

Minutes of Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Forum
Special Meeting held on 21 Oct 2014, 16:30 – 18:30 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	
Pamela Fitzpatrick	PF	Harrow Law Centre	HLC	
Rachel Wright	RW	Voluntary Action Harrow	VAH	Meeting Minute Taker
Cllr Manji Kara	MK	Harrow Council	HC	
Avani Modasia	AM	AGE UK Harrow	AUH	VCS Representative
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	
Jan Irwin	Jl	Harrow Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum	HDSV	
Sarah Kersey	SK	Harrow Community Radio	HCR	
Pratima Shah	PS	Harrow Equalities Centre	HEC	
Deven Pillay	DP	Harrow Mencap	HM	VCS Representative
Stephen Bolsover	SB	Harrow Nature Conservation Forum	HNCF	
Varsha Dodia	VD	Harrow Interfaith Council / Namaste Care CIC	HIC / NC	
Russell Suttcliffe	RS	Harrow Community Farm	HCF	
Vera Murray-Fowler	VMF	Harrow Shopmobility	HS	
Lynne Burke	LB	Ignite Trust	IT	

... continued Attendance				
Member	abbreviation in minutes	Member Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Pushpa Hargovan	PH	Harrow Shopmobility	HS	
Tajinder Nijjar	TN	Harrow Citizen Advice Bureau	HCAB	
Baldev Sharma	BS	Harrow Anti-Racist Alliance	HARA	

Apologies:				
Member		Member Organisation		Forum Role
David Phelops	DPH	Harrow Community Choir	HCC	
John Seymour	JS	Friends For Friends	FFF	
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association	HEA	
Jane Skully	JSK	Friends Of The Earth	FOTE	
Ewan Malcom	EM	The Disability Foundation	TDF	
Carol Foyle	CF	Kids Can Achieve	KCA	VCS Representative
Cllr Sue Anderson	SA	Harrow Council	HC	
Geraldine Gower	GG	The Disability Foundation	TDF	
Dan Burke	DB	Ignite Trust	IT	
Frank Anti	FA	Harrow Equalities Centre	HEC	
Jane Jaroudi	JJ	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 and members introduced themselves.		
1.2	Conflict of interest declared: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour Councillor – Cllr Pamela Fitzpatrick, • Conservative Councillor - Cllr Manji Kara • Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum Reps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Steve Porter, Deven Pillay, Julie Browne, Avani Modasia 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrow Community Action (HCA) directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rachel Wright, Deven Pillay, Steve Porter, Avani Modasia, Varsha Dodia 		
2.	Structure of the Forum and its relationship with Harrow Community Action (HCA) and Voluntary Action Harrow (VAH).		
2.1	At a VCS Representative meeting, JB & CF questioned how HCA & the forum fit together. JB shared round information sheets. RW clarified the full list of HCA directors. AM clarified there are three VCS Reps on the HCA board but not on as VCS Reps, they are on this board as representatives from their own organisations.		
2.1.1	GD was pleased that it is a local organisation – sometimes there are times when there will be conflict as the role of HCA is different to other VCS group which provide a specific service. The current structure confuses some people. HCA should be doing what it is set out to do but there is a different role of HCA compared to most organisations due to the Harrow Council contract to administrate the Forum.		
2.1.2	LR said it would be helpful if all HCA board of director's names are listed.		
2.1.3	AM said GD is right to some extent – the role of HCA is to bring in money which will then be distributed to its membership, it is wider than just the single contract. Its aim will be to bring in other contracts. VMF remarked it is often the case that it is the same people appearing everywhere due to the same few volunteers coming forward and doing all the roles. There can be conflicts around who are the most loyal – some people spread themselves too thinly. DP stated there are ways of dealing with the conflict.		
2.1.4	LR asked if a HCA Director left HCA as a HCA member would they have to resign from the HCA board. DP answered they would need to withdraw.		
2.1.5	LR asked for clarification regarding founding members, was the reason for them joining the board due to their roles in their own organisation. DP stated HCA was quickly set up following a survey to the sector and using a consultant. Initially there was founding members, in future HCA intends go through elections from its membership. AV gave the example that when Angela Dias left Harrow Association of Disabled People she resigned from the HCA board. VMF asked what is the distinction between a member org and a director e.g. Shopmobility. DP said 'yes', a member of Shopmobility could become an HCA director, but the individual would be the director. The organisation would need to become an HCA member first.		

