

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2009  
at 2.00 PM 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
Richard Eason	Richmond upon Thames LGBT Forum	LGBT
Emma King	Richmond Borough MIND	Mental Health
Kath Rosen	RCVS	Volunteering
Andy Sutch	Sport Richmond	Sport and Leisure
Mark Tuohy	Richmond Carers Centre	Carers
Ed Tytherleigh	SPEAR	Homelessness
Anne Wallace	CrossWay Pregnancy Crisis Centre	Faith
David Ward	Arts Richmond	Arts
Eleanor Willett	Richmond Crossroads	Carers
Kate Woodhouse	Mortlake Community Association	Community Development
<b>Apologies:</b>		
Jamie Cutler	Richmond Advice and Information on Disability (RAID)	Physical Disability
Prehlad Dhall	Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Group (EMAG)	BME
Lydia Hansbury	Creating Opportunities in Richmond for People with Learning Disabilities (CORLD)	Learning Disability
Heather Mathew	RCVS	Children & Young People
Sandra Morrison	Age Concern Richmond	Older People
Susan Smith	Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux (RCABS)	Advice and Advocacy
<b>In attendance:</b>		
Chris Channer	Partnerships Manager, LBRUT (min. 1)	
Melissa Watson	Voluntary Sector Partnership Manager, LBRUT (min. 5)	
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 27 AUGUST 2009 AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 August 2009 were agreed with matters arising to be covered under the main agenda.

2. **UPDATE ON THE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP) AND ITS STRUCTURES**

Chris Channer, Partnerships Manager at LBRUT, gave a presentation on recent developments within the LSP and the future focus for his work. The group noted:

the drive to standardise the operational practices of the main Community Engagement and Performance Management strands of the LSP, and the many sub-groups attached and reporting through these structures, to ensure that all groups maintained and reviewed key delivery documents such as terms of reference, work plans, forward plans, equality impact needs assessments, risk assessments and web pages, in a shared conformity;

the need to develop and strengthen linkages between all the groups to achieve efficiencies in consultation and engagement practices;

that the voluntary sector should have representation on all groups, and the role of the VSSP in achieving this, and

the need to achieve consistency in communication and feedback on LSP issues through all available channels, including web, and to ensure a two-way dialogue between sub-groups and the main LSP.

2.1 In discussion, the group considered that ensuring full voluntary sector representation across all LSP sub-groups would be a priority piece of work for VSSP, and looked forward to the completion of the comprehensive LSP mapping exercise that would highlight any gaps.

2.2 The Partnership noted again that more time for response should be given by LBRUT in its consultations and Chris Channer agreed to take back these views to LSP.

Thanks were expressed to Chris Channer for such a helpful presentation.

### 3. **REPRESENTATION**

#### 3.1 **Community Development**

Following a brief presentation from Kate Woodhouse, Chair of Mortlake Community Association, the meeting formally endorsed the application from Mortlake Community Association to be the strategic lead organisation for community development on VSSP.

### 4. **COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK WITHIN SUB-SECTORS**

David Sidonio introduced a discussion on the ways in which VSSP could ensure that the two-way flow of communication and feedback in each strategic constituent area could be achieved in a fully inclusive way, and the need to identify an appropriate level for issues that would most naturally fall within the remit of VSSP work.

4.1 Members of the Partnership felt that the focus for communication and debate should be around generic, sector-wide issues, such as the Compact, voluntary sector accommodation, self-directed support (SDS), and the voluntary sector grants programme, with a view to ensuring that VSSP had a direct influence on strategic decision-making within the local authority in the future. It was agreed that a VSSP Work Plan should be developed for the first year of activity.

4.2 Although the strategic leads should still have a role to undertake in facilitating communication around sub-sector specific issues through their networks, as well as on wider VSSP matters, it was noted that not all strategic leads were funded or had the resources to do this.

4.3 The group noted that VSSP agendas and minutes would be included on the local authority website as part of the LSP pages, and there would be a dedicated area on the new RCVS website in the New Year. This would include signposting to the strategic lead organisation websites and to LSP which would, in time, have active web-pages for all its sub-groups and representatives. These links should also be included on strategic lead organisation websites.

