

Minutes of Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum

held on 19 Jan 2015, 10:00 – 12:00 hrs

Venue: Committee Room 1&2, Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2XY

Attendance:				
Member	abbreviation in minutes	Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Steve Porter	SP	Third Sector Potential CIC	TSP	VCS Representative
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve	FBPNR	
Julie Browne	JB	Asperger's Syndrome Access to Provision	ASAP	Forum Chair / Co-opted VCS Representative
Rachel Wright	RW	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	Minute Taker
Gilly Chowdry	GC	Home-Start Barnet Harrow Project	HSB	
Avani Modasia	AM	AGE UK Harrow	AUH	VCS Representative
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	
Deven Pillay	DP	Harrow Mencap	HM	VCS Representative
Russell Sutcliffe	RS	Harrow Community Farm	HCF	
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association	HEA	
Tajinder Nijjar	TN	Harrow Citizen Advice Bureau	HCAB	
Cllr Sue Anderson	SA	Harrow Council	HC	
Jan Irwin	JI	Harrow Domestic and Sexual Violence Forum	HDSVF	
Stuart Dashwood	SD	Carramea Community Resource Centre	CCRC	
Jenny Stephany	JS	Positive Connections	PC	
Hassan Khalief	HK	Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations	HASVO	
Sharon Pienarosa	SPi	Harrow Carers	HCAR	

... continued Attendance				
Member	abbreviation in minutes	Member Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Fran Smith	FS	Kids Can Achieve	KCA	
Ilias Kostalas	IK	Kids Can Achieve	KCA	
Latoya Ridge	LR	Victim Support	VS	
Trevor Walker	TW	Prostate Cancer UK	PCU	
Cabdul Qadir	CQ	Somali Cultural & Educational Association	SCEA	
Leandre Sahiri	LS	Mary Bro Foundation	MBF	
Bharti Vyas	BV	Mind In Harrow	MiH	

Apologies:				
Member		Member Organisation		Forum Role
Steve Williams	SW	Watford FC Community Sports & Education	WFCSE	
Geraldine Gower	GG	The Disability Foundation	TDF	
Ewan Malcolm	EM	Relate London North West	RLNW	
Gary Long	GL	SAMEC Trust	ST	
Eileen Martell	EM	HOPE Harrow	HH	
Sarah Kersey	SK	Harrow Happiness Campaign	HHC	

Item	Minutes	Action by whom	Action by when
1.	Welcome, Introductions, Apologies & Conflict of Interest (Agenda Item 1)		
1.1	JB welcomed everyone to the meeting.		
1.2	Conflict of interest declared: None declared		
2.	Minutes of last meeting VCS Forum (24.11.14) (Agenda Item 2)		
2.1	Correction on item 2.4.4 from FOHNF to FBPNR		

2.2	Correction on item 2.7.15 & 2.7.16 from JD to JB, also DP to DB		
2.3	Minutes approved providing corrections are made.		
3.	Co-opted rep election (Agenda Item 3)		
3.1	JB stated an advert went out for a co-opted rep, SK & LR put themselves forward. JB read out a statement from Sarah who apologised for not attending and is flat out with her day job both in the day and at weekends. JB stated her aim is to increase representation from smaller groups.		
3.2	AB read out statement from LR which was on the voting form (Appendix 1).		
4.	Reps Update (Agenda Item 4)		
4.1	DP stated the Health & Wellbeing Board's internal review has not been completed as yet. DP will report back once the board has looked at the findings of the review. DP informed the Forum that The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and The Council have now agreed the approach for moving forward with the Better Care Fund submission, which will provide a more integrated approach for Health and social care within the borough. There was a delay to finalise the detailed agreement, however this was finalised at the Health and Wellbeing Board. DP explained that the Health & Wellbeing Board is a sub-committee of the council where members of the public can attend, submit and raise issues through deputations, questions etc, there is usually a good attendance from the public. If submitting questions please talk with DP so he can offer support.		
4.1.1	AM stated Joint Strategic Needs is out of date although it was promised that when it is being refreshed, VCS would be invited. Since the strategic boards were disbanded, no new ones have been set up. Again it was part of the action from H & WB Board that these would be set up but to date nothing has happened. DP will take this back. e.g. older peoples, carers and others. .. DP has raised, but will go back and raise again. A flaw of the board is the agenda is too big, so they don't get round to picking up action points. No matters arising is an issue.		
4.1.2	AM asked can we raise the two issues above as a forum? DP said he has raised how they are updated and they have promised they would engage, set a date but cancelled and no follow up. TN stated it was important for the council to refresh, tie in with Public Health Joint Strategic Needs assessment which is out of date.		
4.1.3	TN asked what they are reviewing. DP stated how they are operating, as they have only been set up a couple of years ago.		

