

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 MARCH 2010
at 2.00 pm at Vestry Hall, Paradise Road, Richmond**

Present:	Strategic Lead	Constituent Area
David Sidonio (Chair)	Richmond Council for Voluntary Service (RCVS)	Generic Infrastructure
Lucy Byrne	Richmond Advice and Information on Disability (RAID)	Physical Disability
Laura Fox	representing RuT LGBT Forum	LGBT
Lydia Hansbury	Creating Opportunities in Richmond for People with Learning Disabilities (CORLD)	Learning Disability
Surinder Kaur	Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Group (EMAG)	BME
Heather Mathew	RCVS	Children & Young People
Sandra Morrison	Age Concern Richmond	Older People
Susan Smith	Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux (RCABS)	Advice and Advocacy
Ed Tytherleigh	SPEAR	Homelessness
Anne Wallace	CrossWay Pregnancy Crisis Centre	Faith
David Ward	Arts Richmond	Arts
Eleanor Willett	Richmond Crossroads	Carers
 Apologies/absent:		
Belinda Canosa	Integrated Neurological Services (INS)	Long-term Conditions
Colin Cooper	Richmond Environment Network (REN)	Environment
Emma King	Richmond Borough MIND	Mental Health
Kath Rosen	RCVS	Volunteering
Andy Sutch	Sport Richmond	Sport and Leisure
Mark Tuohy	Richmond Carers Centre	Carers
Kate Woodhouse	Mortlake Community Association	Community Development
 In attendance:		
Chris Channer	Partnerships Manager, LBRUT (min. 2.2 - 4)	
Anne Lawtey	Community Planning Manager, Adult & Community Services, LBRUT (min. 2)	
Catherine McCallum	Clerk, RCVS	

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

David Sidonio welcomed all to the meeting; apologies for absence were noted, and introductions were exchanged for the benefit of new members of the Partnership.

1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 9 NOVEMBER 2009 AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November were agreed with the following matters arising:

- 1.1 **Self Directed Support (min. 7.3):** David Sidonio drew attention to the half-day event on 31 March that RCVS and the SDS team at LBRUT had arranged to offer guidance for the sector using case study experience. An action plan for supporting the sector further around the Personalisation agenda would be developed from these discussions.
- 1.2 **Health and Social Care:** The first meeting of the new Health and Social Forum, coordinated by RCVS, had taken place on 3 February with the aim of providing a more formal opportunity for voluntary agencies working in this area to discuss key issues affecting their work and raise any concerns with representatives from the statutory sectors. In considering the remit for this new group and bearing in mind their own, broader agenda, VSSP members felt that an additional consultative arena on specific health and social care issues was helpful in the current climate. However, it was felt that the need for the Forum could be reviewed over time in the interests of reducing the number of consultative layers in place.

2. LBRUT: PRESENTATION BY ANNE LAWTEY, COMMUNITY PLANNING MANAGER, ADULT & COMMUNITY SERVICES

2.1 Community Plan Refresh

- 2.1.1 Copies of the refresh flow chart were tabled. The chart documented each stage of the process to refresh the Community Plan through a phased programme of consultation, stocktaking, review and endorsement within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), its thematic partnership groups, and by partner agencies including the voluntary sector. The refresh would ensure that the Plan continued to reflect local dynamics and emergent needs; it would take into account the greater level of information available on priority areas, through recent intelligence gathering processes, such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), and ensure that resources, in a more challenging financial climate, were appropriately directed.
- 2.1.2 In noting the main cross-cutting themes that had been identified so far (Children & Young People, Crime and Community Safety, Environment, Health and Wellbeing), VSSP members felt that Culture could be more strongly identified within the framework either as a discrete theme or as a key priority for development within each thematic area. It was acknowledged that cultural activity would be an important element within work around Community Cohesion.
- 2.1.3 VSSP members welcomed the opportunity for the voluntary sector to be more fully involved in discussions on the priorities for the Plan throughout the refresh process, through their representation on the thematic groups, and at the LSP Conference. It was noted that a glossary of abbreviations would be extremely helpful to partner organisations.

