

**Minutes of Harrow Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum**  
**Ordinary Meeting held on 23 March 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 pm**  
**Committee Rooms 1&2, Harrow Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2XY**

<b>Attendance:</b>				
<b>Attendee</b>	abbreviation in minutes	<b>Organisation</b>	abbreviation in minutes	<b>Forum Role</b>
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	VCS Representative
Linda Robinson	LR	Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve		Forum Vice-Chair Minute Taker
Varsha Dodhia	VD	Harrow Interfaith	HIF	VCS Representative
Sania Sehbai	SS	Harrow Women's Centre	HWC	VCS Representative
Julian Maw	JM	Hatch End Association	HEA	
Eniola Adetunji		Fresh Horizons CNB (the Chance of a New Beginning)		
Richard McCaffrey	RM	38 Degrees (Harrow Local Group)	38D	
Dannie Darko	DD	The WISH Centre	WISH	
Samuel Genen	SG	Harrow Law Centre	HLC	
Carol Grant	CG	Harrow Street Pastors		
Leonie Hanson		Home-Start Barnet, the Harrow Project		
Cabdul Qadir Mohamed		Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations	HASVO	
Bill Phillips	BP	Harrow Association of Disabled People	HAD	
Neena Garnavos	NG	Harrow Carers	HC	
Somanah Achadoo	SA	Healthwatch Harrow		

<b>Apologies:</b>				
Carol Foyle	CF	Kids Can Achieve (Westminster Society for people with learning difficulties)	KCA	Forum Chair and VCS Representative
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport		Forum Vice-Chair
Eileen Martell	EM	HOPE Harrow		
Rowena Jaber	RJ	The WISH Centre		

Jan Irwin		Harrow Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum		
Deven Pillay		Harrow Mencap		
Avani Modasia		Age UK Harrow		
David Griffiths		Harrow Bereavement Care		
Kelly Mattoo		Yiewsley Cornerstone Centre		
Vandana Y Joshi		Brahmin Society North London		
Rachel Wright		Harrow Community Action		

Item	Minutes	Action by whom	Action by when
1.	<p><b>Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</b></p> <p>1.1 AB opened the meeting by explaining that he was taking the chair in the last minute absence of CF and GD, as Vice Chair, and as LR was taking the minutes. After a round of introductions, he drew attention to a questionnaire distributed around the table by SA, about people's experiences of healthcare. All were encouraged to return them completed to SA.</p> <p>1.2 AB read out the list of apologies received and checked that no Conflicts of Interest were anticipated in relation to the agenda topics. He asked participants to make it clear if they did not want something that was said to be minuted.</p>		
2.	<p><b>Agenda Review</b></p> <p>2.1 AB established that all were happy with the content and sequence of the agenda, and that one item of Any Other Business was expected to be raised.</p>		
3.	<p><b>What is the Care Act? What is its impact? – Harrow Law Centre</b></p> <p>3.1 SG explained that the Care Act was an extensive, well drafted document that brought together different pieces of previous legislation. It covered a broad range of a local authority's responsibilities, which must be considered holistically in relation all of its other responsibilities and must also be compliant with the Equalities Act. There was a positive obligation to protect and safeguard people, both in medical provision by the NHS/CCG and social provision by the council, which had separate budgets. Levels of need had to be assessed regardless of an individual's income and certain questions were required to be asked. Unlike previously, these now also covered the care of carers. There had been cases where local authority refusals had been overturned on grounds of human rights.</p> <p><b>Action: SG's <a href="#">presentation [PDF]</a> to be included with the minutes.</b></p>	AB	with minutes