<p>Action</p> <p>4.1.4</p> <p>4.1.5</p> <p>4.1.6</p> <p>Action</p> <p>4.1.7</p> <p>Action</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.2.1</p>	<p>Once the findings are sent, DP to bring to the forum.</p> <p>Jl asked when the Harrow Strategic Partnership disbanded, what replaced formal reporting to the Harrow Strategic Partnership. DP answered the Health & Wellbeing board ‘task and finish’ groups, had been pushing for continued to engagement, which hadn’t happened yet.</p> <p>SA acknowledged that the Harrow Strategic Partnership had been wider than just the Council and the Health & Wellbeing Board; it had also included Greener Harrow and other reference groups. SA offered to find out from the current administration what mechanisms would replace the former channels of interaction with such reference groups, including the VCS Forum itself which was now an independent body. JM pointed again to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) review, which was being undertaken by Harrow’s Public Health department, not by the Health & Wellbeing Board which did nothing itself but only requested and received reports from others. DP suggested inviting a representative from the Health and Wellbeing Board to attend the VCS Forum.</p> <p>LR lamented the lack of council engagement with the environment agenda since the demise of Greener Harrow. One of the Constitution Working Group’s ideas was for the VCS Forum to have sub-committees on specific topics, for example for groups concerned with sustainability issues or with older people, which could replace the former reference groups as long as the council would listen to them. SA said she would make this suggestion to the administration, although not all remits such as environment fell within her own area of responsibility. DP stressed the importance of setting up appropriate structures for engagement, which could be an appropriate role for the VCS Forum.</p> <p>SA to make suggestion to administration.</p> <p>TW: They should want as much input from a wider range of people, they can look at it from externally. DP stated it is an internal review. We need to clarify as we are mixing everything up.</p> <p>DP to take back Health & Wellbeing Board and SA will feedback on how the council can improve the general engagement with the VCS.</p> <p>AM stated she went to the equality impact meeting around the cuts. AM found that the officers are jumping the gun and it was proposed they wait until the cuts have been consulted on and then look at the impact. A meeting will happen after the consultation.</p> <p>AB said there was an equality impact meeting on the 28th Jan.</p>	<p>DP</p> <p>SA</p>	
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	Attendees were not aware of this.		
Action	To check and get back to VCS Reps	AB	
4.2.2	SP stated as a result there has been an extension for the second stage and insurance given for when people are losing contracts a 3 month notice period. Surveys are the only method where service users can engage. AM stated an e-mail has come from Kashmir offering to meet with service users. TN asked SA what methodology will be used.		
4.3	DP stated we are going off topic and questioned procedure when we have an observer. DP stated we need to manage this, distraction as questions are directed at SA. We shouldn't be apologising. SA stated she is not comfortable being here. DP suggested SA could be given a time slot to attend. SA stated this is your forum.		
Action	SA to come back to TN regarding the question	SA	
4.4	SP attended a Council Scrutiny Meeting with Mark Gillham (Mind in Harrow), to comment on the process the council had used to deal with the cuts. Mark spoke on behalf of the sector. DP said this will be picked up on item 7. JB expressed concerns about how public health select delivery partners.		
Notes	SA left the meeting		
4.5.1	SP asked how public health needs to link with the agenda, stating there is a lack of clarity in vision. HK asked how the Public Health Sector links in with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. TN stated it was raised with Sarah Crouch about the monitoring of services already commissioned, and sharing the data. TN stated we need to know this and what the impact has been on residents. They are picking and choosing suppliers rather than sending it all out for public tendering.		
4.5.2	SP stated they invite potential suppliers via e-mail. AM said they invite some groups. AB asked SP who is on their database, as some groups may not be included.		
4.5.3	JM stated Pubic Health is combined with Barnet which comes from Department of Health and is ring-fenced. JM suggested not much is due to be cut.		
4.5.4	JB summarised questions: 1. How do they monitor, how do they evaluate? 2. How do they advertise contracts?		

