**ICNC Minutes 3 February 2015**

**In attendence:**

Mike Sherriff Voluntary Action Islington (Chair)

Chris Taylor Voluntary Action Islington

Colin Adams Octopus Community Centres

Nicholas Watts Islington Environment Forum

Jaspal Dhani Islington Disability Network

Ruth Hayes Advice Network (Chair)

Phil Watson Voluntary Sector Health Network

Mark Brennan Homelessness Network

Jean Smith Islington Children and young People’s Voluntary Sector Forum

Janan Aljabiri Islington Refugee Forum

Alva Bailey LBI Lead on Social Value

Sara Montague LBI Procurement Category Lead

Stav Aristokle LBI Construction Development Officer

Giles Rankin LBI Third Sector Partnerships

Tony Bamforth The Elfrida Society (Guest)

Graeme Jones Hillside Clubhouse (Guest)

**Apologies:**

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

John Mackinnon Sport Islington

Katy Fattuhi Creative Islington

Aisha Forbes Islington BME Forum

Liz Mercer Islington Carers Provider Forum

**1. VCS Procurement Action Plan review & Social Value**

Mike Sherriff presented an overview of Social Value. Alva Bailey (AB) presented on Islington Council’s approach to Social Value.

AB advised that Social Value is added as a requirement if that is proportionate and reasonable to a given contract. The council wants Social Value to become as embedded in its contracts as the Living Wage is presently.

A contract with a VCS organisation has social value in itself, but members were asked to consider what additional value could be brought in, and how to show that social value saves money, for instance by using the Unit Cost Database.

The council is keen for commissioners to leave the details of Social Value in contracts open and it was emphasised that this is so that providers can make proposals. There are no implied, particular responses expected.

The possibility of smaller, local groups risking the loss of wider services if they lose a contract for a particular service was raised as a Social Value issue as there is a real value to the existing relationships of organisations to communities. Though it was reiterated that commissioners can’t distort competition, it was suggested that VCS groups increase their competitiveness to lessen risk, for instance through partnership. It also would be possible to argue at pre-procurement stage that Social Value should be given more weight for a particular contract.

The need to open conversation across themed area of work, both in the VCS and the council, and between commissioning managers and the VCS was highlighted. These currently take place *ad hoc*.

It was asked what measures would be accepted of outcomes, as a successful outcome for a person is often the result of long-term work with a number of services. The response was that commissioners will accept proxy outcomes. It was recommended that service providers be clear about expectations for their service and that it is a part of a longer pathway for an individual. Market testing is being recommended before contracts are drawn up and that stage would be a good opportunity to address these issues.

Council representatives said that partnership and consortia building would make VCS groups more competitive. They could also try to work with larger organisations and look beyond the Local Authority for opportunities. The council has tried to encourage consortia building for certain contracts.

Many commented on the obstacles to joining consortia. The entrepreneurial skills required are not necessarily those that VCS people have. Building consortia is an additional job role and organisations may not have the resources to support that alongside their services. Contracts can be smaller than is appropriate to the effort to win and implement them, in effect loss-leaders, and so are not necessarily good business.

Commissioners were asked to think more about why they tend to offer big contracts that require big organisations. When it was suggested that it could be written into contracts that large providers should work with local groups, it was replied that that does happen with some contracts. Those present wanted it to be made known when that happens so that local groups can approach larger providers.

**Action:** CT to distribute presentations and supporting information to members.

**Action:** ICNC to input to reviews of Social Value guidance and the VCS Procurement Action Plan by end of financial year.

**2. Previous minutes and matters arising**

It was noted that decisions on granting discretionary business rate relief have been made and will run to 2020. There will be twice yearly opportunities for new applications.

It was advised that few young people attended the Saturday Night Out (SNO) during the ICN visit, but that a good connection was made between Islington Boxing Club and SNO. The possibility of further visits to SNO will be kept under review.

A meeting between the Leader of the Council and ICN representatives did take place and it was reported that the council sees three priorities for the VCS: winning more contracts, both from the council and other statutory groups; reducing costs; and better management.

**Action:** CT to advertise the appointment of Cllr. Asima Sheikh as Executive Member for Economic and Community Development.

**Action:** CT to invite representatives of Help On Your Doorstep and Age UK to join the ICNC.

**3. ICN Update**

Members were advised that a draft report on the Welfare Reform Research project has been delivered and the final report is expected by the end of February. Following the ICN social enterprise networking event in September, a Facebook group for local social entrepreneurs has been set up on the VAI Facebook account.

**Action:** CT, RH, CA to prepare 4th March ICN workshop to follow up discussions with Cllr. Richard Watts on how the council and the VCS can best work together.

**4. Voluntary Sector Conference**

It was reported that the 2014 conference attracted over 100 delegates and was rated good or excellent overall by over 90% of those that completed feedback forms.

**Action:** CT to share draft report and recommendations with ICNC for comment.

It was agreed to bring the 2015 conference forward to July, to hold it in the evening and that it will be on the theme of funding, resources and collaboration.

**5. Islington Employment Commission & follow-up ICN employment event**

It was agreed not to schedule an event at present but that the ICNC will find out what is happening with the work strands arising from the Employment Commission. It was noted that there is an increase in self-employment locally and that there are significant advice needs of self-employed people.

**Action:** MS to clarify position regarding collaboration in the employment support provision strand (with Graeme Cooke).

**Action:** RH to clarify position regarding the business engagement strand (with Jacqueline Broadbent).

**Action:** JS to clarify position regarding the young people strand (with Holly Toft).

**6. Forums Feedback**

Homelessness Forum – Students from UCL are organising a Street Store on Islington Green at the end of February.

Children and Young People – The next meeting is on 10th March and will include a presentation about the new arrangements for youth funding.

Octopus – There is a meeting on Thursday. Closer work with arts groups and different tyoes of hub are being considered.

Advice – The next Advisers Forum is this week. It is useful for front line organisations to consider current social policy issues. Work on the shared volunteers project is developing. Advising Islington Together funding runs until July.

**7. Community Chest update**

It was confirmed that the Community Chest fund is to be extended for three years. There will be a review of the fund's criteria.

**Action:** CT to find out about the review process with a view to collating the views of the ICNC and feeding them in.

**8. Safer Neighbourhood Board**

At the 27 January meeting it was reported that the first funding bids of the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) have been sent to MOPAC for approval. The board discussed tensions in the Islington community arising from the death of Henry Hicks during a police chase. The 2015 Crime and Safety Summit take place on the 14th March at Lift on White Lion Street. It will be a public meeting to set out the vision for Community Safety for the next year and for Committee Member Elections.

**9. AOB; future meetings**