4.	<p><b>Disability – Harrow Association of Disabled People</b></p> <p>4.1 BP outlined the work of HAD. It was estimated that its Benefits Advice Team had brought an extra million pounds to Harrow residents, and it had helped people to take cases to tribunals. HAD’s Red Brick Cafe in Wealdstone was staffed by service users with learning difficulties. Other activities included training courses, providing speakers, a dancing group, a popular nightclub, brokerage accountancy for personal budgets, Pay As You Earn schemes and more. Ten partnerships had been formed, for example with Barnet. BP had been trying to encourage more volunteers, especially those who could look for fund-raising opportunities, following funding cuts. A move from Bentley House into offices behind the Red Brick Cafe had saved money, but there was a question mark over the future of the building due to Wealdstone’s regeneration plans.</p>		
5.	<p><b>Carers – Harrow Carers</b></p> <p>5.1 NG ran through a presentation, giving figures to show the worth of carers at £132 billion nationally. Official definitions of a carer existed, but HC was not strict about them. Its services included advice, although not up to tribunal level, and holistic activities such as yoga. HC had been commissioned by Harrow CCG to run a preventative positive psychology programme, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT). HC would act as a hub for other organisations, reducing the need for carers to keep retelling their stories to different agencies. NG encouraged groups to signpost people to HC. AB urged HC to become a VCS Forum member.</p> <p><b>Action: NG’s <a href="#">presentation [PDF]</a> to be included with the minutes.</b></p>	AB	with minutes
6.	<p><b>Discussion on Disability and Carers</b></p> <p>6.1 VD referred to the poor English language skills of many carers and people with disabilities who needed help. Many services were not culturally sensitive. NG agreed that even when needs were known, they were not always able to be provided. There had been some negative feedback about certain sessions at HASVO, for example, which had been adjusted as a result. SG confirmed that both the Care Act and the Equalities Act placed obligations on authorities to provide reasonable spiritually and culturally sensitive adjustments. So, if a need was identified by a family or carer, it must be met. SS asserted that some services offered by HWC were helping women to get some of these needs addressed.</p> <p>6.2 Responding to BP’s concerns about funding, AB spoke of “Harrow Giving”, which was a plan to create a pool of fundraisers to share fundraising across a number of Harrow organisations.</p>		
7.	<p><b>Member Networking Break / Festival of Purim</b></p> <p>7.1 As it was the Jewish festival of Purim, AB read out a special message which had been approved by HIF’s Jack Lynes as a member of the Jewish community. SS high-lighted other religious and cultural festivals of the season, including Holi, Easter and Nowruz. Appropriate refreshments were therefore provided for the break.</p>		