4.5.5	JB proposed inviting Public Health to March meeting. RS suggested we wait until after the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is published. JB suggested we do both. JS stated we give them opportunity to learn from the review.		
5.	Funding cuts & the sectors response (Agenda Item 7)		
5.1	SP stated there was a lack of vision how we make the cuts and lacking details. SP asked how we deal with the most disadvantaged in the community. There is a need to engage with service users.		
5.1.1	DP asked why it took us to suggest getting users engagement. TN stated it is not inclusive to do online only. SP said a meeting held was very clear that the cuts will be 9.5% - this is incorrect and spin. In reality how it affects the VCS is around 35% as it is only about the grants and adult SLA's. The information has been presented in a spun way. AM stated they have gone back on their word.		
5.1.2	JI stated last year VCS had lost a lot of funding, now just cutting the ones left. AM stated this will only get worst. JI: we shouldn't focus on those still standing but also the ones that have already been cut. DP stated their vision is no funding for the VCS after 3 years. AM suggested been too passive.		
5.1.3	GD stated HCT lost funding years ago, promised funding through SLA's but needed to compete with private. Whilst HCT have got some contracts, when they wanted something from the council it is always at private rate e.g. parking. GD said there needs to be some give and take. Partnership approach, offer facilities instead of grant. When there is any promise as soon as legal and estates receive they are blocking. Is there a way the council can allow the VCS to use underused resources.		
5.2	TN stated we should be able to submit under localism bill. RS stated he has put it to the council and got no response. Nothing has been published about the process and it needs to come from the top. TN asked if we write from the forum. RS suggested there need to make sure services are delivered and it is our responsibility.		
Action	<i>JB, TN, GD & RS to put together a letter to Cllr David Perry and carbon copy in SA.</i>	JB, TN, GD, RS	
5.3	AM asked what we are going to do about the current cuts.		
5.4	RS stated localism has been available for the last few years. SP said a joint approach should be taken and he would like to input into discussions. SP stated it is important to make sure people are aware of localism and to tell the council 'We believe we can deliver this better than you'. SP suggested one way might be to target when Council writes tender, puts conditions, their terms, could be the way		

	they write it, it could be more expensive in how it is run.		
Action	Put together an e-mail group with SP, TN, JB, RS, GD	AB	
5.5	DP stated we need to express our disappointment – they’ve not come back and said they have listened to us. DP said there is a big difference between 9.5% and 35%. GD said there have been many historical cuts. Without engagement with Estates & Legal departments Libraries won’t happen.		
5.5.1	HK agree there is good work in VCS and could state the cuts can’t go on. BV stated MiH is going to complain and there will be a campaign around the 35% cuts which will include impact on service users. We should ask legal service what are our legal rights.		
5.5.2	DP felt the consultation is flawed and there may be a judicial challenge. TN said HCAB is looking at the list who have been selected for cuts – it is only certain groups. There is an issue around inequality. TN stated the VCS was told it was going to be across council but now it is just certain select. AB added they aren’t putting monetary value to all the choices to be made making some of the consultation questions are incomplete and biased.		
5.5.3	TN asked how the Compacts tie in. SP said will bring the document to the discussion.		
5.6	DP asked if councillors should be invited to the meeting or should it be just the portfolio holder. JB stated we ask councillors to inform. RW stated we need one rule for all councillors. JB suggested this is a role for the constitution working group. SP stated if they are coming as a VCS organisation they are coming under that hat and Portfolio holders should be invited for specific items.		
5.6.1	AB stated some councillors work for VCS organisations. AM stated they should send someone else from their organisation. AB said VCS organisations are limited might not be able to do this.		
Action	AB to inform councillors they should wait for specific invitations.	AB	
5.6.2	AB stated we need to ensure attendees of this meeting feel confident to speak out if a conflict exists. Not informing certain people who are included in the VCS will cause a conflict. It should be on the responsibly of the attendees if they feel there is a conflict.		
5.6.3	RS stated this is a public meeting. Attendees questioned this.		
5.6.4	AM suggested to get the principle sorted out first. GD said the reason they are councillors they are part of the VCS. If councillors are involved in the VCS they should be invited. Conflict should be		

