

**LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES  
VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGIC FORUM**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST 2009  
at 10.00 am at RCVS, 1 Princes Street, Richmond TW9 1ED**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Strategic Lead</b>	<b>Constituent Area</b>
David Sidonio (Chair)	Richmond Council for Voluntary Service (RCVS)	Generic Infrastructure
Belinda Canosa	Integrated Neurological Services (INS)	Long-term Conditions
Colin Cooper	Richmond Environment Network (REN)	Environment
Prehlad Dhall	Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Group (EMAG)	BME
Richard Eason	Richmond LGBT Forum	LGBT
Lydia Hansbury	Creating Opportunities in Richmond for People with Learning Disabilities (CORLD)	Learning Disability
Linda Joyce (for Mark Tuohy)	Richmond Carers Centre	Carers
Heather Mathew People	RCVS	Children & Young
Sandra Morrison	Age Concern Richmond	Older People
Kath Rosen	RCVS	Volunteering
Susan Smith	Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux (RCABS)	Advice and Advocacy
Ed Tytherleigh	SPEAR	Homelessness
Julie Ward (for Lesley Bengé)	CrossWay Pregnancy Crisis Centre	Faith
<b>Apologies:</b>		
Lesley Bengé	CrossWay Pregnancy Crisis Centre	Faith
Jamie Cutler	Richmond Advice and Information on Disability (RAID)	Physical Disability
Mark Tuohy	Richmond Carers Centre	Carers
Eleanor Willett	Richmond Crossroads	Carers
<b>In attendance:</b>		
Sarah Simpson	Chair, RCVS Board of Trustees	
Catherine McCallum	Clerk, RCVS	

**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

David Sidonio welcomed all to the first meeting; apologies for absence were noted, and introductions were exchanged.

1. **BACKGROUND**

David Sidonio set out the background to the establishment and remit for the new group, highlighting:

- the re-focusing of the former Key Strategic Organisation structure through the specifications and funding decisions of Round One of LBRUT's Voluntary Sector Grants programme;
- the need for a strategic representation that encompassed the entire sector: the Voluntary Sector Community Group had been focused around health and social care issues alone;
- the re-shaping of the Community Engagement strand of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which had introduced a new "Voluntary Sector Forum" to ensure that there was a direct mechanism for the views of the sector to be reported and influence local decision-making, and for information to be exchanged, through an appropriate structure of strategic representation;
- the service level agreement between RCVS and the local authority which gave management of the new "Forum" to RCVS, with a role to ensure that regular meetings were held and clear reporting structures were in place, and
- RCVS's consultations with the sector which had led to its current shape as the Voluntary Sector Strategic Forum and a framework for strategic representation that would comprehensively embrace the constituent areas of interest of the voluntary and community

sector (VCS) locally, in an inclusive but manageable way. In this context, the word "Forum" was, perhaps, misleading.

## 2. REPRESENTATION

2.1 David Sidonio reported that VCS organisations had been invited to nominate themselves for the strategic lead role in the constituent areas that had not been represented previously. As the only candidates to come forward through this process, RCVS had recommended, and it had been endorsed by the existing strategic leads, that SPEAR (Homelessness), Richmond upon Thames LGBT Forum (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans, LBGT), EMAG (Black and Minority Ethnic Communities, BME), Integrated Neurological Services (Long-term Conditions) and the CrossWay Pregnancy Crisis Centre (Faith), should be adopted to the group as strategic leads in these areas. In considering whether an elective process should be undertaken where more than one candidate had expressed an interest, the group felt that a logical decision by members of the group should be applied in the first instance based on an understanding of local factors.

2.2 **Faith:** In considering the sensitive and complex area of the Faith sector, and its representation by the CrossWay Pregnancy Crisis Centre, the group acknowledged the difficulties in finding a representative for such a diverse community and noted that the interests of this sector were not at present being adequately met by the LSP's Interfaith Forum. On behalf of CrossWay, Julie Ward, set out her initial plans to make contact with faith groups engaged in voluntary work and for ensuring that representation was as broad as possible, which were welcomed by the group and would be supported by RCVS through its contacts. The work of CrossWay on behalf of all Faith groups was also recognised. Thanks were expressed to CrossWay for coming forward, and its role as strategic lead was endorsed, noting that any difficulties and sensitivities encountered in representing the wider Faith sector would be monitored and addressed at future meetings.