4.4 It was noted that although RCVS maintained a database of voluntary sector organisations, and communicated regularly with the sector through its Information Sharing e-bulletin, the contacts list was not comprehensive for the sector as a whole. Where the e-bulletin was concerned, RCVS had recently launched a "Spread the Word" campaign to raise awareness and increase the number of subscribers to its information-sharing mechanisms.

4.5 The group acknowledged that there were elements of crossover between their areas of work. It felt that a mapping exercise would be useful to identify all existing contacts within the various networks so that a comprehensive database for the entire sector could be compiled and maintained by RCVS as the principal communicator on VSSP issues. This would ensure that communication overload and duplication was avoided. Some research would also be required by VSSP members to identify gaps in their constituent area contacts to feed into a central database over time.

4.6 Some concern was expressed that the local authority was devolving its engagement with the sector to partner members of VSSP who did not all have a funding agreement to deliver such work (ref min. 4.2) and whose principal responsibility was the operational development of their own organisations. However, the group felt that by ensuring a visible and active presence for VSSP, through websites in particular, the wider sector would in time be able to take responsibility for obtaining information for itself and would know how to raise any issues of concern.

**ACTIONS:**

**David Sidonio to draft initial Work Plan for consideration by the group prior to discussion at the next VSSP meeting**

**Chris Channer - for the Local Authority - to continue to update LSP website, ensuring that pages for all sub-groups were active and included full list of representatives**

**VSSP members to include link to LSP website, highlighting VSSP pages, on their own websites**

**VSSP members to provide information on existing contacts and begin mapping exercise to identify any gaps in their constituent areas with assistance from RCVS where available. Information to be fed through to RCVS for contacts database.**

**5. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS PROGRAMME**

Melissa Watson, Voluntary Sector Partnership Manager at LBRUT, provided an update on the grants programme, differentiating between the small grants programme and strategic funding, which included Round 2 decisions and the priorities for funding through Round 3.

**5.1 Rounds 1 and 2**

Melissa Watson noted, in particular, that investment through Round 1 funding (for infrastructure and capacity building, as well as advice services, such as homelessness) had been with a view to ensuring that the voluntary sector was prepared and would be supported as the local authority moved towards a commissioning model. In Round 2, three-year funding had been provided around the culture and leisure agenda, equality and diversity, and the environment, with a one-year funding agreement around community development which would be reviewed again next year. Membership of the Grants Panel had been drawn from representatives of the LSP and its thematic sub-groups so that LSP had some influence on how funding was distributed. Where Round 3 was concerned, the priorities had not been open to consultation, but feedback and comment from the voluntary sector had been sought.

5.2 Melissa Watson invited comment on the grants programme to date, noting that the intention was to work in partnership with the voluntary sector in shaping the services the Council and NHS Richmond needed to deliver to support local people, in the areas where Council and voluntary sector objectives were shared. The group raised points as follows:

5.2.1 A summary of the service level agreements that were in place would be welcomed.

5.2.1 Acknowledging the difficulties in moving the available funding around and perhaps away from organisations which had historically benefited from the local authority grants programme, the sector had been ready for change and considerable disappointment had been felt at the lack of diversification in Rounds 1 and 2. This had led to a feeling of disenfranchisement from the programme with organisations reluctant to submit applications in what appeared to be a closed process and to an extremely short timescale. It was significant that no new organisations had submitted applications under Round 1.

5.2.2 There was a high degree of cross-sector inequality and inconsistency in the funding, with some organisations being funded as strategic leads and not others, and some for straightforward service delivery, with a varying level of funding for headings such as admin costs, leading to an overall lack of transparency.

**5.3 Round 3**

Melissa Watson reported on the uncertainty around the funding that would be committed by NHS Richmond for its partnership work in the current economic climate. However, it was envisaged that a commissioning model would be introduced fairly quickly. As a result, the Children and Young People's Trust Board (CYPTB) had proposed a one-year funding model for Children and Young People's Services, with a view to establishing a commissioning structure from 2011 onwards. A similar approach was likely to be taken around Adult Services, and Carers.

