

**Minutes of Harrow Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum
 Ordinary Meeting held on 25 July 2017, 12:30 – 14:30
 Kids Can Achieve, Chicheley Road, Harrow Weald, HA3 6QH**

Attendance:				
Attendee	abbreviation in minutes	Organisation	abbreviation in minutes	Forum Role
Carol Foyle	CF	Kids Can Achieve	KCA	Forum Chair
Shona Duncan		Westminster Society for People with Learning Disabilities		Forum Vice-Chair
Gerry Devine	GD	Harrow Community Transport	HCT	Forum Vice-Chair
Thanuja Pereira		South Harrow Christian Fellowship		VCS Representative
Bill Phillips	BP	Harrow Association of Disabled	HAD	VCS Representative
Alex Buckmire	AB	Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative	VAHC	
Linda Robinson	LR	38 Degrees (Harrow Local Group)	38D	Minute Taker
Tajinder Nijjar	TN	Citizens Advice Harrow	CAH	
Jenny Stephany	JS	Positive Connections		
Jan Irwin	JI	Harrow Domestic and Sexual Violence Forum		
Julian Maw		Hatch End Association	HEA	
Phil Bryson		Harrow Green Drinks		
Jane Galbraith	JG	Harrow Parks Forum	HPF	
Kathy Westhead		Harrow U3A	HU3A	
Brian Whitehead	BW	Welldon Activity Group	WAG	

Invited guests in attendance:				
John Gillespie		Rocket Science UK Ltd		
Helen Fagan		Rocket Science UK Ltd		

Apologies:				
Varsha Dodhia	VD	Harrow Interfaith		VCS Representative
Shabbir Merali		Harrow Interfaith		
Eileen Martell		HOPE Harrow		
Ray Barber		St Alban's Parish Church, N. Harrow		
Kanti Nagda		Sangat Advice Centre		
Mina Kakaiya		Healthwatch Harrow		

Item	Minutes	Action by whom	Action by when
1.	<p>Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>1.1 CF welcomed all to KCA. Everyone introduced themselves. Apologies had been received as listed above. No Conflicts of Interest were declared in relation to the agenda topics. CF asked participants to make it known if they wished anything that was said to be omitted from the minutes. JS asked about the distribution of the minutes. CF confirmed that they were sent to all VCS contacts and made available for anyone to see on the Forum's website.</p>		
2.	<p>Agenda Review</p> <p>2.1 CF established that all were happy with the agenda's content and sequence.</p>		
3.	<p>Interactive Session: VCS Review</p> <p>3.1 Following on from the Forum's session about the VCS Review in March, CF referred to the Terms of Reference now agreed and circulated by the Steering Group, which had since used a competitive process to appoint Rocket Science UK Ltd to conduct the Review. It was a company that had done similar work for Camden Council and it had also been commissioned by Harrow Community Action (HCA) to look at the sector's contribution to Harrow's health agenda. Although the Review had been commissioned by Harrow Council, CF described it as a joint undertaking with the VCS. It had been felt that Rocket Science were able to show the best understanding of the partnership approach required. CF handed the floor to Rocket Science to outline what the Review would entail.</p> <p>3.2 All were promised that they would be sent the slides used by the Rocket Science representatives to present their vision of the Review. They would be sending out a survey and conducting interviews.</p> <p>3.3 JI and JS sought clarification about the additional resources to be made available to the sector after the Review. Rocket Science admitted that the council had not committed to allocating any further funds, but had signalled a willingness to do so if more investment was recommended by the Review.</p>		