2.3 **Arts & Leisure:** David Sidonio reported that three candidates had come forward under the Arts & Leisure category. In reviewing the breadth and scope of this constituent area and recognising the many opportunities that would arise through the 2012 Olympics, he recommended that the category be split into two - one, to cover the Arts, and one to cover Sport and Leisure. This was agreed. The group then considered the nominations that had been received from Sport Richmond, Combination Dance and Arts Richmond and their capacity to undertake the remit of a strategic lead.

2.3.1 **Arts:** Following discussion, it was felt that Arts Richmond, as the umbrella organisation for the Arts in the Borough had the capacity, strength and influence to act as strategic lead for the Arts, and their adoption to the group was agreed.

2.3.2 **Sport and Leisure:** Following discussion, it was felt that Sport Richmond had the capacity, strength and influence to act as strategic lead for Sport and Leisure, and their adoption to the group was agreed.

The important work undertaken by Combination Dance, particularly with young people, was acknowledged, and thanks were expressed to them for coming forward.

2.4 **Mental Health:** David Sidonio reported that expressions of interest had been received from ASCA, the Friends of Barnes Hospital, and Richmond Borough MIND, which had been unable to submit a formal application because of Emma King's holiday commitments. The group considered the capacity of each organisation to undertake the remit of a strategic lead for all areas of mental health, without additional resources.

Where issues of dementia were concerned, it was felt that a commitment from RB MIND to engage fully through the existing networks and organisations working in this area - in particular the Friends of Barnes Hospital - in conjunction with the remit of the strategic leads for Older People and Long-term Conditions, should ensure that the needs of this group were represented.

Noting that work surrounding offending, and drug and alcohol abuse were key targets for statutory sector partners, the group felt that it might be necessary in future to co-opt additional strategic leads in these areas, such as ASCA, at a future point.

In conclusion, the group felt that RB MIND had the capacity, strength and influence to deliver this area of work within the Borough as strategic lead for Mental Health, and their adoption to the group was recommended. However, the group requested that a full expression of interest from

RB MIND, setting out its commitment and motivation to deliver the remit of a strategic lead in this constituent area be submitted.

Thanks were expressed to the Friends of Barnes Hospital and to ASCA for coming forward. It was felt that any further requirements around representation in the Mental Health constituent area would be considered through future meetings.

2.5 **Community Development:** David Sidonio reported that Mortlake Community Association had suggested that an additional constituent area be included within the strategic representative framework of the Forum to cover Community Development. In discussing this point, the group noted that some elements of crossover existed, particularly where neighbourhood care groups were concerned. In addition, the Community Development workers attended some of the existing network meetings. However, it was generally felt that it would be very useful for the extensive and diverse interests of this sector to be represented within the group, and it was agreed that a representative should be sought.

2.6 **Sensory Disability:** David Sidonio reported that Richmond Association for the Blind had suggested that an additional constituent area be established around sensory disability issues. However, the group felt that this area was a fairly narrow sub-sector and that RAID should be able to ensure appropriate and full representation of its interests.

2.7 **Health and Social Care:** Whilst the specific and broader interests of the health and social care sector had been encompassed in recent years through meetings of the Voluntary Sector Community Group, David Sidonio stated that the remit of RCVS's Health and Partnerships Manager would ensure that regular and timely opportunities to meet and discuss the pertinent issues arising through this wider agenda were available.

**AGREED: The representative structure as set out at Appendix A. David Sidonio to follow up actions 2.3 to 2.6 above, and contact the sector to invite a representative for Community Development.**

### 3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 The draft Terms of Reference had been previously circulated. It was noted that the agreed Terms of Reference would be presented to the LSP for endorsement.

3.2 As a structured representative body that was not a forum for open attendance and general debate, it was agreed that the group should be known as the Voluntary Sector Strategic Partnership (VSSP).