	announced. AB agreed the person should announce when there is a conflict. DP stated it is also for members to say they are uncomfortable. GD said councillors should be told it as it is.		
5.6.5	AB said the minutes are public and asked do we want the full minutes to be available online and this should be taken to the Constitution Working group (CWG).		
Notes	<i>Forum seemed to be in agreement with this.</i>		
Notes	<i>SA returned to meeting</i>		
6.	Timescale for launching constituted forum (Agenda Item 5)		
6.1	JB met with LR & SK. Timescales of constitution were shared by AB through Harrow Community Action (HCA) newsletter. AB had received no response to request from the role description. JB would like someone to help with this. RW said SK had drafted a role. JB said this could be used as a base.		
6.2	JB read through Timescale (Appendix 2).		
6.3	AM asked if there will be a criteria. LR said they will need to be a member. AB questioned as we don't have a membership criteria or agreement.		
6.4	JB said we need a role description and eligibility, and expressed a concern. JS stated we need to have an intermediate process so a role description and eligibility can be agreed. LR asked will it just be electronic. DP asked people can add to the proposal.		
6.4.1	AB suggested couldn't we use the current chair role that was shared for JB election.		
6.5	JB suggested SK send the role description round for comment and not just electronic.		
Action	<i>Send a message to SK to send role descriptions around</i>	JB	
7.	Summit (Agenda Item 6)		
7.1	SP announced there will be a summit with the aim to link in with the funding project, webinars, surgeries, overall talk with the Big Lottery and sector. SP said Harrow is at the bottom of table for accessing the Big Lottery funding.		
7.1.1	SP stated Jane Sterland will come from Big Lottery and will also offer one to one support for Reaching Communities applications in the future but as a follow on from the summit. VCS needs to attend the summit to be offered the one-to-one support.		

<p>7.1.2</p> <p>Action</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>Notes</p>	<p>Summit will also look at where we can deal with cuts, Communities Click and HCA. There was an invitation sent out via Harrow Community Action Newsletter.</p> <p>Minutes will be circulated.</p> <p>SP stated Saturday is more accessible to volunteer led groups and organisations need to make an effort to attend summits.</p> <p>Date: 31st January 2015 Time: 11.00am – 2.00pm Venue: Members Lounge Civic Centre</p> <p>Age UK Harrow will contributing towards the cost of the food.</p>	<p>SP</p>	
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.1.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p> <p>8.4</p> <p>8.5</p>	<p>Volunteering project & compulsory volunteering (Agenda Item 8)</p> <p>JB read out SK volunteering statement from Greater London Volunteering (Appendix 3).</p> <p>TW said he couldn't sign up to this as thinks people who are capable should be made to volunteer.</p> <p>JB said it needs to be circulated.</p> <p>AB said workfare could lead to traditional volunteering being ruined</p> <p>LR said it was important distinguish between being a volunteer and work placement/experience. SD said when doing placement from school this is work experience and compulsory, different from volunteering.</p> <p>SP said his volunteering project was trying tackle the inappropriate use of Accident & Emergency (A&E) at Northwick Park Hospital. This is being run in conjunction with Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Chief Officers GP and will be asking community organisations to promote the appropriate use of A&E services.. To be able to target intervention better the CCG are conducting research as to which groups are using A&E inappropriately and for what purpose, from which targets will be set We are currently waiting for this research and once received measurable deliverables will be created. The background to this is that the Council / CCG tend to come up with solutions without using the VCS. We want this project to show that we can be involved in the solution and as in this case lead on the delivery of the solution We are currently waiting on the CCG.</p>		
<p>9.</p>	<p>AOB (Agenda Item 9)</p>		

