

Haringey Community Centres Network

<https://lordshiphub.org.uk/haringey-community-centres-network/>

General Meeting, 7th May 2025 @ Chestnuts Community Centre

Present: Vicky (Morrison Hall), Daron Osbourne (Wolves Lane Centre / Ubele), Russell King (Chestnuts Centre, and Tiverton Hut), Dave Morris (Lordship Hub), Herman Irish (for part of the meeting) **Apologies:** Andrew (Engine Room), Debra Mendes (Hornsey Vale CC), Margaret Bonney and Candy Fernandez (Goan Centre), Conall Ó Brolcháin (Mind in Haringey), Keith Fair (Markfield Project)

Chair: Russell King Minutes taken by: Dave Morris

1. Minutes of last meeting (February 2025)

Agreed as accurate. Matters arising include..

- a. plans to invite Octopus Network (Islington) to a future meeting
- b. LBH Joe Baker was asked to investigate potential for joint contracts re gas/electric supplies.
- c. Dan of Public Voice is chasing up the idea of a map of all Centres in Haringey.

2. Updates from Centres present:

Chestnuts Community Centre See previous minutes. Very active Centre, with 30 organisations and 3 businesses based there. In Council building managed by Bridge Trust since 2015. Previously a peppercorn rent agreement. They urgently need the Council to offer a new affordable lease (at least 20 years) and to do repairs. Have had some negotiations, which stalled pending the Council's recent Cabinet meeting (see report below).

Tiverton Hut: Managed by the Bridge Trust. See previous minutes – no further update.

Wolves Lane Horticulture Centre: Predominantly a food growing site. 7-8 greenhouses. Have a palm-house. 3 new passiv-haus eco-buildings recently completed – plan a public launch soon. Leased from the Council by a consortium including Organiclea and Ubele. Do lots of educational work and activities, and sell produce to restaurants etc.

Lord Morrison Hall: Active for 40 years in a Council building to the east of Bruce Grove area. Managed by Afro International. No Council support. Was previously very active in the HCCN before covid. Lease ran out 2022. Had a legal dispute before then over structural repairs issues – successfully challenged a court case over eviction proceedings.

Lordship Hub: A key issue for this specialist eco-building has been repairs, with £120,000 worth of repairs currently being carried out by Haringey Council. Also getting a new Changing Places unit (for people with severe mobility challenges), to be installed in the autumn.

Also noted:

Hornsey Vale Community Centre: See previous minutes. Currently negotiating with the Council for a proper lease.

Markfield Project: Currently negotiating with the Council for a proper lease.

Living Under One Sun community hub: Council building in Down Lane Park. Vibrant centre, café and outdoor space. Hundreds attended the 20th anniversary celebrations for LUOS. The £multi-million regeneration of the

park had earmarked funding for a new Centre for LUOS. However, after years of preparations the amount allocated was drastically reduced against LUOS's wishes and LUOS recently have sadly decided to pull out.

Bernie Grant Arts Centre: Have suspended activities in order to conduct a major review of their future strategy and finances.

3. Leases/rents/repairs etc

As we stated at our last meeting, our Network was set up over 10 years ago because of the unacceptable model leases that were then being proposed by the Council. Virtually every Centre (most of whom seem to have had full rent offset) was refusing to sign them, and that has continued since. Some Centres have had to close down. 7 years ago the council cabinet changed and adopted a public commitment for more support for and collaboration with the Voluntary and Community Sector. HCCN and LBH officers have held constructive negotiations over the last 4 years to try to rectify the situation, with some degree of success. However there are still some serious sticking points, and relations with individual Centres are still patchy and sometimes problematic.

We have argued that..

- Services: The great range of services and activities provided by and conducted in Centres should be properly acknowledged and valued (including in financial terms).
- Rent: The value of the services above should offset any deemed notional charges.
- Length of leases: We say 25 years should be the default – if people want less that could be negotiated, but this should be standard offering.
- Repairs: repairs to the infrastructure of their buildings should be the responsibility of the Council.

Action..

Since our last HCCN meeting we arranged for a HCCN delegation to meet with senior Council officers and the relevant Cabinet Member. As a result of this many of our points were incorporated into a draft policy Social Assets Value Report to be put before the Cabinet on April 22nd.

On receiving the draft Report we called for further changes, some of which were incorporated at the last minute.

However due to the serious issue of the Report still insisting that in future leases each Centre would be expected to pay at least 20% of a market rent, we wrote to all Councillors and then had a deputation (Dave, Candy and Debra) to that cabinet meeting to call for further amendment. Unfortunately this was rejected.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLe8EDrRAXA&list=PL_DSjoFpWl8tSPZp3XSVAEhv-gWr-6Vzd&index=1
HCCN Presentation is from 2m 15s - 7m 30s Council response: 7m 35s - 11m 50s Council presentation of Report and Cllrs' Qs: 12m 00s - 20m 00s

The future..

This is a summary of the current situation as circulated to all Centres:

The HCCN is the umbrella network for around 40 community-run Community Centres throughout Haringey, of which around 30 are based in Council buildings. Following around 4 years of constructive negotiations to try to resolve a crisis due to proposed unaffordable new leases for the Centres in Council buildings, the HCCN made our deputation to the Cabinet on Tuesday April 22nd to call for changes to an officers' Report put in front of the Cabinet. The Cabinet unfortunately (as is usual practice) adopted the officers' Report unchanged. We had already negotiated quite a few positive changes to the draft beforehand, but they wouldn't amend the key 'sticking point', the limitation to a maximum 80% rent offset.

However, we remain in a strong position:

- **the Council have accepted Centres provide fantastic services, which should be recognised and valued to offset rent charges** (albeit only to 80% maximum at the moment - unlike the 100% accepted in the past, and the 100% 'internal recharge arrangements' for all current Council-run services).

- **We've made it clear that we provide services and enable vital activities collectively worth £millions**, which the Council can't provide. We do so at no cost to the Council, so have a very powerful story to tell publicly. We need to start to tell that story loudly!

- **They have recognised that the maximum 80% rent offset may well be unaffordable for Centres** (as we have explained to them) and may need some 'mitigation'. Each Centre can of course insist on effective 'mitigation' if they can't afford new lease arrangements. HCCN will back those Centres.

- **They have recognised that the newly proposed Services Value Matrix, for measuring services/activities provided, needs amending** (re its themes, and its ridiculous and arbitrary 'capping' etc)
- with the officers empowered to make those changes during the coming weeks and months, following negotiations with Centres and the HCCN.

- **the Council have publicly committed to working with the sector and the HCCN in partnership.** They recognise that there has been a leases crisis for the last 10 years as Centres have refused to sign unrealistic and unaffordable lease terms. That crisis is likely to continue, and the Council have committed to negotiating over the coming year and then reviewing and reporting back to Cabinet whether the new leases are in fact viable and being adopted. If they aren't then we have an even stronger case in a year's time.

We agreed that HCCN will, as always, support all Centres in any negotiations.

Dave to draft a simple template for Centres to be able to calculate the financial value of their services provided. To bring to the next HCCN meeting.

4. Borough of Culture

Community centres are a crucial part of the Haringey Year of Culture 2027 - most things that happen, and happen regularly, in our Centres add greatly to the borough's daily cultural life.

5. Next Meeting: Provisionally Wed 9th July, 15.30-17.30 @ Wolves Lane Centre