<p>3.4 BP wondered whether the Review would even be worth it, given that all available council monies were set to be channelled into commissioning, without any partnership or engagement with the sector. An example was the unhelpfulness he had met from the council when trying to renew the sublease for HAD's premises. It had left him inclined to abandon any attempt at anything other than a hostile relationship. AB agreed that the sector had been through some bad experiences. GD stuck up for the good intentions and ethos of most councillors, whilst acknowledging that the drive for commercialisation had led to jobsworth officers causing unnecessary blockages for VCS organisations. He envisioned such problems being solved by appointing officers as 'VCS Champions'.</p> <p>3.5 Having been consulted many times in the past, with no evidence of resulting improvements, JI maintained that no progress would be possible unless there was to be extra investment. Likewise, JG spoke out against the council squeezing the sector by outsourcing its statutory duties to charities at unsustainably low rates of remuneration. TN too was aware that current contracts represented an unequal relationship, but saw the impartial facilitation of Rocket Science as an opportunity to mould the Review to suit the sector's own needs.</p> <p>3.6 JS spotted an excess of jargon and platitudes in the language of Rocket Science's presentation material, such as 'co-commissioning', while AB noted the absence of vital elements like safety, citizenship and community cohesion. JI lamented Harrow's long-standing neglect of community development. AB alluded to the demise of the council's old Community Development department, which LR insisted had never understood the true meaning of the term anyway.</p> <p>3.7 Rocket Science was keen to explore 'hidden unknowns' of which the council was unaware, for example much of the voluntary work done by faith groups. JG commented realistically that not all voluntary undertakings in Harrow could be known to the council. Regarding faith groups' work, LR recounted experiences that reflected similar recent reports via VD, where groups of nature enthusiasts from Harrow's mosques and temples were having to venture many miles into Hertfordshire to do their conservation volunteering or litter picking because their plans and activities faced too many council restrictions and obstructions in Harrow's parks and open spaces.</p> <p>3.8 LR also talked about this month's cabinet meeting at which resolutions had been passed about waste and recycling policies (see item 6.3 below). Many VCS groups, including HU3A, HPF and HEA, had a lot of ideas and expertise to offer the council in matters like waste, traffic, parks etc., and yet they were not being asked for their input or even made aware of proposals before far-reaching decisions like these were taken.</p> <p>3.9 Rocket Science wished to capture all such input on post-it notes. Attendees were asked to work in pairs to focus on the long term positive impacts that they hoped would result from the Review. Afterwards, a high proportion of the collected post-it notes appealed for better communication from the council.</p> <p>3.10 AB mentioned a joint infrastructure event planned for the autumn, details of which were expected to be advised to all following a meeting of infrastructure organisations next week.</p> <p>Action: Members to be advised details of infrastructure event.</p>	<p>AB</p>	<p>August</p>
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	<p>Rocket Science representatives left the meeting.</p> <p>Action: Rocket Science survey to be emailed to all VCS contacts.</p> <p>Action: Any questions etc. to be sent to Helen Fagan at Rocket Science, Helen.fagan@rocketsciencelab.co.uk, 020 7253 6289, 07816 324562, www.rocketsciencelab.co.uk, 70 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6EJ.</p>	<p>Rocket Science</p> <p>All</p>	<p>soonest</p>
4.	<p>Break</p>		
5.	<p>Health & Wellbeing Subgroup Update</p> <p>5.1 In the absence of VD, CF reported that two interactive 'Transforming Health & Wellbeing VCS Engagement' events had taken place in May, led by AB. The resulting notes and recommendations were due to be considered by the Management Board. Participants had called for more practical relationships, not only with Harrow's Clinical Commissioning Group but also with schools, parents groups and other relevant parties.</p>		
6.	<p>Environment & Sustainability Subgroup Update</p> <p>6.1 GD confirmed that the E&S Subgroup had held its first meeting in June at the Old Dairy Visitor Centre at Wood Farm in Stanmore. He commended the centre as a good meeting place, with great views across Harrow. AB remarked that community groups were able to use the venue for free. Although not easily accessible by public transport, HCT had provided minibus transport from Harrow Town Centre and the meeting was well attended.</p> <p>6.2 The Subgroup's Terms of Reference had been agreed and priorities had been chosen. These included air quality, water pollution, overdevelopment/tall buildings, traffic/transport/parking, Green Belt and invertebrates.</p> <p>6.3 One of the priorities discussed, waste and recycling, had come to the fore in the light of this month's decision by Harrow's Cabinet to change rules and procedures at Harrow's Re-use and Recycling Centre (HRRC). Harrow residents would be required to show proof of their address, and extra charges and restrictions would apply. There was no evidence that any VCS groups had been consulted about these changes affecting so many residents and environmental issues. Instead, consultants had been commissioned to write the cabinet report, which had pointed to the link between the recently introduced garden waste collection charge and a rise in fly tipping, extra demand at HRRC, increased traffic congestion and reduced recycling rates.</p> <p>6.4 It was noted that a BBC local television news item, seen by many the previous evening, had labelled Harrow 'Ratland'. Showing disturbing footage of rats amongst bags of waste in the town centre, it had featured an interview with Council Leader Sachin Shah.</p> <p>6.5 GD raised a concern from the council's ongoing public consultation about the redevelopment of the Leisure Centre site, to be known as Byron Quarter.</p>		

