**ICNC Minutes 25 May 2016**

**In attendence:**

Ruth Hayes Islington Advice Alliance (Chair)

Chris Taylor Voluntary Action Islington

Phill Watson Manor Gardens

Tessa Newton Age UK Islington

Mark Brennan Islington Homelessness Network

Janan Aljabiri Islington Refugee Forum

Nicholas Watts Islington Environment Forum

Anita Grant Islington Children and Young People’s Voluntary Sector Forum

Cllr. Kaya Comer-Schwartz Executive Member for Community Development

**Apologies:**

Colin Adams Octopus Community Network

Roz Miller Islington Faiths Forum & Mental Health and Poverty Networking Forum

Guljabeen Rahman Voluntary Action Islington

Despina Tsiakalou Islington BME Forum

John MacKinnon Sport Islington

John Muir London Borough of Islington

Peter Courtie London Borough of Islington

**1. Discussion with Cllr. Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Executive Member for Community Development**

* **Introductions**

Members introduced themselves and KC-S and TN were welcomed to their first ICN meeting.

The portfolio for the Executive Member for Community Development was discussed and changes noted. Among other things it includes the voluntary and community sector (VCS), the Community Chest fund and a role embedding equalities across LBI services. It will now also include some aspects of housing development.

* **Issues arising from the second stage of the LBI VCS grants programme**

It was clarified that grant allocation is not solely based on the relative strength of bids as if a gap in provision is identified then specific criteria may be applied to ensure that need is met.

Members indicated that more involvement of the VCS in decision-making would help to mitigate any unintended consequences. KC-S was asked to be a voice for the VCS in the early stages of decision processes, so that impact on the VCS is taken in to account.

Concern was raised that small groups falling under the remit of different LBI departments may not be treated consistently. Specifically, early years providers work with Children’s Services rather than the VCS Development Team, but don’t fit that department’s model of procurement. The only interaction of community nurseries with the VCS is the attendance of representatives at this meeting.

Work with academics, who it was felt would welcome opportunities to demonstrate the impact of their research was recommended. It was recalled that a report on the value of grants, produced in late 2015 by London Metropolitan University and VAI, was shared with councillors and was used to brief the Islington CCG executive on grants, leading to serious discussion of a CCG grant fund.

**Action:** CT to re-circulate the research on the value of grants undertaken by LMU and VAI.

Members were advised that John Muir is happy to respond to queries that arise regarding the VCS grants programme.

* **Update on Mental Health provision workshop**

It was explained that there had been some uncertainty over what funds might be available for work around mental health. It is hoped that as the VS grants programme has retained its budget, there will be a grant to support such work.

PW disclosed that Manor Gardens will take over a contract to support Mental Health Champions from the 1 July and will also take over the Community Mental Health Development project. Manor Gardens has also been shortlisted for funds for the VCS grants programme for work linking Islington’s VCS with the health sector, including mental health.

Members did want to proceed with an event regarding mental health but as the outcome of the VCS grants programme will affect which group leads the work and what format it might take, detailed planning will wait. KC-S and John Muir can be approached to discuss the possibility of council support for the event.

The relevance of green space and the physical environment to mental health was noted.

**2. Previous minutes and matters arising**

It was explained that CT had not yet contacted the CCG as there are now some additional matters to explore, including influencing the reinstated Third Sector Discussion Forum.

**Action:** CT to contact CCG regarding its relationship with the VCS.

It was clarified that the action relating to Age UK Islington under item 1 on page 2 of the previous minutes related to knowledge of partners’ services particular strengths and the potential for internal feedback on referrals made to partners’ services, rather than knowledge of partners’ current capacity.

**3. ICN Update**

Members were advised that VAI were due to meet the council’s VCS Development Team on the 26 May to discuss the grant bid that is in part for ICN funding.

It was noted that Bob Green had sent apologies and that with CT would agree on a regular attendee at ICN meetings to provide an LGBT perspective.

**4. Voluntary Sector Conference**

It was confirmed that Professor Tony Travers will be the keynote speaker at the conference. Members were invited to hold stalls at the conference, and to suggest other relevant stallholders. Bookings are low in comparison to previous years and members were asked to promote the event.

**5. Forums Feedback**

CYP Forum – The Chair of the Forum is now Denise Ward. The Forum is planning an event to give those working with young people, whether they think of themselves as youth workers or not, practical ways to deal with difficult situations. There will also be an event on the impact of the Early Years Transformation programme.

Homelessness Forum - Joe Murphy is the new head of Housing at the council. The council Housing team is employing a greater proportion of agency workers, so it’s more difficult to build relationships with them. The Crisis ‘No One Turned Away’ campaign is lobbying MPs to put forward a Private Members Bill that would change law to focus on prevention of homelessness rather than response to crisis, and to support single people too. There is interest in the Housing First model from Canada, which has eliminated rough sleeping.

Environment Forum – The Forum is currently interested in work around energy, green spaces, and hopes to put on an event to share learning from Bristol’s experience of being the European Green Capital 2015. The Forum is looking for new members.

PW – Manor Gardens will be holding a 9 July wellbeing event to launch its combined mental health service, and a 22 September seminar on free speech.

TN - 9-12 June is Carers Week and the theme is: Building Carer Friendly Communities. The Carers Hub is holding an event to mark Carers Week with Centre 404, with the aim of identifying hidden carers. During Dying Matters week a ‘Death Café’ raised awareness of the benefits of planning for what happens when we die.

IAA - HOYD is now a member of the Advice Alliance. The implications of Legal Aid cuts for policy are becoming apparent, for instance in Surrey there is now no provider of Legal Aid for housing issues. There is to be a conference about undocumented young people in London, who may spend years in education in the UK and only discover problems when they try to get work and finance. Universal Credit and the Housing Bill will mean people who were getting by before will need support. 90% of housing outreach clients are single and mostly working age. A number of Housing Associations are reducing or stopping welfare support services. Sadiq Khan’s team are open to dialogue on employment, e.g. enforcing minimum wage and employment rights.

**6. Community Chest update**

**Action:** CT to contact the ICN Community Chest representatives for feedback.

**7. Safer Neighbourhood Board**

It was reported that the SNB holds small amounts of funding for work with young people. The Board discussed the difficulty for small groups in accessing MOPAC funding. A number of bids have been made but none accepted. All SNB members are reporting that young people are a concern both as perpetrators and victims of crime.

**8. AOB; future meetings**

It was agreed to invite KC-S to future meetings. Network meetings will in the future be less frequent.

It was noted that the council has put two contracts to run Adventure Playgrounds (APs) out to tender. Each is to run six APs and the specifications are identical, but one is only open to mutuals and offers more money. There has been concern over this as a mutual formed by ex-council employees currently runs six of the APs.