

Minutes of Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum

held on 24 Nov 2014, 10:00 – 12:00 hrs

Venue: Committee Room 5, Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2XY

Attendance:				
Member	abbreviation in minutes	Member Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Steve Porter	SP	Third Sector Potential CIC	TSP	VCS Representative
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow	VAH	
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve	FBPNR	
Julie Browne	JB	Aspergers Syndrome Access to Provision (A.S.A.P.) in Harrow	ASAP	Forum Chair / Co-opted VCS Representative
Elizabeth Hugo	EH	Aspergers Syndrome Access to Provision (A.S.A.P.) in Harrow	ASAP	
Mark Gillam	MG	Mind in Harrow	MIH	
Rachel Wright	RW	Voluntary Action Harrow	VAH	Minute Taker
Yaa Asamany	YA	Independent & Asperger Syndrome		
Avani Modasia	AM	AGE UK Harrow	AUH	VCS Representative
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	
Georgia Weston	GW	Friends of Pinner Park	FPP	
Sarah Kersey	SK	Harrow Happiness Campaign	HHC	
Leonie Hanson	LH	Home-Start Barnet	HSB	
Gilly Chowdry	GC	Home-Start Barnet Harrow Project	HSB	
Rickey Denton	RD	Harrow College	HCo	
Deven Pillay	DP	Harrow Mencap	HM	VCS Representative
Geraldine Gower	GG	The Disability Foundation	TDF	
Varsha Dodia	VD	Namaste Care CIC	NCC	
Russell Suttcliffe	RS	Harrow Community Farm	HCF	
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association	HEA	
Manpreet Chhokar	MC	Hope Not Hate	HNH	

... continued Attendance				
Member	abbreviation in minutes	Member Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Pushpa Hargovan	PH	Harrow Shopmobility	HS	
Dan Burke	DB	Ignite		
Tajinder Nijjar	TN	Harrow Citizen Advice Bureau	HCAB	
Cabdul Qadir	CQ	Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations / Somali Cultural & Educational Association	HASVO / SCEA	
Cllr Sue Anderson	SA	Harrow Council	HC	
John Hillingdale	JH	Harrow Nature Conservation Forum	HNCF	

Apologies:				
Member		Member Organisation		Forum Role
Alan Voda	AV	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	
Pamela Fitzpatrick	PF	Harrow Law Centre	HLC	
Jan Irwin	JI	Harrow Domestic and Sexual Violence Forum	HDSVF	
Eileen Martell	EM	HOPE Harrow	HH	

Item	Minutes	Action by whom	Action by when
1.	Welcome, Introductions, Apologies & Conflict of Interest		
1.1	JB welcomed everyone to the meeting.		
1.2	Conflict of interest declared: None declared.		
2.	Constitution		
2.1	JB summarised the history of the constitution: It was discussed and agreed in the March Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) forum meeting. A Constitution Working Group (CWG) produced a draft constitution which has gone back and forward. The CWG have got in down to 3 final questions. The VCS forum needs to decide if we adopt the draft.		