<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Management Board Update</b></p> <p><b>8.1 Voluntary Sector Review</b> – CF had met with Barry Kendler (BK), as expected, to talk about the council’s Voluntary Sector Review. LR relayed CF’s report that BK had asked a lot of yes/no questions about the relationships between the various local VCS structures/bodies. He had wanted to know what help was needed from the council in order for the sector to become more commercial. Despite being pressed, he had not been forthcoming about the Review’s terms of reference. It was all about procuring services from the sector instead of dishing out grants. CF had offered the Forums’ help and had since tried to find out when the sector would receive feedback from the review and learn of its recommendations. The Forum’s Management Board were not confident that many individual organisations had been consulted. Council Leader David Perry had responded that it was an ‘internal’ review at stage one of a two stage process. He had given assurances that the sector would have much more involvement in the second stage and had offered to meet with “the local VCS” and listen to organisations’ comments only after a proposed new strategy had already been collated. LR thought it seemed as though the council wished to write a replacement for the expiring Third Sector Strategy which, although it had never been properly implemented or monitored, had at least been written by Steve Porter at Third Sector Potential on behalf the sector itself.</p> <p><b>Action: Outcomes from the Voluntary Sector Review and Third Sector Strategy replacement plans to be advised to members.</b></p> <p><b>8.2</b> BP confirmed that HAD was one of the organisations that had already given its input to the review. He warned that, eventually, only statutory services would be provided by the council. He clarified that an ‘internal’ review meant one that was conducted only within the council’s Labour group, and that ‘commercial’ meant self-sustaining. LR and AB wished that the administration had been more upfront and inclusive about its intentions and findings. At the next Representatives’ meeting with the Council Leader and Chief Executive, Management Board members hoped to discuss the whole engagement process and the dates of expected future consultations affecting the sector, and ask for a map showing “how health works”, said AB.</p> <p><b>8.3 Save the Bridge</b> – LR expressed the Board’s disappointment that, in the face of the threatened ending of its council contract to run mental health services at The Bridge, charity Rethink had not turned to the Forum for help but had instead organised an event that clashed directly with tonight’s Forum meeting, leaving a missed opportunity to raise awareness and show solidarity. Some considered it ironic and deplorable that an online petition to save the centre had been initiated by Harrow Conservatives. Receiving such late notice of cuts like this from the council made it difficult to co-ordinate protests before irreversible decisions were made. Groups were encouraged to bring such issues to the Forum as soon as they were known. RM and LR drew attention to 38D’s facility to set up online petitions locally and get the message out to a wide public, which they felt would be a better way to conduct a united campaign.</p> <p><b>8.4 Volunteering Strategy</b> – AB and colleagues were still working with the council on its plan for a web based strategy.</p> <p><b>Action: Volunteering Strategy progress to be shared with members.</b></p>	<p>Management Board</p> <p>AB</p>	<p>when known</p> <p>when known</p>
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	<p><b>8.5 Events Policy</b> – LR gave an update that the final version of the policy approved by Cabinet had featured charges more acceptable for community groups holding events in parks and public spaces. Many of its requirements were still considered unenforceable, however, especially as they now applied to events with no minimum number of attendees.</p>		
9.	<p><b>Health &amp; Wellbeing Advisory Sub-group</b></p> <p><b>9.1</b> VD said that she and members of the sub-group would be attending the CCG’s first meeting about its Sustainability and Transformation Plan on 29 March. The VCS had an important role to play in keeping the plan alive in these challenging times.</p> <p><b>9.2</b> While the sub-group was still considering the best way for the sector to feed into the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB), rather than leave the VCS non-voting advisor’s seat vacant, CF had offered to attend HWB meetings in an ‘acting’ capacity, with VD as a reserve in her absence. This was agreed as an acceptable interim arrangement by all present.</p>		
10.	<p><b>VCS Forum Representative Election</b></p> <p><b>10.1</b> AB had received an official VCS nomination form from Thanuja Pereira (TP) of the South Harrow Christian Fellowship. He read out her nomination statement. There were no other nominations and no objections to TP being elected as a VCS Forum Representative.</p> <p><b>Agreed: TP to serve on the Forum Management Board as a VCS Forum Representative.</b></p>		
11.	<p><b>Membership Applications</b></p> <p><b>11.1</b> AB had received 15 new applications for Forum membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harrow Street Pastors <i>represented by</i> Carol Grant</li> <li>• Communities into Training and Employment (CITE) <i>represented by</i> Jo Barter</li> <li>• Watford FC Community Sports &amp; Education Trust <i>represented by</i> Steve Williams</li> <li>• The Tamil Association of Brent <i>represented by</i> Siva Sivapalan</li> <li>• Harrow Law Centre <i>represented by</i> Pamela Fitzpatrick</li> <li>• Capable Communities Ltd <i>represented by</i> Oluwaseun Ipinmoroti</li> <li>• Harrow Foodbank <i>represented by</i> Oky Lee</li> <li>• Norwood <i>represented by</i> Sharon Bradman</li> <li>• The West House and Heath Robinson Museum Trust <i>represented by</i> Cynthia Wells</li> <li>• Love Harrow <i>represented by</i> Chad Rigney</li> <li>• Pandit Ram Sahai Sangit Vidyalaya (Sangeet College) <i>represented by</i> Udayani Garnage</li> <li>• Stanmore &amp; District Scouts <i>represented by</i> Stuart Hogge</li> <li>• Harrow Community Action <i>represented by</i> Rachel Wright</li> <li>• Hestia Housing &amp; Support <i>represented by</i> Sadiyah Muhammad</li> <li>• Healthwatch Harrow <i>represented by</i> Somanah Achadoo</li> </ul>		

