**ICNC Minutes 23 September 2015**

**In attendence:**

Mike Sherriff Voluntary Action Islington (Chair)

Chris Taylor Voluntary Action Islington

Colin Adams Octopus Community Centres

Ruth Hayes Islington Advice Alliance (Chair)

Phill Watson Manor Gardens

Janan Aljabiri Islington Refugee Forum

Roz Miller Islington Faiths Forum & Mental Health and Poverty Networking Forum (Vice-Chair)

Jane Chambers Age UK Islington

Ken Kanu Help On Your Doorstep

Mark Brennan Islington Homelessness Network

Cllr. Asima Shaikh London Borough of Islington

John Muir London Borough of Islington

Pete Courtie London Borough of Islington

Kristina Glenn Cripplegate

**Apologies:**

Katy Fattuhi Creative Islington

John Mackinnon Sport Islington

Liz Mercer Islington Carers Provider Forum

Despina T Islington BME Forum

**1. Discussion with Cllr. Asima Shaikh, Executive Member for Economic and Community Development**

**LBI VCS funding timetable**

It was acknowledged that there has been a delay in the programme for renegotiating London Borough of Islington (LBI) grants and contracts with the voluntary sector. Budgeting is waiting on the expected Autumn statement from central government. A prospectus for the new round of funding will be shared in December. Current contracts will be extended until the end of June.

**Draft LBI VCS Strategy presentation**

* JM and PC presented the draft LBI VCS Strategy. The strategy is intended to guide the behaviour of all LBI departments. It will be used to further LBI’s priorities through the work of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). There is an expectation that LBI will change the way it works with the VCS and LBI hopes vice-versa.
* LBI is committed to maintaining grant funding, including core funding, though the money available for this is not yet known. LBI also wants to support VCS to access funding through commissioning and from sources other than itself. There will be some funding to support partnership building to access funds as they arise. LBI is looking at how to get round the challenges to commissioning for smaller groups and is encouraging statutory partners to do so.
* It is believed that the VCS should be the provider of choice for first contact with residents, but LBI also wants links between LBI and VCS services, particularly advice services.
* Thematic networks are expected to play a role in aligning with and holding to account LBI departments.
* LBI is working on reducing the burden of monitoring and wants the VCS to only report to the LBI VCS team.
* The LBI VCS and Equalities Development team is keen to be notified of poor commissioning practices in council departments as they occur so that they can have an influence.
* It was noted that community cohesion is to be separated, as an objective, from community safety. Cohesion should be about empowerment and development.

**Comments on draft strategy**

* Members welcomed the approach of seeing the VCS as an independent partner.
* Acknowledgement was made of the positive inclination of LBI toward: shifting some smaller commissions to grants and encouraging statutory partners to do so; and including scope in larger commissions to grant some funding to smaller groups for specialist work and community engagement.
* It was thought that an independent broker, such as VAI, could be contacted by VCS groups if in difficulties, prior to contacting a funder, so that help is less likely to be requested too late to save projects and services.
* In the ‘Neighbourhood based approaches’ section, it was thought appropriate to indicate the reasons for targeting specific areas.
* Members were keen to point out that, while it is good that volunteering is recognised as resource intensive, on page 12, not all organisations lack the capacity to manage volunteers.
* There has been less collaboration in the VCS recently as there are fewer shared objectives, which is a result in part of LBI funding priorities.
* There is a gap opening up between organisations that are becoming more professional to access funds and those which are not, due to size or other reasons, and which may be left behind.
* It was recommended that the strategy includes a note on communicating funding opportunities in a timely fashion so that the VCS is able to take advantage of them. There will be a new team LBI team supporting VCS fundraising by providing relevant information.
* It was commented that the VCS brings funding into the borough and that this should be considered as a factor in LBI decisions as relatively small changes to statutory funding can have larger effects in terms of leveraging other funding.
* Coordination of groups with regard to the allocation of trust funds was recommended as the number in a given area affects the chances for new applications.
* Members were advised that Cripplegate is working on a strategy for the next 3-5 years and it will highlight the importance of flexible grant funding and recommend 5 year grants.
* LBI has a role in facilitating dialogue on partnership work between local and mainstream groups. LBI could, for instance, facilitate roundtable discussions.
* Members were invited to return written comments on the draft strategy to JM by Friday 2 October.

