

Community Engagement Systems for Haringey Strategic Partnership

Proposal to Develop Haringey Community Link

Background

The current provider of community engagement systems in the Haringey Strategic Partnership has been derecognised as of 22nd March 2007, following a performance review. This situation leaves the HSP with a vacuum in ensuring effective community engagement in the partnership and its themed boards. Therefore the London Borough of Haringey have commissioned a community development advisor to work with the Council, HSP and HAVCO to develop new proposals and model for engagement that can be introduced within the financial year 2007/8.

The funding that was available through Government Office for London to establish and manage Community Empowerment Networks no longer exists. Therefore the priority for Haringey is to ensure we secure effective systems that offer the partnership value for money while ensuring the principles of effective engagement, accountability and real influence are adhered to.

This document outlines new engagement systems proposed by HAVCO with support from the Council and the Partnership.

Interim Arrangements

The HSP still has approximately 10 representatives from the community sector and 13 from the voluntary sector remaining on its Main Board and Themed Partnership Boards. In some cases Themed Partnership Board Chairs have taken action to fill voids during this interim period.

Main HSP Board	Community Sector	- Youth Council (2)
	Voluntary Sector	- HAVCO (3), Peace Alliance (1)
Well Being Board	Community Sector	- Federation of Residents Association (1)
	Voluntary Sector	- HAVCO (2)
Safer Communities Board	Community Sector	- There were no community representatives
	Voluntary Sector	- Peace Alliance (1), HAVCO (1)

Children & Young Peoples Board	Community Sector	- Youth Council (2)
	Voluntary Sector	- HAVCO (2)
Better Places Board	Community Sector	- Federation of Residents Association (2) Friends of Parks (2) Mobility Forum (1)
	Voluntary Sector	- No representation
Enterprise Board	Community Sector	- No representation
	Voluntary Sector	- Selby Trust (1) HAVCO (1) Collage Arts (1)

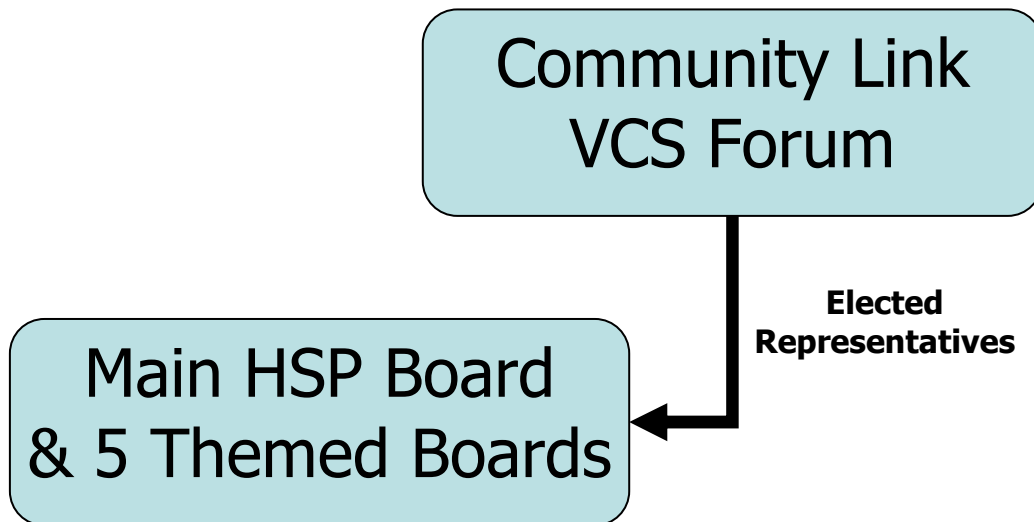
It is proposed that these places remain as an interim arrangement until new systems are adopted and fully operational. This would ensure consistency, stability and remove the requirement to develop systems of securing further representatives for a 6-9 month period which would be resource intensive. The new proposals will ensure consistency across the whole partnership structure and a higher level of accountability and support for *all* representatives.

Proposed New Model for Community Engagement

Other than HAVCO's standing position it is proposed that all voluntary and community sector representatives on the Main HSP Board and its Themed Partnership Board structures are elected through a new forum called Haringey Community Link. This would become the 'forum of forums' for the voluntary and community sector.

The introduction of the new system for securing voluntary and community sector representatives would replace *all* existing mechanisms (some of which vary by themed boards), ensuring consistency and accountability. This will mean that existing voluntary and community sector representatives will lose their current places at the end of the interim arrangement period. If they wish to retain their places they will have to stand for election.

The new systems will add value to the partnership and all sectors involved. It is a real opportunity to improve effective representation, as the voluntary and community sector want to build upon the beacon Status achieved by the London Borough of Haringey for Area Assemblies. It could also offer real value for money if utilised for securing voluntary and community sector representation on other structures outside of the HSP, such as PCT partnership boards, LSC project/partnership boards etc. This is an approach being adopted in several other London boroughs.



