

Haringey Community Centres Network

Ordinary meeting, online (Zoom), 25 November 2020, 10 – 11.30am

Attendees: Dave, Lordship Rec (Chair); Jo, Hornsey Vale Community Centre (minutes); Sarah, Markfield Project; Leyla, Living Under One Sun; Herman, West Indian Cultural Centre; Andrew Williams, Engine Room.

Apologies: Raj Gupta, Wood Green hub

Dave apologised for short notice of the meeting due to communication issues with council officers. Centres asked to hold 2 Dec for a meeting with the Council (tbc).

Summary since last meeting:

It had been a very busy time since the last HCCN meeting on 20 April.

- Sarah [Markfield]: Had run a food project with Haringey Play Assoc; children's sessions in the park and online training sessions had continued; devastating fire led to a crowd-funding campaign; now need to do a major redevelopment project and a new lease is imperative. Senior officers have said they are working towards this but no timeline given. Meanwhile continue to pay peppercorn rent.
- Andrew [Engine Room]: staff on furlough; opened briefly in Sept; hires much reduced; proud to be collection point for Tottenham food bank
- Dave [Lordship]: 7/9 p/t staff on furlough; had constructed new hatch in café wall to do takeaways; sit down service cancelled; free food offer once per week; had survived due to furlough and a range of grants, including £15,500 from Council.
- Leyla [Down Lane / Café Connect]: furloughed staff for 1 month; café open for 3 months but made a loss; park setting had proved useful and lots of family activity offered; had run projects for women and on sport and digital inclusion, which revealed underlying mental health issues in the community. Noise/pollution difficult to deal with. Confused about 106 money/consultation and would like more information. Felt Council grant programme too time consuming/intrusive for size of grants. Had recently signed a new lease.
- Jo [Hornsey Vale]: furloughed single member of staff in Nov but not possible before; opened July – Oct after a huge volunteer effort to create a trusted Covid-secure environment. Remain concerned about the lack of a lease. Have to chase Council officers for every small concession; recently been offered a rent reduction Sept 20-Mar 21 but still paying way more than others, e.g. Markfield, which is unfair; still without a lease. Received £3k in Council grant (to pay the rent!)
- Raj [Wood Green Hub] (by email): Continue to have problems with waste collection. Bywaters has demanded payment during the lockdown period despite no service provided; continue to have problem with the boiler which now needs replacing. We need support with free personal protection equipment.

Community Centre closures - The meeting noted with huge regret that two precious Centres had folded over the summer, the Northumberland Park Women and Children's Centre and the Irish Centre. [Both] had a 30 year history in the Borough.

Haringey Council Covid Support grants - The meeting welcomed that grants were made available and noted that more transparency about how Council grants are distributed would be welcomed. Those centres that were Companies Ltd by Guarantee had received a Business rate grant from central government, distributed by Haringey Council.

Rubbish collection – agreed to ask again if Veolia could collect rubbish from Council owed sites for free or at a reduced rate. Hornsey Vale had paid £250 per month.

Maintenance – this was usually negotiated as part of a new lease but as few leases were being issued, it was becoming a critical issue e.g. for WI Cultural Centre. Markfield had a maintenance arrangement with the Council; Sarah noted that the Council's current provider was slow and difficult to engage with.

Council Strategy – at the VCS meeting on 10 Sept 20 a new Community Framework was introduced by Charlotte Pomery, this one developed in partnership with the VCS Leaders' Group. Strands of the CF will include:

- Data, intelligence and insight;
- Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy: Infrastructure, Funding, Roles
- Community Engagement and Co-Production

A year had passed since the Voluntary & Community Strategy had been proposed and an update was requested by the meeting.

VCS support partner – the meeting noted disappointment that there wouldn't be an ordinary VCS meeting between Sept and Jan given this time of crisis. More information would be welcomed about the VCS Leaders Group and how community centres can engage with and benefit from it.

The following agenda was proposed for the meeting with the Council:

1. Continuation of the **rent holiday** for Centres, as discussed and agreed during the first Lockdown.

2. **Business rates** to be suspended. Claim forms were expected. [We'd like a list of those Centres who were eligible for either suspension or grant, and who received such].

3. **General grants** for maintaining the sustainability of centres. Did these get widely received by Centres? Will grants continue to be issued? [We'd like a list of those Centres who were eligible for the grant, and the amounts each have received up to now].

4. Add Centres to the **Veolia contract** for free waste collection on a temporary basis (e.g. designated alongside the other Council buildings that get the free collection service).

5. Add Centres based in Council-owned buildings to the Council's central **maintenance contract** and tackle repairs at each Centre on a temporary basis during the crisis period.

6. Supply **PPE, disinfecting equipment** and signage that can be used to make centres safe.

7. Provide central advice, guidelines, safeguarding training, equipment and finance to enable community centre kitchens (where they exist) to operate safely and to provide free **hot meals or takeaway packages** to those needing them in all parts of the Borough.

8. Enable the relevant Centres to negotiate the **25-year leases** the Council has recognised are needed and ensure the long-promised rent equity across the VCS is actually delivered.

9. Start to implement the agreed '**social value**' **offsetting-against-rent** process for future rent calculations.