<p>2.1.1</p>	<p>LR said the CWG have spent a lot of time thinking about this and if the constitution is not adopted she will give up as she fed up and is not interested in being involved in a non-constituted forum. SK, GD, Alan Voda (AV) & VD were on the CWG and AB provided space & communications. The CWG had received feedback on the draft constitution which made them think and delve down deep to how it will work. Linda said that everyone has had their chance to input and they don't want to go over things that have already been decided.</p>		
<p>2.1.2</p>	<p>DP asked if people understood. SK went into detail saying she was a former VCS Rep until May 2014 where she talked to the other Reps, who didn't understand who the Forum members were, what the rules are or the structure of the forum. Originally the reps were part of Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP), this was a reference group. Sk had questioned what the purpose of it was and why we were doing it. In March 2014 SK proposed the need of a constitution to clarify a purpose of why attendees are meeting. GD said there was a consultation with elected councillors; they wanted to deal with a constituted group.</p>		
<p>2.1.3</p>	<p>SK used a draft constitution from Hounslow VCS Forum as a template and went away with the newly formed a constitution working group (CWG) to create a draft constitution. The draft has come back to meetings in, June, July and September. All comments and queries have been minuted. The CWG have gone out and asked for comments, held walk in sessions. The CWG have met 3 times, discussed every clause and invited people to join. SK remarked how they have developed the document through a thorough consultation. SK said they have used an array of engagement techniques sending around again for feedback and contacting people by phone.</p>		
<p>2.1.4</p>	<p>DP said it shouldn't be done just because the councillors want us to do it. SK said she agreed with the statement and the CWG did not think this either. DP said it has taken time for the councillors to use the forum.</p>		
<p>2.1.5</p>	<p>GW stated a great amount of effort and congratulated on the CWG's fantastic work.</p>		
<p>2.1.6</p>	<p>DP stated we don't want to do it just for Harrow Council. We also work with Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The VCS reps spent time getting them to acknowledge they should involved in the forum in consulting with the sector. There are some dangers if we constitute the forum we need to be clear what these are. LR queried if there is anything we are not clear about. GW asked if DP can clarify what the dangers are.</p>		
<p>2.2</p>	<p>LR asked if everyone has seen the constitution stating there are 3 remaining clauses that need to be voted on and asked how we are</p>		

<p>2.3</p> <p>2.3.1</p> <p>2.3.2</p> <p>2.3.3</p> <p>2.4.1</p>	<p>going to vote. MG asked can we discuss. LR asked how we will vote by secrets or hands. RS said It needs to be a consensus decision.</p> <p>LR read out Clause 5 under Membership and asked if people thought there should be a fee for membership, giving example of Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS) who had a membership fee as does Harrow Environmental Forum. LR views are it is better to avoid charging but some people had suggested we reserve the right to charge. GW asked if we can delay this for further down the line? AB queried that part of a reason for this decision was if we had to send mail outs via post we might need to charge. PH said we could have an interim period of free membership then introduce a charge.</p> <p>DP suggested that the second statement regarding to charging left it open so a decision can be made in future. GW queried if the decision needed to be made at AGM. DP answered 'No', it has to be 75% agreement. This clause gives flexibility, doesn't need a change to constitution. LR stated it's not much more complex. AM suggested we should leave it open at this stage. It is hard to get people to pay a fee if they don't know the benefits. GD proposed if we adopt now can we charge. Should the wording change from 'shall' to 'may'? JM asked for clarification what the 'may' is in relation to. The 75% rather than the option of charging.</p> <p>LR reported that people have said what about code of conduct, finance, elections? Those things don't belong in the constitution there will be separate documents e.g. code of conduct. We don't want to be changing the constitution every year. There will be documents produced later. I'm happy with either.</p> <p>MG stated Mind's views around membership: Mind in Harrow have made it clear there doesn't need to be a constitution, instead it could be a Terms of Reference (TOR). Is an organisation need to be created? What is needed is an effective mechanisms; rules, membership, decision making, bringing people together and formality. GW In my experience as secretary of another organisation we had a document, this was the constitution. Mind agree with having rules. This will be a new legal entity. The management board would have a legal role. They would be legally responsibility, insurance will be needed. GW asked is this not a good thing? MG gave the example that Mind in Harrow support a mental health forum, in setting up we considered; how do you ensure they members have a voice, need to have a democratic way of making decisions. We have a steering group, good rules and structure not an extra organisation. A legal structure needs time to manage. The mental health forum is an example and members feel represented.</p> <p>JB asked if it is the CWG's intention to be legal organisation. VD gave the example of Harrow Interfaith Council which have been</p>		
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	<p>operating for 30 years, they have a constitution. This helps, not hinders, we have a document to refer to which has a clear purpose. JB agreed there needs to something, whether it needs to be legal organisation is a question. DB asked is it a legal entity, as interested in understanding the process of it being an organisation. Would it need to become registered somewhere? MG replied that it will be an unincorporated organisations. Being a charity is a status. Legal responsibilities are with the management board. It would need insurance, policies in place. GW added only if you have requirement to have these in place. LR responded these may not be needed. MG recommend the CWG should get advice as the board will have the same responsibilities as an organisation.</p>		
2.4.2	<p>GW asked if the fear is that the responsibility for the board. That is for the individual to decide on. MG asked if people know what they are letting themselves into. AB added that this is the first step in a long process. If people want to take on the responsibility it is up to them. GW said there can be problems when there are too many trustees e.g. one organisation has 40 trustees – we need to be clear about the roles.</p>		
2.4.3	<p>JB reminded people that the discussion has gone onto the final question we need to come back at the end.</p>		
2.4.4	<p>LR said the CWG haven't heard these thoughts from MG through the process. There is some truth in what he says. FOHNF is constituted but doesn't have insurance. Not everyone needs the policies. We can go to organisations to get support with this. I don't think forum will need insurance. If so we can get it.</p>		
2.5.1	<p>JB asked if the forum can hold the vote for fee clause. RS asked if the exact fee be decided at AGM. DP said this shows a full discussion, proper debate has been held. LR stated a preference for DP's interpretation. SP added for clarification regarding an unincorporated organisation. It is the case that the people are in charge of finances. Silly not to get policies and insurances in place. I have been involved in the forum and Mind have been consistent in their view about not being in favour.</p>		
2.6.1	<p>JB asked if there is an agreed consensus - regarding the fee clause?</p>		
2.6.2	<p>Agreed by consensus: A fee for membership will be determined by at least 75% of registered members.</p>		
2.7	<p>Administration (6j)</p>		
2.7.1	<p>LR introduced the administration clause. This is the clause about whether there should be a restriction about size of groups joining the forum as reps. There has always been questions around smaller groups involvement. Reps are often from large orgs. It is good to see so many small groups. The reps have mostly been from larger orgs.</p>		