2.2 **Community Cohesion**

- 2.2.1 Following assessment by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to provide a framework for improving Community Cohesion in Richmond, views were sought by the end of May on what community cohesion should look like in the borough; what needed to be changed to achieve that vision; what the voluntary sector could do to help bring about these changes, and what other organisations needed to do.
- 2.2.2 In looking at the issues identified so far as barriers to community cohesion, VSSP members raised concerns about how the indicators had been identified. In some cases, such as “the difficulties of voluntary youth organisations in recruiting adult helpers”, the statements were considered to be misleading and/or misinformed based on local knowledge and experience. In addition, the group felt that factors such as the deepening recession and its impact on public finances should be more clearly highlighted.
- 2.2.3 VSSP members felt that a workshop would be a useful way to explore these themes in greater detail if it could be arranged with partner organisations.

ACTIONS: Anne Lawtey to provide further information to VSSP on the IDeA assessment and on the Community Plan and Community Cohesion consultation process for circulation through networks.

3. **LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP) UPDATES**

3.1 Chris Channer, Partnerships Manager at LBRUT, reported on two areas of work within LSP.

3.1.1 **Local Area Assessment (LAA):** Much work had been undertaken recently to ensure that the Council was on track to meet the 17 targets of the LAA three-year plan 2009-2011). However, one target, under the priority area Care and Provision for Older People was proving difficult to reach. This was to meet the national indicator for providing access to appropriate care to enable people to be able to choose to die at home.

On behalf of the Carers sector, Eleanor Willett drew attention to the initiative that Richmond Crossroads Care had developed within the palliative care agenda, that had enabled over 40 people to die at home. Unfortunately, there had been no incentive from the funders to support this initiative once funding had ended.

3.1.2 **Choosing Health funding:** NHS Richmond was making changes to the way the Choosing

Health funding was channelled and allocated, and this would now fall within the remit of the Healthy Richmond Partnership. The funding stream would expire in 2012. Existing commitments would be honoured, but there was a level of uncertainty about how additional funding that was newly available would be allocated, though it was likely to be on a commissioning model working to the identified priority areas for narrowing the gap around health.

In discussion VSSP expressed its concerns that the process should be as equitable and open to all groups as possible and asked that further information would be circulated to RCVS for cascading through VSSP and its networks once it was available.

- 3.2 In conclusion, VSSP stressed that the voluntary sector had much evidence that could contribute to and inform LAA and LSP targets. There was a concern that the focus of development plans in areas such as alcohol abuse was set to address the populist view rather than on genuine need. It was key that the sector was fully represented in all thematic groups. However, there were additional barriers to fuller participation by the sector arising from the costs of attending meetings, inadequate resources through lack of office and IT support, and not least an increasing use of jargon at all levels of communication.

4. **PRIORITISING THE COMPACT**

- 4.1 David Sidonio reported on the NCVO workshop he had attended on working with government that had focused on the Compact, and particularly the new national agreement. Although work to embed the Compact in cross-sector relationships and communications was a main theme within the VSSP terms of reference, and its Work Plan, there was a need to ensure that the statutory agencies were also fully committed to this process and were taking a lead on it.

- 4.2 In discussion, VSSP members felt that there was a clear need to refresh the Compact in the light of the new national agreement; ensure that its principles underpinned all cross-sector engagement through a strengthened profile, and enforcing its standards through challenge wherever appropriate. The consultation sent out by the Voluntary Sector Partnership Manager on the report to Cabinet about the new Commissioning Framework - which gave four working days for response - demonstrated a lack of adherence to the agreed principles of the existing Compact, and would be discussed under Feedback from Sub-Sectors (Agenda Item 7).

- 4.3 On behalf of the Local Authority, Chris Channer acknowledged that the timescale for consultation on the Cabinet Report was unreasonable, and wondered whether the Compact should be a standing item on VSSP agenda, for concerns to be raised, and fed back to statutory sector colleagues through him in a continuing process.

- 4.4 In discussion VSSP members felt it would be useful to have a half-day workshop on developing the Compact, with input from outside agencies such as NCVO, Compact Voice, and local authorities such as Merton (which operated to a best-practice model) and involve a range of statutory sector colleagues. There was a desire to emphasise the positive aspects on the Compact on cross-sector relationships and to move away from the negative stance, that was emerging by default through recent experience, particularly around the voluntary sector funding programme. VSSP felt that the Compact would benefit from having a champion within the local authority, perhaps through Chris Channer's work as Partnerships Manager.

ACTIONS: David Sidonio to take forward the idea of a half-day workshop on the Compact. Chris Channer to feedback views to the Local Authority.

5. **LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS**

- 5.1 VSSP discussed the opportunities that existed to raise awareness of voluntary sector issues with the main political parties prior to the elections to the Council in May. Acknowledging that a number of agencies had held hustings events, in particular around Health and Social Care (the LINK), and that a number of other organisations, such as EMAG, were also planning meetings where views could be exchanged, the group felt that an additional event was unnecessary. However, plans for RCVS to host an Induction event for newly elected members were welcomed, and David Sidonio agreed to take this forward.

