

# Charnwood Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Forum

Minutes of Meeting held at Gorse Covert Community  
Centre on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at 10am

Peggy welcomed everyone and introductions were made

## Present

Peggy Nicholls	The Bridge (Chair)
Helen Wootton	Home-Start Charnwood (Vice-Chair)
Mike Griffiths	20:20 Mentoring Project (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Jane Hunt	Assistant to Nicky Morgan MP - speaker
Cllr David Snartt	Cabinet Lead for VCS, Charnwood BC - speaker
Vicky Dawson	Chair of WAGS, Altogether Place - speaker
Alison Greaves	WAGS Secretary
Tom Kiernan	Charnwood Borough Council
Linda Shaw	Rosebery St Peters Community Centre
Christine Barrell	Youth Shelter
Marie Davis	Youth Shelter
Zoe Whetherly	Fearon Hall
Lesley Severn	Fearon Hall
Jane Hall	Parent Carer Council
Anne Glasper	Trustee of VAC & VAL
Clare Nagle	VAL
Neil Lambert	VAC

## Apologies –

Caroline Howell	The Bridge
David Brindley	New Dawn
Gopaldas Popat	Sathi Group, John Storer House
David Rodgers	Treasurer of VAC trustees
Geoff Jackman	VAC Trustee
Vin Gaten	VAL (belated apology)

## **1 Big Society – national views**

Councillor Jane Hunt, both a Borough Councillor and a Case Worker/Assistant to Nicky Morgan MP, was introduced.

Jane spoke to a handout which is available on line at;  
[www.voluntaryactioncharnwood.org.uk/forums-partnerships-and-networks.html](http://www.voluntaryactioncharnwood.org.uk/forums-partnerships-and-networks.html)

The term 'Big Society' is to distinguish from big government and seeks to devolve power into local communities. Information needs disseminating and understanding, but hopefully will translate national policy into funding for local voluntary and community groups.

In response to questions, Jane added:-

- Local Authority Officers may need assistance and encouragement to prevent them from holding back such changes devolving power
- Small community groups, such as the Shepshed Community Plan, need to build their status to be more recognised
- The Bridge, working with Charnwood BC, had won a prestigious national award, and was good example of the VCS delivering a "public service", which others could emulate
- The VCS Forum is an approved channel for voices to be heard by the authorities

Jane was thanked for presenting and stayed for the rest of the meeting.

## **2 Localism – Local Government views**

Councillor David Snartt, Cabinet lead for the VCS at Charnwood Borough Council, and also a County Councillor, was introduced.

David gave a wide ranging talk referring to various ways in which local communities are gaining power from both tiers of local government, Leicestershire County Council, LCC, and Charnwood Borough Council, CBC, e.g.

- Rawlins Community College is becoming an academy not under Local Authority control
- There will be an age 11-16 school in future, replacing the current 11-14 High schools
- The new Police and Crime Commissioner will be elected locally and replace the Police Authority in 2013

- LCC are offering Big Society grants to VCOs
- CBC has funded 20:20 to provide local mentoring and won a national award, and celebrates the achievements of the young people making remarkable progress in their lives

There will be budget reductions at both LCC and CBC in 2012, which will make things difficult, but we can work together, smarter, and ensure best use of premises etc., to sustain as much value as possible.

CBC will be consulting on the new Corporate Plan, so David urged everyone to ensure you **“get your voice heard!”**

Tom Kiernan added that Area Forum budgets are available again in 2012-13, and very local – 3 in Loughborough and 4 across rest of Charnwood. His advice would be to bid for “less” in future, i.e. don't ask for 10k from a 12k pot, hundreds or a thousand or two is more likely.

### **3 Views from local residents**

Vicky Dawson, Chair of WAGS, Warwick Way Action Group, at Altogether Place, was introduced.

Vicky felt the WAGS had had a great start since moving in to ATP just over a year ago. She recounted numerous events and activities they had provided, training sessions run, agencies worked with, days out organised, visits received and general networking successes making them feel part of the established community services, statutory and voluntary.

Tom contrasted WAGS with Marios Tinenti Centre, praising Vicky and her colleagues for ensuring local needs are responded to by local people.

### **4 General discussion, Q & A**

Helen Wootton felt that many, especially smaller VCOs, are not politically aware, and mainly concentrate on tasks and delivering their own activities, and so not involved in strategic discussions.

Peggy and David both agreed and asserted that VCS input is vital.

Neil hoped that the respect and recognition displayed today by Jane (pp Nicky) and David would be sustained and evident from others in

authority at county and borough level. Jane and David offered to encourage wider support.

Neil also talked about the tension between public funding in line with national policy, and actual local needs which we want to be met.

## **5 Consultations and Feedback from other forums**

- 5.1 Charnwood Together, CT: new internal structure of the Partnership including functions delivered through it, and how Charnwood aligns with Leicestershire Together. Peggy is official VCS rep on CT Board.
- 5.2 Peggy will shortly be attending the Children & Young Peoples, CYP, Group on CT.
- 5.3 Neil raised a concern that the new Health and Well-being Group on CT should not concentrate on Health only.
- 5.4 VCS Assembly: Peggy is involved in continuing debate about the potential role of the Assembly and its relationship with VAL.

## **6 Input from VAL**

Clare Nagel explained her new role is county-wide with Vin and Ilir in Charnwood. She complimented Charnwood on the good practice evident with Voluntary, and Statutory, sectors working closely together, which is not the case in all districts.

VAL is facilitating input to strategy discussions at county level across various themes including CYP, and will be sharing a protocol on VCS representatives. VAL is also campaigning against cuts in funding in City and County.

## **7 Input from VAC**

Neil talked about information available on the VAC website [www.voluntaryactioncharnwood.org.uk](http://www.voluntaryactioncharnwood.org.uk)

VAC had convened this meeting of the Charnwood VCS Forum under sub-contract to VAL, and Neil hoped that the funding agreement would extend into 2012-13.

## **8 Date of planning meeting**

**The quarterly meetings for 2012 will be planned on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January at 130 @ JSH**

**It is anticipated dates and times of day will vary and venues spread across the borough**

Members will be notified ASAP

Neil Lambert  
CEO VAC  
5<sup>th</sup> January 2012