	<p><b>11.2</b> All except Healthwatch Harrow were accepted without question. There were some strong feelings that, as Healthwatches were required by statute, Harrow's did not count as part of the VCS even though it was hosted by a local social enterprise, which SA said was set to become a registered charity.</p> <p><b>Agreed: Fourteen new members to be accepted.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Eligibility of Healthwatch Harrow to be considered in more detail.</b></p> <p><b>11.3</b> The Management Board had decided to reject the recent application from the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust as it was a public sector body. It was understood that its voluntary 'Friends Group' had ceased to exist. Nevertheless, Forum members could continue to engage with the hospital's volunteering programme and vice versa.</p>	<p><b>Management Board</b></p>	<p><b>by next meeting</b></p>
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Forum Members' Offers and Wants</b></p> <p><b>12.1</b> JM asked members to support the initiative by Cultura London to save Harrow Arts Centre, by pledging a donation. Details of how to do so could be found on HEA's website at <a href="http://www.hatchend.org/harrow-arts-centre">www.hatchend.org/harrow-arts-centre</a> or from <a href="http://www.culturalondon.uk">www.culturalondon.uk</a>.</p> <p><b>12.2</b> RM appealed to members to think of coming first to 38D when there was a local issue about which they wanted to campaign or raise a petition. He wondered if there was any support among Forum members to put pressure on the council to declare Harrow a "TTIP Free Zone", as has happened at other local authorities in response to the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership which threatened to compromise democracy across Europe. There was interest in pursuing the idea, especially as a signal of the sector's concerns about the privatisation of the NHS.</p> <p><b>Action: Harrow's Democratic Services to be contacted to find out how such a TTIP Free Zone declaration could be achieved in Harrow.</b></p>	<p><b>LR</b></p>	<p><b>by next meeting</b></p>
<p><b>13.</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016</b></p> <p><b>13.1 Accuracy</b> – The minutes were agreed as a true record.</p>		
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>14.1</b> Item 3. CG confirmed that Firm Foundation's night shelter would be finishing at Easter, although its drop in would continue to operate.</p> <p><b>Action: Details of Firm Foundation's continuing operations to be shared.</b></p> <p><b>14.2</b> Item 14.1 and 15.1. LR and AB reported that the proposed 'speed dating' session was now expected to take place at the Forum's AGM, which it was hoped could be arranged as the next meeting in combination with the long awaited Community Event at KCA. A possible date was Saturday 25 June.</p> <p><b>Action: Details of next meeting, AGM and Community Event to be progressed and confirmed to members.</b></p>	<p><b>AB</b></p> <p><b>Management Board</b></p>	<p><b>with minutes</b></p> <p><b>with minutes</b></p>

	<p><b>14.3</b> Item 15.2. Future meeting dates and themes needed to be decided before Bob Blackman MP could be invited to the Forum to talk about housing, immigration etc., as agreed.</p> <p><b>Action: Bob Blackman still to be invited to address the Forum.</b></p>	CF	
15.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>15.1</b> SS led condolences for recent terrorist atrocities in Brussels.</p> <p><b>15.2</b> Jasbinder Baddhan from Harrow Council's Community Development department had been in touch with AB about whether the Forum could help facilitate the mapping of information, advice and advocacy services in Harrow. She was gathering data through a survey via Harrow Community Action (HCA)'s newsletter during the first half of April, and planning a consultation at the end of April into May. She was keen to get relevant groups to a meeting. LR queried what had become of the Harrow Advocacy Forum, last mentioned at the VCS Forum in 2014. Nothing further had been heard about it. DD voiced concerns at the idea that a 'middleman' was to be appointed to oversee groups' confidential services to vulnerable clients, although she could not say what position RJ would take on behalf of WISH. VD cautioned that, if Harrow groups did not co-operate on this, the council would give a single contract to an organisation from outside the borough. AB proposed getting Jasbinder to present details to interested Forum members at a separate meeting. VD suggested inviting someone from Southwark, where there had been some success with this issue. DD did not wish to express an interest in WISH engaging with the process until more was known about the council's intentions. BP felt the same on behalf of HAD.</p> <p><b>Action: Interested groups to be invited to any meeting arranged with the council to discuss advice and advocacy services.</b></p> <p><b>15.3</b> DD thanked AB for stepping in to chair the meeting at the last minute.</p>	AB	by next meeting
16.	<p><b>Dates of future meetings</b></p> <p><b>16.1</b> To be confirmed.</p>		
	<p><b>Meeting closed at 9.20 pm</b></p>		