**Action:** CT / MS to circulate an explicit VAI offer for VCS groups in difficulties via the ICN.

**Action:** MS to draft a statement that acknowledges voluntary and community action to add to the section detailing how the VCS supports LBI’s vision.

**Action:** CT to forward comments received by email to JM.

**2. Previous minutes and matters arising**

**Action:** RM and RH to share information regarding stop and search

**3. ICN Update**

Members were made aware of research on the impact and value of grant funding being carried out by London Metropolitan University on behalf of ICN. This will be presented to councillors in time to influence budget decisions for 2016/17.

**4. Voluntary Sector Conference**

The recommendations in the draft conference report were agreed. Members agreed that they want to put on another conference in 2016. It was thought that the speakers had taken too long and it was recommended in future to book fewer or to give them less time.

**5. VCS procurement action plan**

**Action:** CT to arrange for JM to meet ICN to discuss LBI procurement.

**6. Forums Feedback**

IFF - For Peace Month 2015, school assemblies have been arranged in partnership with St. Ethelburg and will reach 5000 people; there will be a Peace Cup football tournament for youth at risk of offending; and faith groups will have religious services focused on peace. Letwin debate 17/11/15 will be about youth disaffection. It was confirmed that RM is now the chair of the SNB.

MB - Homelessness is on the increase, with welfare reform a big issue. The commission for the homeless outreach service has been awarded to St Mungos, taking over from the Pilion Trust. The Fulfilling Lives team at the Single Homelessness Project, which supports people with complex needs, has stopped taking referrals, having as many as they can deal with already, a year into an eight year programme. The Islington Churches Cold Weather Shelter scheme is going well, and is now involving mosques and synagogues.

IRF - The Forum is holding a Dignity in Mental Health event on 8 October. Following a February consultation, mental health has been identified as a thematic issue for IRF. Also upcoming are: a 3 November London Living Wage event with Citizens UK, and a 3 December event on Universal Credit. The forum is also working on capacity building for members.

JC - The Locality Navigators project is being extended across the borough, with four more staff. A new referral method will be in place from December and some people other than GPs will be able to refer. The service is for people aged 16 and over with long-term mental and/or physical health problems.

**Action:** agenda item for Locality Navigators

MS – The VAI AGM will take place on the 4 November. Volunteer of year awards - please nominate. Neil Jamieson, from Citizens UK, is the main speaker. VAI and Creative Islington are holding a networking for creative and VCS groups on the 21 October.

KK - HOYD is working on the Universal Support Delivered Locally pilot, which addresses the risks of Universal Credit, with LBI. The pilot finishes in November. People on the pilot are being referred to 222 Upper Street, CAB, and Adult and Community Learning. HOYD is bringing people from the Bemerton and New River Green estates into the programme.

MH&P - The Forum is meeting next on the 25 September, but is still unfunded.

IAA - The introduction of court charges will make it harder for poor people to access justice and there will be more changes to criminal Legal Aid. The Labour party has ordered a review of Legal Aid. A bid is being submitted for funds to maintain the Benefit Advisers Forum. There will be an Advising Islington Together conference on the 6 October. Welfare reforms are likely to affect some groups more than others, so members are thinking of tactics to manage the impact of Universal Credit. The alliance wants to encourage those concerned about refugees to support people and organisations locally.

Octopus - Octopus met last week: key discussion points were the competency of boards and training for centre managers. The most important issues currently are community safety and Universal Credit. The network is talking to children’s centres about how to support refugees.

**7. Community Chest update**

It was agreed that JA will take up the vacant position on the Community Chest panel.

**8. Safer Neighbourhood Board**

RM wants the SNB to be more challenging in holding the police to account. It was agreed that KK and CA will share the responsibility of representing ICN at the SNB.

**9. AOB; future meetings**

**Action:** CT to put dates of future meetings at the bottom of agendas and minutes.

* Wednesday 11 November 2015; 13.30 – 15.30
* Wednesday 9 December 2015; 14.00 – 16.00; Cllr. Shaikh
* Wednesday 27 January 2016; 13.30 – 15.30
* Wednesday 2 March 2016; 10.00 – 12.00; Cllr. Shaikh
* Wednesday 6 April 2016; 13.30 – 15.30
* Wednesday 25 May 2016; 13.30 – 15.30; Cllr. Shaikh