	<p>Need to make sure more are from small orgs. SK found it hard to represent the smaller groups when she was a rep. This is a clause that came from Hounslow, they had the same issue and had written into the constitution. What is a small group? Some people thought the size of the small groups as defined in this clause wasn't big enough, some people thought we shouldn't have this clause.</p> <p>2.7.2 JB stated the reps fully support smaller groups JB & SP are from smaller groups, there are concerns about getting people to take on the role. There needs to be a plan b if we don't get 50% of the reps from small groups. SK said this clause will focus our efforts in engaging with small groups. The intention is to focus our commitment to engage with small groups. We looked at forums across the country, all have concerns about big groups dominating the rep role. E.g. Brighton. It is a reminder to have the commitment to engaging with small groups. We could look at ways to engage small groups e.g. evening groups.</p> <p>2.7.3 JM asked is the 50% of the 8 people on the board? We must be clear if 50% is 2 or 4 people. LR replied that she is glad JM has made this point as it needs to be read in conjunction with clause 6b. We didn't want to envisage the same situation as we do now, that we don't have the situation that the reps become chair. There is an opportunity to have the chair who isn't a rep and vice chair who doesn't need to be on the board but maybe they can be. The max number is 8 on the board. There are reps with a small 'r'. There may be times we can send reps. We can choose someone who isn't a member of the board. We thought this was confusing. So we changed this to 'delegate'. These are reps with the big 'R' and can have a chair & 2 vice chairs. One could take on secretary and finance. Max number is 8. Clear that the 50% is of the 5 reps.</p> <p>2.7.4 JM said he's not clear. DP: said he was concerned this could restricted – being a rep takes time, lets strive rather than restrict.</p> <p>2.7.5 DP said there are fundamental flaws here. It's right we should have small groups as reps. I was voted in by small groups, the big groups wouldn't vote me in. If you tie the reps wholly into the forum and if the forum folds you don't have reps. Aim was to enhance. In the forum, how many members? The reps should represent the wider sector, you don't have to attend the forum to have a voice. Once you tie the reps to the forum this limits their representation. SK asked what the current elections mechanism is. DP said it goes to all the groups. SK asked who the reps represent. DP replied the whole sector. GD added, they should do</p> <p>2.7.6 DP said the reps fought to have some accountability through this process. How many here at the forum, who elects the reps? The members of the wider sector? GD said the election can be through the membership, not just those who attend. DP asked what if people</p>		
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	<p>don't sign up. SK replied that this can be done through the mailing list by whoever is administrating the forum.</p>		
2.7.7	<p>AB asked what the background to the reps elections is. Was it membership of the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP)? Was this a membership body? SK replied the HSP wasn't a membership body. AB asked how was voting done? SK replied that there was mailing list from forum, held at HAVS, then Ealing Council for Voluntary Services (ECVS)</p>		
2.7.8	<p>DP said the reps are not Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum reps, we are VCS reps. MG added that DP's point is interesting, either there is a constituted forum and the VCS reps are part of it. Current arrangement is they are VCS reps. Makes more sense to keep it loose. We can't have both. EH added I don't get paid so can't come to all meetings. Being a rep will be straining the ability of small organisations to be a rep. They should be representing all of constituents.</p>		
2.7.9	<p>JM said people need to be registered to vote. GW stated elected politicians don't just represent the people who voted for them they represent their whole constituency.</p>		
2.7.10	<p>GW asked where the mailing list belongs. DP answered that HAVS used to conduct the election, then the council facilitated it. GW said that we don't want the council to be doing it.</p>		
2.7.11	<p>JB said if the voting is from the wider sector, we use the mailing list, who ever administrates the process uses the mailing list to distribute election papers, this is where the votes go out. GW added that this makes sense that.</p>		
2.7.12	<p>JB asked how do those not on the list vote? VD replied having a constituted forum will clear this up. Only use an e-mail list, don't post. There is a void. Constitution clears it up.</p>		
2.7.13	<p>JB reminded people that there are 2 points about membership about small groups. GW asked for clarity is this 3 people out of the 8? RS replied there is no minimum number? GW replied this is clear, 50% is a moveable feast. JM stated it is very unclear; it needs to state that they aren't elected by the forum. Suggest a % of the board. Small orgs can be chair. This it is better to say 25% of the board. It would be harder to work; we would have to have additional elections. We currently elect every 2 years. RS said a lot of organisations have this process; we don't want to muddy this with procedural issues. The procedures can be adapted.</p>		
2.7.14	<p>SP: Regarding the VCS reps, there needs to be clarity. Are they reps of the forum or the sector? My understanding is we are reps of the sector. For the last 3 years there have been problems with the</p>		