9.1	JB: Chief Officer meetings are no longer happening, they aiming to get these set up.		
9.2	AB stated the Lobbying Act is in effect and suggested all charities should be careful to remain neutrally politically. DP stated you have to monitor all costs of campaigning.		
9.3	LR stated she was offered 1 day of free support with the database and links with the e-mail list. LR asked if we can tie in Harrow Community Network and the forum membership. RS said we need to decide the process first. DP asked if the chair can come up with the structure.		
Action	<i>RW, LR & RS to get together for this.</i>	RW	
8.	Date of next meetings All meetings to be held 10am – 12pm at Committee Room 1 & 2, Harrow Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23rd March 2015 • 1st June 2015 • 27th July 2015 • 28th September • 30th November 2015 		
	Meeting closed at 12.10		

Appendix 1 (Item 3.2)

“The Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve is a small volunteer-run community group, which I have officially represented at the Forum since 2012. But it is not the only group I belong to. Others include Harrow Friends of the Earth and the Stanmore Society. With a forty year history of involvement with the voluntary sector in Harrow, I’m in regular contact with various local organisations, most of which receive no money from the council and have no interest in delivering public services.

As a trainer, I’ve delivered sessions for voluntary organisations and councils all over London, including community engagement departments and housing associations. What I’ve noticed in Harrow is that the voices of many grass roots groups are going unheard amid the clamour for funding and contracts. These include environmental groups; amenity societies; tenants’ and residents’ associations; youth clubs; arts and heritage groups from our many cultures.

Some of them are campaigning groups, sticking up for residents’ rights and quality of life in a way that might not be directly about health factors, disabilities or ethnicity. Groups that we’ve not been used to seeing at the Forum, because they’re not on anybody’s list of priorities.

I’d like to see a Forum that is not just for the big, funded charities. Could it morph into a worthwhile body for the rest of us to join, aside from the consortium agenda? Can we make the authorities take notice and listen to small groups’ concerns and suggestions? I hope so.”

Appendix 2 (Item 6.2)

January Forum – Agree election process for Chair and Vice Chairs.

January - Summit with funding presentations and campaigning re current cuts from Harrow

February – Election of Chair and Vice Chairs

March Forum – Elect Chair and Vice Chairs, agree Roles and Responsibilities for reps and election process for reps.

2 weeks later – 2nd Summit to include workshops on reps duties, launch of reps election and launch of constituted Forum.

April – Reps elections

May Forum - Reps handover.

Appendix 3 (Item 8.1)

Taken from Greater London Volunteering:

Principles of Volunteering

In January 2009, the London Stakeholders Volunteering Forum came together with guest stakeholders to discuss the definition of volunteering.

The Compact code on Volunteering currently defines volunteering as

“any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment.”

In response to an increasing interest in volunteering as a means to support people (back) into employment, and some clarity required around the differences between volunteering and work experience, the Forum felt it necessary to establish the principles behind the term ‘volunteering’.

Volunteering:

- Is mutually beneficial (to individual and organisation)
- Is independently chosen and freely given
- Is enabling and flexible wherever possible
- Has a community or social benefit
- Offered to not-for-profit activities

These principles will guide the volunteering infrastructure (members of the Forum) in providing support to volunteering activity.

In addition, the Forum notes the following considerations when developing a volunteering opportunity:

- Any financial benefit from the involvement of volunteers is reinvested to the community or allows a not-for-profit to continue to exist
- Organisations need to be clear where paid roles should be protected or reinstated again when affordable
- Volunteering roles should be designed with a Mutuality of Expectations statement to clarify expectations of commitment without entering into a contract which changes the role into one with employment rights
- Any other form of unpaid work or experience should not be labelled volunteering.

For example, a large employer supplying employees to support the development of small businesses are part of a mentoring scheme. Employees should be referred to as 'mentors' and the programme as a 'mentoring scheme'. Voluntary work as a term might be applied, but volunteering may not.