2.2	VD asked for clarification with complaints statement – “If VAH have any issues with the Forum they take it back to HCA.” JB stated HCA are paying VAH to administer. HCA are contracting VAH to administer the forum so complaints should be directed to HCA around the administration of the forum.		
2.3	AB wanted clarification on an email sent which mentioned unrest in the VCS Sector with VCS reps. AB highlighted that the e-mail doesn't refer to any unrest. AB read out the e-mail. JB agreed that unrest wasn't the correct wording.		
2.4	VMF stated the sector wants an umbrella body was what wanted. This worked beautifully in the past. The current structure sounds complicated, if HCA was the umbrella and ran everything instead of contracting it out it would be more straight-forward. DP stated there was a survey within the sector & a summit and to ask organisations views. The current consortium model was put forward and accepted.		
2.5	<p>TN asked for clarification. If the VCS Reps are attending meeting and representing the forum they should be disclosing the meetings. JB stated this has disappeared since when she was last chair. Previously there was a template that VCS Reps would complete after meetings and this was sent to the forum. SP said the VCS Reps had a look at utilising how we use the time in the Forum so this was sacrificed. The way it was presented was more informal. GD is referring to a specific form. VD suggested it could be sent electronically. JB suggested restarting VCS Reps using the template. GD suggested circulating the report with the meeting agenda and have a question, rather than the full report on the agenda.</p> <p>Action: Approved – VCS Reps to complete report using template and circulate with the forum agenda. Another template also to be created.</p>	JB	
2.6	VD asked how organisation's feed in. AM said used to have the CEO meeting prior to forum meetings. VD said there are also other boards; e.g. health and well being. The reps aren't on all these boards. JB said another member of the VCS Forum can be elected from the forum and feedback. DP stated the issue is that the Reps role was developed outside the forum as part of the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP). Some argued needed elections / other ways to get groups to participate. The VCS Reps currently go through a process where the wider sector is involved. People who attend forum is a small sample of sector.		
3.	To Constitute the VCS Forum or Not?		
3.1	JB took responsibility for upsetting people about this agenda item. JB wasn't up to date having missed some of the VCS Forum		

	<p>meetings and it appeared that people were still arguing if it should be constituted whereas in previous forum meetings it has been agreed to constitute the forum and the Constitution Working Group (CWG) had been tasked to develop a constitution.</p>		
3.2	<p>AB stated the constitution has been sent round 3 times, detailed feedback had been received from AM. It was then raised at the last forum, and has since received detailed comments from DP.</p>		
3.3	<p>VD stated form follows function and asked is it fit for purpose? LR suggested go round the table to get feedback. DP suggested if you have a subgroup going out, highlight the issues that have been raised and report back the comments and only debate the sections that have been queried.</p>		
3.4	<p>GD was under the impression this meeting was to discuss the constitution. JB suggested fifteen minute spent on this item. LR invited members to list the clauses in the constitution they had questions / concerns about. The following clauses were highlighted: 5d, 5b, 5h, 6b, 6d, 6h, 7 (whole), 4a, 6g, 5b, 4c, 3i, 4a, 4c, 5d, 5f, 5g, 6d, 6f, 6g, 6i, 6i, 6k, 6l, 7c (challenged), 8d, 9i, 11b, 11c,</p>		
3.4.1	<p>LR would have suggested we got together and discussed those clauses listed, rephrase, write up any wording. There are too many and this will take too long. DP stated in the main it is about queries, some is about principles e.g. naming another organisation in the constitution. A concern is having a constituted body with a restricted membership, if only 10 people signed up how is it representing the sector? The aim of the forum is to be the main conduit. VD: to elect people there needs to be a membership. We need a list of people who can vote.</p>		
3.4.2	<p>VMF has questions that need to raised e.g. is no charge where does the money come from, who is going to administer the forum? Do you have the money available to do this? RS suggested, based on others challenges, a presentation as there are questions that need to be discussed. GD stated purpose of membership renewal is to make sure membership is up to date. The Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS) database was out of date. Regarding payments, it would be covered by the council set aside the money although this may not happen with cuts. The aim is to make it simple to become a member. If the cuts mean we don't have the money we can review later. Suggest we have something in place which can be adapted in the future. DP suggested leaving charging open in the document as it has more flexibility.</p>		
3.4.3	<p>JB suggested that all the clauses where individuals are not happy and suggestions for amendments are put into a document for everyone to view.</p>		