	<p>engagements of the groups – this could be cutting out those who don't attend the forum. If people must be a member to get representation, is this the position we are going in?</p> <p>2.7.15 TN asked how to the reps get feedback from the sector? JD replied through VAH administration of the forum. TN asked how the reps canvas views. What method are you currently using? JB answered through the forum mailing list and newsletter. LR added this is a good question –who gives the reps a mandate? SK replied if we clarify the membership we could canvas the members, The reps we don't report back other than through the forum. DP agreed, this hasn't been perfect, but the reps don't want to strangle things. AM added one example is that we were approached by safeguarding board to become part of the board. The VCS reps were too busy, so approached all those working with children. Reps contacted children's groups. DP of Ignite & Rowena Jaber of Wish Centre now attend the board. TN stated that this isn't canvassing all the sector. VD: This didn't go out on e-mail. DB: It did go out on an e-mail, I responded to it.</p> <p>2.7.16 AB said he is confused – part of the forum is to have a collective groups, people aren't always going to be happy. JD: Is this clause too restrictive? There will be another doc about electing reps.</p> <p>2.7.17 JB asked if we don't have 3 from smaller groups what happens. GW asked who here is from small groups who would meet this criteria?</p> <p>(show of hands - 14)</p> <p>2.7.18 JB asked how many would put themselves forward. SK replied the reason people don't get involved is about not having the topics on the agenda of interest to smaller groups. DP: We are confusing the 2 things. The only people who can put themselves up are from those who are from the forum membership e.g. 30 groups.</p> <p>2.7.19 MG stated that Mind in harrow continues to vote against the formal constitution, but believes the forum does needs rules.</p> <p>2.7.20 JB stated that we need a vote by members. RS reminded the forum that there are no members. SK added this demonstrates why we need membership. DP said where the reps are concerned, this is wider than the forum. JB said we are not discussing the need of a constitution at the moment.</p> <p>2.7.21 JB asked can we vote. AM stated she agrees on constitution. However, small groups have tried to come on, not able to attend all the meetings. They didn't have the time, couldn't make the meeting, I'd like to step down rather than coming to these meetings. PH suggested that the small groups could extended their power to larger</p>		
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	<p>groups and that can be delegated to a larger organisation if they can't temporarily attend. LR said this would be in the procedures. I haven't volunteered to be a rep because there isn't a constitution. DP said this is about the management board. If there are 5 reps. What I am bothered about how we elect reps. LR said people can input when we write this doc.</p>		
2.7.22	<p>JB: invited those present to vote for including clause regarding small groups. For: 12 Against 6</p>		
2.7.23	<p>Vote carried. The following clause will be included: <i>A minimum of 50 per cent of VCS representatives on the Management Board shall be from small groups, which shall be defined as those having not more than one full-time paid employee or equivalent;</i></p>		
2.8.1	<p>Administration (6j) Application to membership.... LR gave an example that there were three people from one organisation here today so we will have three votes. In future only one vote for one organisation should apply. LR stated this clause allowed an organisation to appoint a deputy and asked whether they can attend and vote or attend and not vote. JB asked for clarification that it is just about the elected Reps. JB stated for the history and amount the reps learn she wouldn't put someone else forward and asked if she could vote by e-mail. RS asked if this clause was needed and what is the thinking. SK said there is a flaw in thinking about the reps.</p>		
2.8.2	<p>LR stated we could vote to remove this clause. JM proposed for the clause to be omitted.</p>		
2.8.3	<p>JB proposed a vote: Clause A - 0, Clause B - 0, Omitted – Majority.</p> <p>Agreed: To omit the clause</p>		
2.9.1	<p>To constitute the forum or not? JB asked do we adopt the constitution or not. JB agreed that there needs to be something but further discussion is needed to he had about how the Reps are elected. JB asked what if the wider sector chose not to be members.</p>		
2.9.2	<p>DP was concerned if people would lose confidence and it becomes a nightmare. DP suggested this can be strengthened when you have a management board and any decisions have to be endorsed by the Forum. DP stated we should be restricting power of the board within</p>		