	<p>Part of the plan was to lose part of Byron Recreation Ground to housing and other buildings. GD considered it a sacrilege to build on a public park. JG distributed a paper petition (appended below) against the proposal, on behalf of HPF. She also referred to a separate petition on the matter by the Campaign for a Better Harrow Environment (CBHE) via 38D. https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/hands-off-byron-recreation-ground JG and GD appealed for people to sign both petitions.</p> <p>6.6 As no one had yet agreed to be the Subgroup's Chair, it had been decided to rotate the responsibilities. Mick Oliver of HU3A's Sustainability Group had offered to organise the next meeting in October. Harrow's Environment Portfolio Holder, Graham Henson, was to be invited to address the Subgroup on the issues under his remit, which did not cover regeneration or planning.</p>		
7.	<p>Management Board Update</p> <p>7.1 CF referred to the setting of some strategic objectives for the Forum, as explored at last month's AGM.</p> <p>Action: Forum's strategic objectives to be firmed up.</p> <p>7.2 The previously requested mapping of Harrow's VCS was set to happen.</p> <p>Action: Progress of mapping exercise to be reported.</p>	<p>Management Board</p> <p>Management Board</p>	<p>October</p> <p>at next meeting</p>
8.	<p>Forum VCS Representative Nominations</p> <p>8.1 No nominations had been received for the one remaining vacancy.</p>		
9.	<p>Membership Applications</p> <p>9.1 AB gave details of three Forum membership applications received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrow Foodbank <i>represented by</i> Judy Cunnington • Prostate Cancer UK <i>represented by</i> Emma Ernesto • Thames 21 <i>represented by</i> John Bryden <p>Agreed: New members accepted.</p> <p>9.2 Harrow Foodbank was re-joining after its membership had lapsed. One member had not renewed, making a current total of 71 members. AB expressed concern that some organisations may become members only in order to advance their own procurement gains.</p> <p>9.3 JG asked if it could be made possible for individuals to represent more than one member organisation each. This request had come about because at least one group, CBHE, had been unable to join or take part officially in the E&S Subgroup because all of its potential representatives were already representing other community organisations to which they belonged. AB reasoned that representing more than one member would complicate voting procedures.</p> <p>Action: Above membership issues to be considered.</p>	<p>Management Board</p>	<p>by next meeting</p>

10.	<p>Forum Members' Offers and Wants</p> <p>10.1 TN was looking for volunteers to train with CAH as information digital assistants, triage assessors and advisors. Up to one year's training was given. The commitment required was at least fourteen hours per week. TN appealed for anyone interested to visit the CAH website or contact her on tajinder.nijjar@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk.</p> <p>10.2 AB stated that VAHC had a volunteer network. If any groups wanted to promote roles they should contact volunteering@voluntaryactionharrow.org.uk. He announced work being done by HCA to get smaller groups more involved with its consortium bids.</p> <p>10.3 JG stated that HPF was seeking a volunteer fundraiser via VAHC. A job description was available from rachelwrightvoluntaryactionharrow.org.uk or at https://do-it.org/opportunities/cce5c550-fefa-48e3-a2a4-a74ac5460069/.</p> <p>10.4 BW had over 200 paperback books on offer from WAG, plus some hardbacks. All were clean and suitable for selling. Interested parties should contact brian.whitehead60@ntlworld.com.</p> <p>10.5 GD mentioned the list of outings on the HCT website, as promoted in HCA VCS newsletters. As always, HCT was in need of volunteers with their own cars for its community car service. All expenses and insurance cover were provided. One councillor who volunteered was really enjoying the role.</p>		
11.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>11.1 TN asked about any developments on the council's offer of a non-voting VCS seat on its cabinet. CF indicated that a role description did exist, but the Management Board had so far shown little appetite for it. The proposal was still set to form part of the VCS Review. AB and LR outlined some of the sector's previous objections to the idea, as voiced at the March 2015 Forum.</p> <p>Action: VCS cabinet seat progress to be brought to a future Forum meeting for a possible vote.</p> <p>11.2 TN was delighted to report that CAH had won the council's tender to provide advice and information services, to start on 01 August. There were congratulations from all.</p>	CF	in line with the Review
12.	<p>Dates of future meetings</p> <p>12.1 Thursday 28 September, 18.00 to 20.00 – The Lodge, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA1 4HZ Thursday 14 December, 10.00 to 12.00 – Location TBC Tuesday 23 January 2018, 10.00 to 12.00 – Location TBC Wednesday 28 March 2018, 18.00 to 20.00 – Location TBC Tuesday 05 June 2018, 10.30 to 13.30 (AGM) - Location TBC Wednesday 25 July 2018, 10.00 to 12.00 – Location TBC Tuesday 25 September 2018, 13.00 to 15.00 - Location TBC Thursday 29 November 2018, 18.00 to 20.00 – Location TBC</p>		
	Meeting closed at 14.35		

Petition to Harrow Council to protect Byron Recreation Ground

Harrow Council's Regeneration Team are proposing to build 8- and 10-storey blocks of flats and the new Byron Hall and Herga Indoor Bowls Club on Designated Open Land in Byron Recreation Ground.

We, the undersigned, ask Harrow Council not to permit building in Byron Recreation Ground which results in a net loss of open space unless it is needed to support or enhance the proper functioning of the open space.

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This petition is organised on behalf of Harrow Parks Forum.

Please return to Jane Galbraith, 78 Roxborough Road, Harrow, HA1 1PB, by 14th August 2017.

For further information email secretary@harrowparks.com and/or visit <https://consult.harrow.gov.uk/consult.ti/ByronQuarterConsultation/consultationHome>