ACTIONS: David Sidonio to consider holding an Induction Meeting on broad voluntary sector issues for newly-elected members to Council, and discuss with LBRUT.

6. **WORK PLAN 2010-2011**

6.1 Copies of the draft Work Plan had been circulated, and its main objectives were agreed. However, the group felt that a sharper focus could be achieved in the outcomes to demonstrate with clear evidence how VSSP had influenced the LSP, e.g. in the use of the Compact. Consideration was also given to the need for lead officers to drive the separate elements of the Work Plan, possibly using time donation/job sharing models.

ACTIONS: VSSP members to send to David Sidonio their suggested amendments to the Work Plan, using tracked changes, by the end of March. VSSP members to discuss the Work Plan and ways of developing and delivering its themes through their networks.

7. **REPORTS AND FEEDBACK FROM SUB-SECTORS**

7.1 **Mapping of VSSP Partner Activity:** David Sidonio reminded the group of the mapping exercise that was being undertaken by Kath Rosen and Kathryn Williamson from RCVS to establish a more central overview of the individual networks. He expressed thanks to those who had completed the pro-forma and would circulate it again to ensure a full response.

7.2 **Funding:**

7.2.1 Uncertainties around the shape and scope of the future funding model remained a key issue for VSSP members, not least in terms of a possible change in the local political agenda. VSSP members were committed to the retention of a grants model within any new funding framework to ensure that small local organisations could continue to provide best value using their knowledge and experience of their local communities.

7.2.2 Although the positive benefits of collaboration were recognised as avoiding service duplication and being more attractive to funders, additional support and resources would be needed by many organisations to address the challenges of entering into partnership agreements, with consideration needing to be given to constitution, organisational ethos, and the potential for mission drift. VSSP members were also concerned that the impetus towards the social enterprise method of working would have an irrevocable impact on the character of the voluntary sector.

7.3 **Report to Cabinet on the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework:**

7.3.1 VSSP members discussed the email that had been received that morning from Melissa Watson, Voluntary Sector Partnerships Manager, seeking views from the sector on the report to Cabinet which made reference to the role of RCVS and the Strategic Leads in the development and implementation of the Commissioning Framework in relation to supporting the wider voluntary sector to respond to a new approach.

7.3.2 VSSP noted that the report had not been circulated to all strategic leads (only eight out of the nineteen VSSP representatives had received it) and the deadline for response of 8 March gave only four working days for members to consult with their sub-sectors and prepare a coordinated response on their behalf.

7.3.3 Following discussion, it was agreed that David Sidonio would coordinate a joint response from VSSP that took into account the concerns of the group over the inappropriate timescale for consultation, and making reference to the Compact agreement. Organisations wishing to respond individually should do so as well.

ACTIONS: David Sidonio to draft a coordinated VSSP response to the consultation and circulate to members for comment by 3 March. Any organisations responding individually to copy to RCVS for information.

8. **ADOPTION OF REMAINING ACTIVITY RELATING TO CAPACITY BUILDERS CONSORTIUM**

8.1 A paper setting out the proposal for VSSP to adopt any of the residual work from the Capacity Builders Consortium was considered. VSSP noted that the Consortium had been founded on the second tier infrastructure provision in the voluntary sector in the borough. Taking into account VSSP's terms of reference for providing improved links with subsectors and specialist infrastructure, members felt that VSSP was the appropriate organisation to incorporate this work into its agenda during the final year of activity.

8.2 The proposal was agreed.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

9.1 **Richmond Charity Hub:** David Sidonio updated the group on the current position, which was now in Phase 3 - the identification of suitable premises. Consideration was also being given in this phase to the possibility of accessing monies that might be available to the charitable sector and not through central government. A management agent would be sought for the hub (which had been registered under the name of the Richmond Charity Centre). Premises, either leasehold or freehold, would have the potential for expansion to include new groups and any organisation wishing to discuss these opportunities further should make contact with the consultant, John Shute (john.shute@btinternet.com). Although Cabinet had adopted, in principle, the recommendations for the creation of a voluntary sector hub at its meeting in January, there was an element of political risk should there be a change in leadership in May. However, the project appeared to have cross-party support at this stage.

10. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting would take place at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 29 June 2010 at RCVS

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4.50 pm.