

HARINGEY COMMUNITY CENTRES NETWORK

REPORT OF GENERAL MEETING AT THE ENGINE ROOM AND ON ZOOM

Tuesday 12th April 2022: 3.00pm – 5.00pm [Note: Next meeting Tues 14th June, 3pm]

Present:

Dave	Lordship Hub
Debra	Hornsey Vale
Daisy	Innovative Vision Organisation
Leyla	Living Under One Sun
Silvia	Markfield Community Centre
Sandra	Grace Community
Herman	Goan Centre
Andrew	The Engine Room

Apologies:

Sajda	Jan Trust
Kevin	Wood Green Community Hub

1. Catch up

Lordship Hub are in a Haringey Council building (in Lordship Rec) and have been for 8 years. They got through pandemic thanks to a public appeal and grants. They are now fully operational again (5 fte staff and 50 volunteers) with café, lots of classes and free public activities, but still on a financial knife edge. Recently got grants to install new solar panels on their roof.

IVO are struggling – they want to their shop-front centre, owned by the Council, to meet various building standards. No funding is available for sorting the ventilation. The Council are not helping.

Markfield Project is fully functioning again though still running some things online. Struggling with the Council on building maintenance - 5 month wait to get lift fixed (it is vital for their users).

Hornsey Vale is fully functioning but it still out of lease. No idea how much they are due to pay to Haringey Council this year so budgeting is very difficult. Have a fully maintaining lease so they have to pay rent and also cover maintenance costs. Financially they are surviving on 0.5 fte staff and lots of volunteer time when 2 fte's needed. Need capital grants for the building.

LUOS – run an allotment site, and also a hub in Down Lane Park with cafe & gardens. Re Down Lane Pk, they are again fully operational. New 5 years MOU agreement signed with Council. LUOS calculated they make a £2.6 million contribution towards local community through their range of activities and services. Feel quite pressurised due to adjacent local development. Design options for improvement of park being considered (due to S106 etc) but there's not enough joined-up thinking.

The Engine Room—now fully operational. During COVID all staff furloughed and local business grants secured to enable them to come through COVID in a strong financial position. Also secured Haringey Giving funding. 60% income is room hire which has returned very strongly.

Goan Centre - yoga hall hire & church deliver income. No help or support has been provided from the Council. Operations are wholly dependent upon volunteers. Outstanding issues with Council on lease.

West Indian Cultural Centre Information was shared on the WICC which is currently closed. Ongoing issues with lease, repairs (they have an online appeal seeking to raise £280,000), and planning/regeneration at the site.

2. HCCN and Haringey Council

Dave highlighted the work that HCCN had undertaken with the Council in the last 2-3 years [See summary of negotiations, at Appendix 1]. In addition, members of HCCN had attended Bridge Renewal Trust Voluntary and Community Sector Forum meetings to raise issues, including during formal consultation over a new draft approach at last recognising the valuable work of community centres. Throughout, HCCN had challenged the previous controversial and unworkable policies of the Council which for over 5 years had tried to impose market rents, short term leases, and priority for re-development in 'regeneration' areas. Most Centres whose leases had run out had refused to sign such new leases. Instead, HCCN has been calling for long leases for all who want them, affordable rent levels offset by services provided, and support over repairs.

Progress had been made but a promised document proposing a different way forward, which was due to go to the Council's cabinet, had not emerged – possibly due to the covid crisis. The concept was based around valuing services and offsetting them against chargeable rent, and longer leases.

And for much of, but not all of, the Covid crisis (which forced many centres to close their doors and face financial ruin) Haringey Council had offered rent holidays, business rate grants support etc – with Government grants to cover these. However despite the above, several community centres had received Council threats due to non-payment of rent at a time when no income from activities was possible.

Hiring: HCCN and the Council (via Poppy Thomas) had also set up a system to facilitate hire enquiries. Centres are asked to fill in an online questionnaire about what spaces they have available, when, for what and the cost of hire etc. Interested groups can also fill in a special questionnaire identifying their needs, and these details are then circulated to the HCCN members via our email list. Dave explained that it had been agreed by all that the role of HCCN and the Council was to encourage such communication but not to get involved or enter into any specific negotiations on behalf of specific groups or centres.

Repairs: Leyla highlighted possible expense of independently engaging the Council's building contractors (currently Homes for Haringey) for maintenance work unless it was an agreed service covered by a centre's lease.

Communications: Daisy thought that the Council should be more pro-active - as community centres we need help. All agreed we should have a further network meeting with Haringey Council. Currently we are in pre-election purdah so no communications between officers and Councillors are possible till May 6th. We should contact Poppy Thomas and Charlotte Pomeroy to propose resuming the joint discussions/negotiations – based on the previous 9 key points [see Appendix 1], plus other current issues.

3. HCCN and Bridge Renewal Trust

Andrew gave a summary of frustrations LUOS and The Engine Room had had around Bridge Renewal Trust who are the designated Voluntary Sector lead organisation, paid by the Council. Specifically around the Home Cooked project in Tottenham Hale where an investment in the community of £750,000 had been secured for Tottenham Hale with a consortium where NONE of the partners were based in the area and where the 2 community centres in the ward were completely overlooked despite having active and ongoing youth work with local groups. To top it all, one of the partners has organised a youth event as part of the Home Cooked funding, using neither Community Centre, but using Tottenham Town Hall which is not even IN Tottenham Hale! Leyla shared Andrew's concerns and thought that the actions of Bridge were inexcusable.