In considering the funding model for Round 3, the following points were noted by the group:

- 5.3.1 A corporate commissioning protocol for working with the voluntary sector would be prepared and Council Link Officers would work with VCOs to ensure that this met their needs. There was some concern expressed around existing Council practice on procurement which was more suited to its dealings with large private organisations and was perceived by the voluntary sector as being bureaucratically rigid.
- 5.3.2 The group felt that smaller VCOs, which were largely dependent on the support of voluntary trustees, would require more information as soon as possible on the commissioning model to enable them to adapt to a new framework. It was felt that the Council should take a more active advocacy lead on this issue and provide additional resources to enable members of VSSP who were not funded as strategic leads to fully engage with the smaller organisations in their sub-sectors in fully understanding the commissioning process. Although applications submitted to the small grants programme for this purpose were likely to be positively received, there was a feeling amongst the group that this would have an adverse effect on any subsequent applications that were made to support the operational development of their own organisations, since applicants were unlikely to be funded twice.
- 5.3.3 The group felt that the relationship between the link officers and VCOs needed to be strengthened so that officers were fully conversant with the pressures faced by the voluntary sector and were proactive in conveying these, not just to the commissioning partners but to the key internal departments who would be managing the procurement process, such as Legal Services.
- 5.3.4 The group noted that when the Compact had been reviewed in the summer, a clause had been included to ensure that in developing commissioning strategies, statutory organisations should give positive consideration to the potential for the voluntary sector to undertake work in appropriate areas. This was to acknowledge the added value that local agencies would bring through local knowledge, local volunteers and local trustees. The group felt that, in the criteria for weighting applications, a tick box around the added value that a local organisation would contribute should be included.
- 5.3.5 Acknowledging some of the advantages of collaboration, the group nevertheless stressed that the commissioning model of funding should not be seen as a natural driver towards mergers.
- 5.3.6 It was agreed that members of VSSP should be consulted on the corporate commissioning protocol.
- 5.3.7 Where the specification for Children and Young People's work was concerned and the new constraints around a one-year programme, the group hoped that a more transparent and open approach could be taken. It was noted that the priorities would be drawn up by CYPTB to reflect the Children & Young People's Plan and that new priority areas of work would, therefore, be established. Since no additional funding was available to support the new funding priority areas, it was anticipated that this would encourage new bidders to come forward.
- 5.3.8 Not all areas of work would be commissioned. There was likely to be a combination of commissioning (where new needs were identified and resources used to address those needs) and grant funding.
- 5.3.8 The Round 3 guidelines would be circulated very soon, with a full-six week period for applications to be submitted.

Thanks were expressed to Melissa Watson for attending the meeting and for feeding back the concerns and comments raised.

**ACTIONS:**

**Melissa Watson to take back comments on the voluntary sector grants programme as a whole and the commissioning process in particular, and facilitate an email consultation with VSSP around the corporate commissioning protocol. Melissa Watson to prepare a summary of the SLAs in place following Rounds 1 and 2 for circulation to VCOs through VSSP.**

6. **THE COMPACT**

6.1 The group acknowledged that the legislative framework surrounding the commissioning process would have an impact on the status of the Compact, which was not a legally-binding document. However, the importance of maintaining and strengthening the spirit of the Compact as a robust local agreement between the statutory and voluntary sectors that could be challenged when appropriate was still a priority for VSSP. David Sidonio agreed to seek VSSP representatives to join the Compact Working Group (which was a joint working party of voluntary and statutory sector representatives) and liaise with Chris Channer, the lead officer on this work for the LSP over meeting arrangements.

7. **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS - VSSP AND SECTOR WIDE**

7.1 **Consultation processes to improve communication and feedback within networks:**

David Sidonio reported on the funding that RCVS had sourced through Capacity Builders to provide two free days of training for VSSP members on improving its skills in participation and consultation methodologies. Copies of an initial proposal from the Consultation Institute were tabled which set out the components and framework for the training. It was agreed that David Sidonio would seek the views of the group on the value of this work by email and put together a framework for training as appropriate.