<p>2.9.3</p> <p>2.9.4</p> <p>2.9.6</p> <p>2.9.7</p>	<p>agreed parameters and should stay true to the constitution as it needs to address and represent the wider sector. DP said this is a Terms of Reference (TOR) in many ways, why does it have to be constitution. DP asked can it be a TOR.GW said It was mentioned that it was to be written as a constitution in an agreed decision and minuted in March, this showed good due process, engaging people and an inclusive process.</p> <p>DB: hadn't heard the argument from MG prior to this meeting and will be abstaining.</p> <p>JB asked do we need more time.</p> <p>SK said in the discussion in March we did talk about the unincorporated association. DP proposed we put to the vote with 2 issues;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Strengthen the role of the forum 2) Subject to the election of the reps going to the wider sector. <p>LR said DP has had enough time to mention this and should have said about this previously.</p> <p>JB proposed there is a recommendation about how the reps are elected. SK said there has been good engagement, hope this will lead to more engagement. JM stated it was either adopt or not - no 'subject to'. JM stated why the forum needs to agree all decisions if there is a constitution to be followed as things will go round in circles. JM proposed we adopt the constitution, GW seconded.</p> <p>JB held a vote For: 17 Against: 1 Abstention: 5</p> <p>Agreed: Constitution adopted.</p>		
<p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p>	<p>Elected reps</p> <p>JB stated currently there is one vacancy as a VCS Rep. DP proposed we have a summit in January and elections in January which means we have to work quickly. AB asked why rush and suggested May. MC said you need to organise what you want to achieve and January is too soon. JB proposed an election in March. RS agreed with DP and said we can start planning in Jan. DP said we can have the summit in Jan with elections in March and stated we had a summit 2 years ago. JB reinstated we are one rep down and asked do we want to co-op a Rep between now and March. RS nominated LR. LR nominated SK. RS said this should go out to the wider sector and apologised for putting LR on the spot.</p>		

