**ICNC Minutes 9 December 2015**

**In attendence:**

Mike Sherriff Voluntary Action Islington (Chair)

Ruth Hayes Islington Advice Alliance

Chris Taylor Voluntary Action Islington

Colin Adams Octopus Community Centres

Phill Watson Manor Gardens

Janan Aljabiri Islington Refugee Forum

John Mackinnon Sport Islington

Ken Kanu Help On Your Doorstep

John Muir London Borough of Islington

Steven Suggate-Francis London Borough of Islington

**Apologies:**

Cllr. Asima Shaikh London Borough of Islington

Despina Tsiakalou Islington BME Forum

Kate Kelly Creative Islington

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

Jane Chambers Age UK Islington

Mark Brennan Islington Homelessness Network

Members first of all expressed enormous thanks to MS, following the news of his resignation, for all his work for the ICN and VAI.

**1. Outline of the VCS grants programme - LBI Partnerships, Place & Culture Team**

Members were advised that the final decisions on the grant programme, including levels of funding, will be at confirmed at a meeting of the council’s Executive on the 14th of January.

All strands of the VCS grants programme are currently marked as a last resort for cuts. The funding cut to Islington council from central government is now expected to be £70 million rather than £90 million.

SS-F delivered a presentation on the Islington VCS Partnership Grants Programme. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

* It was clarified that the requirement for applicants to the programme to have satisfactorily managed previous grants or contracts from Islington council only applies to organisations that have in fact had such previous grants or contracts. Those that have not are also welcome to apply.
* The application process will aim to enable organisations to be creative and flexible in the services and activities they provide to meet resident need.
* Stakeholder panels composed of officers from across the Council will assess applications and make recommendations to members”.
* The VCS Development Team wants its officers to move from a grant management relationship with the sector, to a more mutual, co-productive relationship. The application process is intended to be co-productive, with project proposals being refined through conversation with VCS Development Officers.
* The application process will have two stages – a written application and a meeting with Council officers. This will aim to promote greater partnership between the Council and VCS. Organisations that are shortlisted in stage one of the application process will have a strong likelihood of receiving funding.
* Grants are intended to be for four years, in practice running for two years, being reviewed, and if all is well enough then for another two years.
* Final decisions on applications to the grants programme will be made in May 2016 with new Grants contracts starting in July 2016. As per the agreement in the Islington Compact, any organisation currently receiving a grant, which is unsuccessful in the application process, will receive a minimum of three months’ notice before their current contract is ended. Members commented that the schedule for the grants programme is ambitious given the amount of work required.
* The Council’s VCS Development Team are working with other Council departments to identify commissioning opportunities for the VCS. In particular, there appear to be opportunities in preventative health work, through the CCG, Public Health, and Adult Social Services. These commissioners have demonstrated interest in ensuring that smaller organisations are able to benefit/compete for from these opportunities. The Council will look to partner with organisations that can facilitate the sector to take advantage of these opportunities.
* Members were advised that the grants programme will welcome organisations that can provide innovative services and activities. However, the decision-making process will not favour innovation ahead of activities or services that have proven effective over time; particularly if there is demonstrated need and evidence that these services are effective.”
* It was affirmed that joint applications will be welcome.
* It was requested that what is meant by ‘robust governance arrangements’ is made more clear, for instance by using examples.
* Members were advised that LBI wants to broker VCS use of its underused premises, and to use the Community Infrastructure Levy to provide VCS premises. A number of organisations have to use their current grant funding to cover the cost of premises in the private rental sector. The Council want to maximise the use of grant awards for services and activities that directly benefit residents and so are considering mechanisms that will enable the sector to reduce the proportion of grant funding that is spent on private sector rent.
* While it was accepted that the council will want grants and contracts with the VCS to help to meet its work priorities, the extent to which that will be expected was questioned. It was explained that what the council asks of the VCS is derived from the council’s own priorities, but is intended to be broad enough to relate to most VCS activity.
* Members recommended consideration of what gaps in provision may open up because of cuts to LBI services. It was suggested the stakeholder panel take this into account when making decisions, and that applying organisations tell LBI if their proposals are intended to address any such gaps they have noticed.
* Members were encouraged that the grant programme seems a better and more engaging process than in many other boroughs.

**Action:** VCS Development Team to advise ICN of when VCS organisations can expect news of the grants programme.

**Action:** CT to check minuted details of grants programme with JMu.

**2. Previous minutes and matters arising**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

**Action:** CT to arrange a visit to a VCS consortium from the shortlist shared with members.

**Action:** CT to follow up the contact made with various local networks and potential members of networks, and to invite the BME women’s network to join the ICN.

**3. ICN Update**

Members were told that colleagues at London Metropolitan University have produced a draft report on grant funding in Islington on behalf of VAI, and that it is intended to be sent to councillors and council officers this week, along with some specific recommendations, in the hope of influencing budget decisions.

**4. Forums Feedback**

IAA – The alliance continues to notice high demand and increasing destitution. There is concern about the gap between applying for and receiving Universal Credit. So expect increased abuse and exploitation. There will be a campaigning event on Legal Aid with Shami Chakrabarti and Jeremy Corbyn on the 6th of January. Social housing rents are to increase significantly for households earning above a given amount. The alliance wants to arrange a meeting to begin to raise awareness of the issue.

KK – HOYD is researching the possibility of extending the Good Neighbour scheme to other areas. They are finding much destitution and vulnerability that is hidden through isolation and are particularly concerned about older people.

Octopus – The network has been successful in a bid to Reaching Communities for a health and wellbeing project. There is concern that no coordinated youth provision will remain from April, with only Lift, Platform and Rose Bowl youth hubs definitely to be funded. Octopus may apply to the Dispossessed Fund to address that.

SI – The network has increased the value of the grants it gives out and wants more groups to apply. Projects related to sports and physical activity are eligible. The website is being improved so that applications can be done online and groups can post stories.

**Action:** CT to advertise Sport Islington grants to ICN.

PW – Age UK has won the Carers Centre contract to run a drop-in and information centre, and to do carers assessments. The project will be delivered at Manor Gardens. Manor Gardens is a signatory to a Human Rights Day letter in support of the Human Rights Act (as is VAI).

**5. Community Chest update**

The Community Chest panel has not met since the last ICN meeting. The final deadline for applications to the 2015/16 Community Chest is the 11th of January. Members were pleased that the panel is now more open to applications from football clubs, given their popularity.

**6. Safer Neighbourhood Board**

It was confirmed that KK will be the primary ICN representative at the SNB, supported by CA. The focus at the last SNB meeting was on youth and play, with concern raised about the stereotype that young people are involved in crime, anti-social behaviour, etc. The SNB has written to the Mayor to express concern about the possible loss of Community Safety Officers. Stop and search is a standing item on the SNB agenda as members worry that it is heavy-handed. A request has been made to report how many convictions there are as a result of stop and search.

**7. AOB; future meetings**

* 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