3.2 In discussing the draft, the group felt that the aims and objectives of the Terms of Reference should reflect the importance of ensuring:

3.2.1 that pan-London/cross-borough initiatives were not excluded, and environmental developments recognised

3.2.2 that the VSSP had a direct influence on policy and change

3.2.3 that there was a mechanism for regularly reviewing the local Compact and ensuring that it had visibility within the sector

3.2.4 that there was a process for representation to be evaluated and its effectiveness reviewed, at least annually

3.2.5 that alternative representatives for the strategic lead organisation might attend meetings, in place of the chief officer should it be necessary, provided that they brought appropriate strategic direction and knowledge to the meetings.

3.2.6 that the frequency and pattern of meetings allowed sufficient time for strategic leads to gather information and feed back to their sectors, and were scheduled to allow formal reports to be made to the main LSP meetings, which took place four times a year. It was felt that three VSSP meetings a year would be sufficient, with an additional annual meeting for the entire VCS.

2.3.7 that a proper focus was given to VCS issues within the main LSP, with full reports from VSSP being presented to LSP at least twice a year

2.3.8 that discussions and the minuted record of meetings of the VSSP were transparent and open to the entire sector

**AGREED: Terms of Reference, amended in line with above, set out at Appendix B. David Sidonio to follow up with LBRUT on LSP issues.**

#### 4. **FUTURE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN**

##### 4.1 **Statutory Partner Engagement**

The group recognised that much of its work would revolve around responding on behalf of their individual sub-sectors to the various local authority consultations. Some frustration was expressed that there had been insufficient forewarning of these in the past, and the lack of a coordinated approach by the local authority had led to much duplication of effort and consultation fatigue. It was hoped and expected that the formation of the two new sub-groups of the LSP to look at Communications and Engagement issues would ensure that an effective and strategic Communications Strategy was in place and that areas for cross-sector engagement were mapped out over a planning year.

With the continued growth of the work of the LSP through the development of numerous offshoots and sub-groups, it was important that the VCS had a pro-active role in influencing policy making through representation on each of the various new strands. The local authority was currently undertaking a scoping exercise of the LSP and when this was available, gaps in VCS representation should be identified and filled by colleagues from the sector, not exclusively from RCVS but as most appropriate.

The group felt that key LSP issues should be a standing agenda item for each meeting of the VSSP and that Chris Channer, the new Partnership Manager at LBRUT, should attend for that part of the agenda. Minutes of LSP meetings should be circulated to VSSP members.

Where NHS Richmond was concerned, it was important for the same principles to be applied, and the group felt that there was considerable scope for improvement in cross-sector communication and engagement with NHS partners.

##### 4.2 **Strategic Lead role**

The strategic leads in each constituent area would have a responsibility for ensuring that effective channels for dialogue within their sub-sectors were in place, and take a pro-active approach to achieve this, building on existing networks where necessary. The group recognised that they could support each other through identifying opportunities to share resources, where possible, and avoid duplication. Initial support in building up contacts with colleagues in peer organisations was available through RCVS.

##### 4.3 **RCVS role**

It was felt that communication of the work of the VSSP should be made initially through the RCVS e-bulletin, Infoshare, with a view to building a separate web-link once the new RCVS website was in place. RCVS could also provide VSSP members with a regular update on key issues, and also call additional meetings that would bring in representatives from the statutory services as appropriate to address urgent questions.

#### 5. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was agreed that RCVS would circulate a schedule for meetings for the year in line with discussions under 3.2.6 above, and that sufficient time be allowed for full debate, with meetings lasting no less than 2 hours.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.05 pm.

## VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Constituent Area	Strategic Lead	Primary Lead	Email Contact
Generic Infrastructure	RCVS	David Sidonio	davids@richmondcvcs.org.uk
Older People	Age Concern RUT	Sandra Morrison	sandram@acrut.org.uk
Carers	Richmond Carers Centre and Richmond Crossroads Partnership	Mark Tuohy Eleanor Willett	<a href="mailto:chiefexec@richmondcarers.org">chiefexec@richmondcarers.org</a> <a href="mailto:ewillett@richmondcrossroads.org.uk">ewillett@richmondcrossroads.org.uk</a>
Mental Health	RB MIND	Emma King	emmaking@rbmind.com
Learning Disability	CORLD – Creating Opportunities in Richmond for People with Learning Disabilities – Richmond Homes for Life Trust and Richmond MENCAP partnership)	Lydia Hansbury	lydia@rhlt.org.uk
Physical Disability	Richmond Advice and Information on Disability (RAID)	Jamie Cutler	j.cutler@richmondaid.org.uk
Environment	Richmond Environment Network (REN)	Colin Cooper	colin.cooper@richenvironmentnet.org.uk
Arts	Arts Richmond	David Ward	D.Ward@rhul.ac.uk
Sport and Leisure	Sport Richmond	Andy Sutch	andy.sutch@btconnect.com
Children & Young People	RCVS	Heather Mathew	heatherm@richmondcvcs.org.uk
Homelessness	SPEAR	Ed Tytherleigh	ed@spearlondon.org
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT)	RuT LGBT Forum	Richard Eason	<a href="mailto:community@richardeason.co.uk">community@richardeason.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:info@richmondgbtforum.org.uk">info@richmondgbtforum.org.uk</a>
Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BME)	EMAG	Prehlad Dhall	prehlad@emaguk.net
Advice and Advocacy	Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux	Susan Smith	susansmith@rcabs.org
Long-term conditions	Integrated Neurological Services	Belinda Canosa	bcanosa@ins.org.uk
Faith	Crossway Pregnancy Crisis Centre	Julie Ward/Lesley Bengé	lesley@helpimpregnant.org.uk
Volunteering	RCVS	Kath Rosen	kathr@richmondcvcs.org.uk
Community Development	Tbc	tbc	

**LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES (LBRUT)  
VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (VSSP)  
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Aims**

- To strengthen, support and develop the voluntary and community sector in LBRUT
- To bring together representatives from voluntary and community groups who work in LBRUT, to ensure that the voluntary sector is fully represented in cross-sector planning structures, in particular the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
- To ensure that the voluntary sector's collective views have an influence on planning and policy decisions.
- To ensure that the views of all voluntary and community groups are identified through the representative structure of the VSSP and its appropriate nominated representatives

**Objectives**

The VSSP will achieve these aims by:

- Through the nominated representative structure, ensuring that all VCS organisations have the opportunity to contribute to current and ongoing strategic issues, through a range of communication and meeting channels.
- Keeping abreast of political, social, economic, legal and environmental developments which may have an impact on the work of the VCS in LBRUT and disseminating this information as widely as possible.
- Providing a co-ordinated response to influence decision making on key issues affecting the VCS in LBRUT, including the Community Plan, Local Area Agreements, and other relevant local plans and policies.
- Encouraging and developing partnership working and sharing of knowledge within the VCS and between the VCS and the statutory and private sectors.
- Identifying specific concerns and issues and organising meetings to address these.
- Inviting any representatives from relevant organisations, who will help to promote and advance the aims of the VSSP, to attend meetings.
- Electing or seeking nominations to represent the VCS on local partnerships, boards, and other structures as required.
- Providing an accountability mechanism for these elected VCS representatives to report back to, and consult with the VCS.
- Contributing to and supporting the development of the LBRUT Compact or other protocols designed to improve relationships between the public and voluntary sectors in partnership with the Compact Working Group.
- Through its representative structure, ensuring that VSSP is accessible and that Equal Opportunities principles and practices are applied.
- By reviewing its Work Plan annually to assess the effectiveness of current structures and representation.
- By reviewing the VSSP Representation Procedure to ensure that representation is effective, inclusive and is appropriately managed by each nominated agency.

**Membership**

The VSSP is a formal structure, which is managed by Richmond upon Thames Council for Voluntary Service (RCVS). It will comprise of up to 20 nominated or elected representatives from each constituency of interest, whose responsibility will be to liaise with their sector. Membership will be reviewed as appropriate to ensure that the representative structure meets current strategic developments. A full review of representatives is held annually (see Appendix A).

**Meetings**

The VSSP will meet four times a year; three meetings of members of the Partnership and one meeting annually involving the wider sector. Additional meetings may be called to consider urgent agenda items. RCVS will notify VCOs of each meeting, administer and facilitate the meetings, and will report back in the form of open minutes and reports that can be circulated widely.

Agreed August 2009 – to be reviewed August 2010