7.2 **Commissioning Process - Tenders and Contracts:**

The group felt that a series of training opportunities around the commissioning process would be vital, not just around putting together a tender and the legal framework. Organisations would also have to demonstrate that they were in a position to deliver services that met the statutory requirements of the local authority, which would be using the procurement process to achieve some of its social objectives and duties and would be passing these to the supplier under the commissioning arrangements. Support on this aspect of the tendering process would also be very helpful.

7.3 **Self Directed Support (SDS):**

David Sidonio reported that RCVS had managed a time-limited number of meetings with stakeholders around SDS which would be ending with a half day in the New Year on SDS and the voluntary sector. Eleanor Willett reported that she was putting together a proposal for small grant funding for Action Learning Sets around SDS.

**ACTIONS:**

**David Sidonio to provide further information on the Consultation training proposal.  
David Sidonio to seek VSSP representatives for the Compact Working Group and liaise with the local authority over dates for meetings**

5. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Acknowledging the need for full discussion on a wide range of issues, it was agreed that the length of future meetings should be extended and incorporate a short break.

**The next meeting would take place at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 2 March 2010**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4.40 pm

## VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Constituent Area	Strategic Lead	Primary Lead	Email Contact
Generic Infrastructure	RCVS	David Sidonio	<a href="mailto:davids@richmondcvcs.org.uk">davids@richmondcvcs.org.uk</a>
Older People	Age Concern RUT	Sandra Morrison	<a href="mailto:sandram@acrut.org.uk">sandram@acrut.org.uk</a>
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	<a href="mailto:emma.king@rbmind.org">emma.king@rbmind.org</a>
Learning Disability	CORLD – Creating Opportunities in Richmond for People with Learning Disabilities – Richmond Homes for Life Trust and Richmond MENCAP partnership)	Lydia Hansbury	<a href="mailto:lydia@rhlt.org.uk">lydia@rhlt.org.uk</a>
Physical Disability	Richmond Advice and Information on Disability (RAID)	Jamie Cutler	<a href="mailto:j.cutler@richmondaid.org.uk">j.cutler@richmondaid.org.uk</a>
Environment	Richmond Environment Network (REN)	Colin Cooper	<a href="mailto:colin.cooper@richenvironmentnet.org.uk">colin.cooper@richenvironmentnet.org.uk</a>
Arts	Arts Richmond	David Ward	<a href="mailto:D.Ward@rhul.ac.uk">D.Ward@rhul.ac.uk</a>
Sport and Leisure	Sport Richmond	Andy Sutch	<a href="mailto:andy.sutch@btconnect.com">andy.sutch@btconnect.com</a>
Children & Young People	RCVS	Heather Mathew	<a href="mailto:heatherm@richmondcvcs.org.uk">heatherm@richmondcvcs.org.uk</a>
Homelessness	SPEAR	Ed Tytherleigh	<a href="mailto:ed@spearlondon.org">ed@spearlondon.org</a>
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@richmondlgbtforum.org.uk">info@richmondlgbtforum.org.uk</a>
Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BME)	EMAG	Prehlad Dhall	<a href="mailto:prehlad@emaguk.net">prehlad@emaguk.net</a>
Advice and Advocacy	Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux	Susan Smith	<a href="mailto:susansmith@rcabs.org">susansmith@rcabs.org</a>
Long-term conditions	Integrated Neurological Services	Belinda Canosa	<a href="mailto:bcanosa@ins.org.uk">bcanosa@ins.org.uk</a>
Faith	Crossway Pregnancy Crisis Centre	Anne Wallace	<a href="mailto:Anne@helpimpregnant.org.uk">Anne@helpimpregnant.org.uk</a>
Volunteering	RCVS	Kath Rosen	<a href="mailto:kathr@richmondcvcs.org.uk">kathr@richmondcvcs.org.uk</a>
Community Development	Mortlake Community Association	Kate Woodhouse	<a href="mailto:kate.woodhouse@tiscali.co.uk">kate.woodhouse@tiscali.co.uk</a>