<p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p>	<p>AB stated VMF point was important and asked if there are individuals not on e-mail who should be consulted to contact him and he will get in contact with them.</p> <p>GD reminded the Forum that the Constitution Working Group (CWG) have suggested a series of drop-ins which people can attend. LR went on to say the sector can also phone or e-mail. LR highlighted that majority of the clauses are not causing any concerns. AB: Walk in groups still open, Wednesday 12.30pm - 2.30pm, Thursday 5pm - 9pm.</p> <p>Action: Send comments/queries to CWG</p> <p>Action: Create a document that lists all feedback received and circulate with next meeting agenda.</p>	<p>VMF</p> <p>CWG</p>	
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p>	<p>Dealing with the cuts</p> <p>SP suggested Councillors' leave. LR thought it is better if they stay. JB proposed a vote as to whether the councillors stay or leave. <i>Vote:</i> 6 for Councillors to leave, 7 for Councillors to stay, 2 abstentions.</p> <p>Agreed: Councillors can stay.</p> <p>SP said the Council have been given a difficult job. The VCS reps have been trying to get to grips with the councillors and the staff, saying they need to involve the VCS in the answers. There are concerns with the consultation as it doesn't have substance. SP stated we need to offer a hand to understand we are in it together. It's not just go at it by knocking them as they are in power. Offer a chance to meet with people and talk it through.</p> <p>AM said some organisations have got together due to those having Service Level Agreements (SLA) – looking at wiping out all the SLA's. This group met with commissioners to say if you cut the voluntary sector now they won't be around when larger cuts are there. AM stated service users don't understand the consultation e.g. what is supporting people. The Council, following discussions have agreed to put costing on the website. There has been an open letter to papers. Stage 2 is to invite back benchers to come and meet up the voluntary & community sector, including service users next Monday (27th Oct). This came about through some groups getting together to see what could be done about the cuts, organisations who received small grants, which have gone this year, and Outcome Based Grants (OBG) who may lose funding were invited to include their name. Many have signed up, the letter went in the local papers. The group have also been to talk with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to highlight that first thing individuals will do who need support and is go to GP / A&E so they will be picking up the pieces</p>		

	<p>of the cuts to local support services. DP stated one thing raised is that the current administration made pledges regarding vulnerable people and the VCS sector. It has been suggested that they back load the cuts not front load them. They have not thought through the potential impact. On 3rd December it is disability day, the group is planning a public march.</p> <p>4.3.1 PF suggests those groups with SLA's & OBG check their contract with the council. It may not be that they can stop the grant. Regarding the Harrow Council 'Take Part' consultation, this is a pre-consultation not a full consultation. The full consultation will take time, 8-12 weeks and this will take the process beyond April 2015. PF stated we need to be working together and she was upset to see the letter and that HLC had not be included into it. This indicates that there are a small group who are upset about the cuts but other organisations are not. AM said Mark Gillham of Harrow In Mind was responsible for contacting the Law Centre.</p> <p>4.4 PF thought the current thinking should not be to accept the cuts have to be made. DP agreed and thought it should be a whole sector approach. PF stated there is a challenge panel to look at the cuts. Harrow Law Centre are working with Unite Community around challenging the changes to Council Tax. BS stated there is no harm it recommending suggestions. DP reminded people to attend the meeting on the 27th Oct. PF stated the meeting which the council back benchers have been invited to on the 27th Oct, clashes with council tax meeting.</p> <p>4.5 RS mentioned the Localism Act, where the community can register assets. Can we submit a judicial review? The information available on the Council website is very vague. Currently no community assets are registered. The community has the right to challenge. Community groups can offer to run something e.g. Arts Centre. DP said it's not that simple. Have to go through EU tendering. VD stated right to challenge not right to buy. Right to challenge is simpler. RS suggested assets can be transferred. AM stated we would need to TUPE (Transfer of undertakings) the staff. RS said this depends if you are taking over the physical asset or the service. BS gave Carramea as an example. LR stated it is not registered as an asset so not the same. SP said it was in the interest of the council to hand it over or put on the market? Handing over Carramea was a way that the Council can save money from the council by not running it.</p> <p>4.5.1 VD said if there is a covenant this can make a difference. RS said this is the old law, the council has ignored this. Here is an opportunity to bring in new people. SK remarked under localism you have to prove more than financial value. If it can generate social value. GD stated community management of parks is being discussed however taking over the running of a park is much more involved that running occasional events. GD said HCT had the</p>		
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	<p>experience of an SLA being scraped. However, with dialogue they came up with solution and offered to help with reducing costs. HCT have now started doing some contract work. AM gave the example of how in other Labour run boroughs they are working in partnership e.g. Haringey. In Harrow it's become them and us. There is a need to work together. SP detailed that the leader of the council has said yes to co-design with the voluntary sector. Since this discussion nothing has come of this. Need to have a dialogue.</p>		
4.6	<p>DP said the council are thinking that if the Council don't do it, volunteers will do it. This could be competition for volunteers from VCS. SK explained this is job substitution. DP thought the VCS needs to be seen as not cheap – but cost effective.</p>		
4.7	<p>JB stated the open letter had to be launched quickly, where others can join the group. VD asked who is co-ordinating this. AM answered there isn't one person co-ordinating and it was being done on an ad-hoc basis by a group. AB asked which groups wrote the letter. AM and DP answered: Age UK Harrow, Harrow Careers, Mind in Harrow, Harrow CAB, Harrow Mencap and Middlesex Association of The Blind.</p>		
4.8	<p>VD asked if small grants had gone. DP said they have not gone. AB thought AM had said they had gone. AM said it is only part of the proposal. VD stated there is no application process so it will technically not fly. So what are small groups going to do, as some rely on that grant. VD said it is the people with the broad shoulders are running this but the little guys are completely being squashed. DP disagreed and stated it was being opened up and the council wrote to every group that received grants. VD, PF (and others) stated they hadn't received anything. DP said they got a list from Harrow Council and AM stated some groups had signed up. DP apologised and stated they have made a start.</p> <p>Action: Someone from the group that wrote the open letter to David Perry writes a quick synopsis that states where they are, what they've done and the full letter. This then goes to AB who shares it through the HCA newsletter.</p>	AM / DP	
4.8.1	<p>RS stated what this group is doing is short circuiting the VCS Forum and destroying the whole point of its existence. LR agreed and stated this is why the Forum needs constituting so it can speak on behalf of the sector. RS detailed it is the reps who are contradicting the Forum. DP disagreed. RS responded that DP is involved in it. DP stated but not as a Rep. JB made clear this was done via individual organisations not the VCS Reps.</p>		
4.8.2	<p>GD thought that if the impression is that the small groups were not concerned about the 'cuts' there is a need to create a press release that there is a wider concerns from the forum. JB asked has this</p>		