Dave expressed his sympathy and suggested that a statement be made to Bridge. Debra felt that the Council need to be held to account as they are the ones paying Bridge to facilitate the Voluntary and

Community Sector. Leyla asked where has capacity building taken place with Bridge support? She has seen none.

Andrew suggested that some of the community centres may want to get together and offer to manage the VCS contract for the Council which is up at the end of 2022. Dave highlighted that others would need to be involved as there were 1000 VCS organisations in Haringey of which around 30 were community centres (albeit serving as a base for many of the sector's groups).

A discussion continued around the value of the Bridge Trust to HCCN – they own and operate two centres so reps should attend HCCN meetings. Herman suggested that this was not a new issue and the Bridge Renewal Trust should be held to account. Sandra from Grace stated that she had had little to no interaction with Bridge Renewal Trust.

Dave suggested that positive proposals should be put to The Bridge Renewal Trust for what we want them to do better, and which should be adopted as an integral part of the bidding criteria for any future VCS contract with Haringey Council. Andrew agreed to draft some proposals. [See Appendix 2].

4. Other business

HCCN set up, and getting advice Leyla suggested that it was time for HCCN to be fully constituted as a legal entity. Debra spoke about the excellent empowerment work undertaken by Octopus Community Network in Islington (15 Centres involved – see www.octopuscommunities.org.uk) and we agreed that it would be worthwhile to invite them to a future meeting.

Centres info Hornsey Vale Centre has a list of all the centres in Council buildings, lease length and rent charged – to be circulated to our members

Contacts We may have lost contact with some Centres as emails changed / staff were on furlough or have changed / some may even have been forced to close due to financial pressures - so we need to re-establish contact with such Centres around the Borough.

5. Actions

- a. It was agreed to seek HCCN meeting with Council officers after the May elections – Dave to send letter to officers and coordinate.
- b. In light of the Tottenham Hale Home Cooked issue, it was agreed to send some positive proposals to Bridge Renewal Trust and the Council about expectations on engagement with local community centres and the HCCN going forward. Andrew to draft. [See Appendix 2]. Dave to send to BRT and Council.
- c. We should work to raise awareness of HCCN again and get more attendees to a future meeting. Volunteers needed to do a phone round beforehand to check details of each centre's current contacts etc.
- d. Octopus Community Network to be invited to our next meeting. Debra to invite them.
- e. Info on Centres' leases and rent levels to be circulated to our list. Dave to forward. [Done]

6. Date of next meeting

3pm Tuesday 14th June. Venue TBA or online or both - by which time we would hope to have met with Haringey Council and secured some response to our proposals from Bridge Renewal Trust.

Appendix 1

HCCN REPORT OF JOINT HCCN/COUNCIL NEGOTIATIONS - DEC 2020

We held a highly constructive HCCN/LBH officers meeting - attended by reps from 6 centres and 2 Council officers. The agenda was the nine proposals of ways we believe the Council can help our sector - see below.

We are still awaiting a Council note/response in writing to the 9 points, following which a further meeting is likely to be arranged.

In summary, our proposals and council response at the meeting (in italics):

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

Extension to March being considered. Aim to decide before xmas.

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].

Further suspensions being considered, eligibility is an issue.

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].

55 organisations applied for the £500k Govt funding for discretionary distribution by the Council. 5 were not eligible. The rest recd a share based on identified need. Info on Council website about a planned further Govt-funded Business grants pot for places forced to close due to covid-19.

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).

Options [eg Council buildings or community rate] to be further considered/discussed with HCCN which might be negotiable with Veolia.

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.

To be investigated and considered

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

PPE is funded by the Govt so Centres could possibly get access. Other safety equipment is bought by LBH services - will see if Centres might be able to buy as well.

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.

Centres can contact / liaise with Haringey Food Bank Network and also apply for grants from Haringey Giving.

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.

Recommendations on this were due to go to the Cabinet earlier this year, but suspended due to Covid. May be reviewed and re-submitted next spring - although Mayoral elections in May may lead to 'purdah' suspensions of business. Any Centres needing a new lease can start negotiating.

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

As above.

Appendix 2

Recommendations for the Council and Bridge Trust *[April 2022]*

In light of the challenges faced by two Tottenham Hale based Community Centres, working with Haringey Council's VCS Partner Bridge Renewal Trust on the £750,000 Home Cooked project, we would like to request that the Council mandates Bridge Renewal Trust or a future VCS Service provider to:

1. Consult with relevant community centres and resources when applying for funding for specific programmes in specific geographical locations
2. Facilitate the engagement of the widest possible number of stakeholders and engage the Community Centres network in specific localities to identify who those stakeholders might be
3. Where events and meetings are to be organised, always seek to use local community centres rather than commercial premises thus investing in our local community centre infrastructure .
4. As meetings move back to face to face meetings post COVID, the VCS partner should partner with the Haringey Community Centres Network (HCCN) to ensure that meetings are held in venues across the Borough and not only in locations which are owned and managed by Bridge Renewal Trust.
5. Identify ways in which the Haringey Community Centres Network can be supported through regular (quarterly?) joint meetings with the VCS service provider in order to identify any issues or opportunities which the VCS service may be able to support or assist with.