3.2	AB asked if all the reps were being elected in March. JB answered all current reps will stand down.		
3.3	JB asked do we want to co-op a rep. GW proposed LR or SK.		
3.4	JB proposed AB to send an e-mail inviting people to express an interest. GW asked why can we not make the decision now. JB agreed to mail out and give LR time to think.		
Action	AB to send expression of interest via mailing list.	AB	
4.	Harrow Council proposed Cuts Consultation		
4.1	JB proposed a bulletin board. DP said there is a meeting tomorrow organised by Cllr. Sue Anderson. AB said he was not sure if people will look at a bulletin board and proposed we have information sent out by e-mail as people are more likely to click on it if of interest. JB asked are people happy that these alerts go out via e-mail? Agreed: Activities relating to campaigning about the council cuts to be sent out via the mailing list. Any Information about the cuts to be sent out to AB to circulate via HCA mailing list.		
5.	Reps Update		
5.1	JB said an update was sent out with the agenda. SP stated since then there has been updates on meetings with the Harrow Chief Officers about volunteering who have agreed to take this forward. SP stated the next step is to set up working party and will be proceeding and inviting people to join. JB to e-mail docs to AB today	JB	
5.2	DP stated The Health & Wellbeing board is reviewed.		
5.3	AB said he needs any document before 28 th November to be circulated via HCA the mailing list.		
6.	Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising		
6.1	15 th Sep: Minutes agreed as accurate.		
6.2	21 st Oct: Spelling of Jane Scully's name (Friends of the Earth) Otherwise minutes agreed as accurate		
Action	AB to edit previous minutes	AB	
7.	AOB		

<p>7.1</p> <p>Note</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p>	<p>SP wanted to introduce Hope not Hate. MC explained Hope Not Hate (HNH) is an anti-racist charity. As a community organiser they are targeting those who are disillusioned and isolated in Harrow. They have an event on 16th December 2014 at Carramea for people to consider voter registration and ask the question if their members are registered. MC asked whether attendees can organise drives for their clients to get people to vote as many people have been dropped off the system. SP stated the organisation is covering both Harrow and Brent, and are concerned about social cohesion in Harrow. DP said this was very important in terms of the due cuts in the sector and would be happy to work with HNH. DP stated Harrow Mencap have been working with people with learning disabilities to make sure they can vote.</p> <p>Meeting Minute Taker Changed To AB</p> <p>JB said how the Reps had meet with VAH recently and stated that the information that was being sent out from HCA would be attributed to the organisation as it was sometimes unclear who the information was being sent from. AB said VAH already do this and he didn't think it would help much would give it a go and be more prominent.</p> <p>AB reminded the Forum the deadline for things to go into the HCA Newsletter was the 28th November.</p>		
<p>8.</p>	<p>Date of next meetings All meetings to be held 10am – 12pm at Committee Room 1 & 2, Harrow Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19th January 2015 • 23rd March 2015 • 1st June 2015 • 27th July 2015 • 28th September • 30th November 2015 		
	<p>Meeting closed at 12.06</p>		