	<p>undermined the Forum. SK said it bypassed rather than undermined. RS agreed, the Forum needs to highlight there are others who have the same level of concerns. PF stated she does think it undermined the Forum and any letter will just repeat what has been said and will make the VCS look divided. DP agreed saying that this was the start of the campaign and invites contributors. PF said the campaign should be the Forum.</p>		
4.9	<p><i>Not minuted due to multiple conversations.</i> Attendees suggested the Forum takes over and lead on this. DP suggested that for any further correspondence the chair signs this on behalf of the Forum. PF reminded the attendees that the consultation is a long process, there will be other opportunities to campaign e.g. use call in, deputations.</p>		
4.9.1	<p>SK asked is there a template letter for call-ins. PF stated No, it needs to be against a specific example. RS asked if there was an example that could be shared. DP said they could.</p>		
4.9.2	<p>DP reinvited everyone to an open invite to 4pm on 27th @ Age UK all can attend. Backbenchers invited at 6pm. AM said please bring service users. RS asked which organisations has AM contacted and stated this has not gone through the Forum.</p> <p>Action: Send invitation to the consultation to VAH</p> <p>Action: RW to connect PF, RS, JB</p> <p>Action: Draft letter/statement/press release from forum.</p>	<p>VAH</p> <p>RW</p> <p>JB with help from PF & RS</p>	
4..9.3	<p>DP said don't do as letter and said join the group. LR stated it's not come and join the group, it's for the group to come and join the Forum. PF agrees, saying it has to be the Forum.</p>		
5.	<p>VCS representative to Cabinet</p>		
5.1	<p>SP: This is something that the Labour administration have requested. Currently the reps are waiting for job description. Cllr Sue Anderson is chasing this.</p>		
6.	<p>Resignation of VCS Rep</p>		
6.1	<p>CF has resigned as a rep, as she does not feel able to fulfil the role at the moment, but she is fully committed to her organisation being involved and to a strong cohesive sector.</p>		

7.	<p>Date of next meetings</p> <p>All meetings to be held 10am – 12 noon at Committee Room 1 & 2, Harrow Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24th November 2014 • 19th January 2015 • 23rd March 2015 • 1st June 2015 • 27th July 2015 • 28th September • 30th November 2015 		
	Meeting closed at 18:46		