP says that the demand for volunteering is increasing as evidence from running Do-It. SP wanted to make clear that it was not about exploiting volunteers and was more to look at a strategy as to why people volunteer. SP stated there should be a strategy and a plan on how we work across the sectors on volunteering. SP would like to get permission to pilot a smaller area (Northwick Park) to see how it goes, so he can apply to Nesta to show how it is working and that he has got sign-up from HC and CCG. If that works well then he can develop a plan with HC. JH asked if he would do that through Carol Yarde (CY). AV thought HC should be paying SP. SP is just asking HC to think again about how to consult as what he thinks they have come up with will be disastrous for the residents of Harrow. JH wanted it confirmed that SP would like our permission to enter into some sort of contract to carry out some piece of work. SP responded that it is a consultation with all of the sectors to assess the needs of Harrow residents. JB agrees in principle but wants a small group to get together to ask how do we do this.</p> <p>Action <i>SP to develop it (Item: 6.3.1) with other people showing an interest and who have some other ideas. SP to send out a notice in the HCA newsletter.</i></p> <p>Notes <i>Julie Browne (Chair) left the meeting</i></p> <p>6.4 DP asked if anyone can stay to discuss the draft constitution. Attendees couldn't. AB said disappointingly it would have to be tabled for another meeting. DP proposed this is the only item on the agenda. AM asked if when the agenda goes out if when the agenda</p>		
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7.	Any Other Business (AOB)		
7.1	AB queried whether the location of the forum should change as the November meeting is the last one scheduled. DP said probably not due to everything that was happening and just to book it with the dates the VCS Forum want.		
7.2	AB said VAH are looking into putting in a bid around increasing Campaigning capacity support. DP thought it was a good idea. AM said it would be good but it depends on who is delivering the program and what expertise they have. AB said he would be mostly running the campaigning side with his experience in marketing, campaigning & communications part and they will bring partners in to run the advocacy side. JH questioned whether or not AB will be able to separate the cognitive the campaigning and the advocacy bits. AB responded that he would though the tailored support plan for the project. JH was happy with this.		
7.3	AB notified the Forum Under One Sky is on the 21 st September and VAH will also be going to the University of Westminster's Fresher's Fair on the 19 th September and if any groups wanted to send any of their material to let them send it to VAH. SK queries if it was £60 to hire a stall at Under1 Sky. LR said it depends on what package you want.		
7.4	AM invited attendees to the Age UK Harrow Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 15 October at the Harrow Mosque with guest speakers Dr Meena Thakur - Work of Integrated Care Pathways (ICP) and Dr Amol Kelshiker, Chair of Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group.		
8.	Date of next meeting 24th November, 10:00 – 12:00 at the Civic Centre, Committee Rooms 1&2		
13.	Meeting closed at 11:58		