The move towards the development of a voluntary and community sector forum will see benefits for the partnership, the voluntary and community sector and other agencies operating in Haringey. It will ensure a formal gateway is developed to communicate with a wide range of organisations on policy and service issues, through regular structured meetings.

The development of Haringey Community Link will see community engagement in the partnership moving towards a generic model of representatives being elected onto the HSP and Themed Boards. This will mean they are representatives of Haringey Community Link and not specialist areas of interest or geography (such as disability, faith etc). There is a firm belief that this will reinvigorate voluntary and community sector representation, especially on delivery partnerships. With the resources allocated by the HSP to support new engagement systems, this model is achievable.

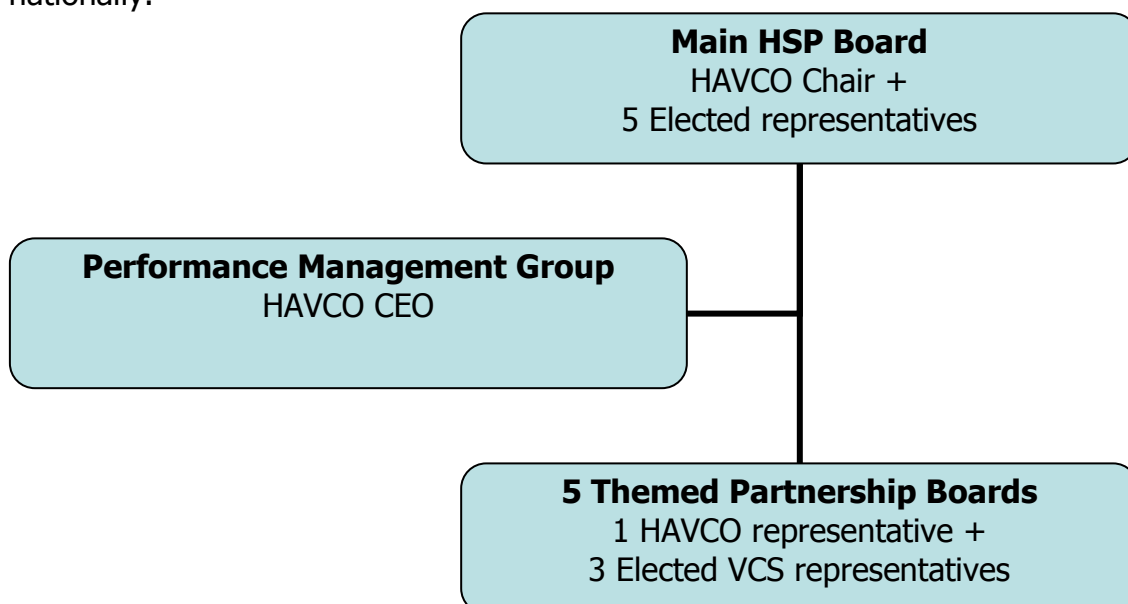
Building on experiences in other boroughs, despite not having specialist forums, people are only nominated to stand in areas of interest/specialism and therefore not having specialist structures does not affect the quality of representatives achieved or the knowledge they bring to the table. Importantly, it does however increase their accountability to the whole forum and wider community.

Where there are key policy areas the HSP is focusing on (such as Local Area Agreement, Children's Trusts etc) ad hoc themed forums may be convened to ensure representatives and the wider forum are briefed and informed. A successful example of this was where HAVCO organised a themed forum linked to the Well-Being Partnership in August 2006. This was to address the Local Area Agreement development. Through this forum the VCS were able to directly influence thinking in developing LAA targets and priorities. This approach should also lead to a greater level of understanding for representatives of Haringey Community Link and increase quality of contribution within the partnership as a whole.

Number of Places for Community and Voluntary Sector Representatives

It is proposed to standardise the number of places available for election across the Main Partnership Board and its Themed Partnership Boards, as at present the quality of representatives varies leading to inequality in possible routes to influence.

HAVCO are also proposing to have non elected positions on the Main HSP Board for the Chair, and new place for the CEO of HAVCO on the Performance Management Group and one position on each of the Themed Partnership Boards. These places would be in recognition of the organisation representing the interests of the voluntary and community sector, in the same way the Chamber of Commerce or Small Business Federation secure places onto the partnership. This would mirror arrangements operating across London and nationally.



This new model would see 20 elected places for voluntary and community sector representatives on the Main HSP Board and Themed Partnership Boards and 7 standing places for the HAVCO representatives looking after the interests of the voluntary and community sector.

Support for Elected Representatives

To ensure a full range of quality representatives are achieved through the new systems; support, training and development are going to be integral in the Community Link Model.

There will be three stages of support and training for representatives in Community Link.

(i) Briefing

Once the nominations for positions on the HSP and its Themed Boards have been opened, briefing sessions will be held around the Borough to ensure that everyone considering standing is fully aware of what will be involved and expectations upon them.

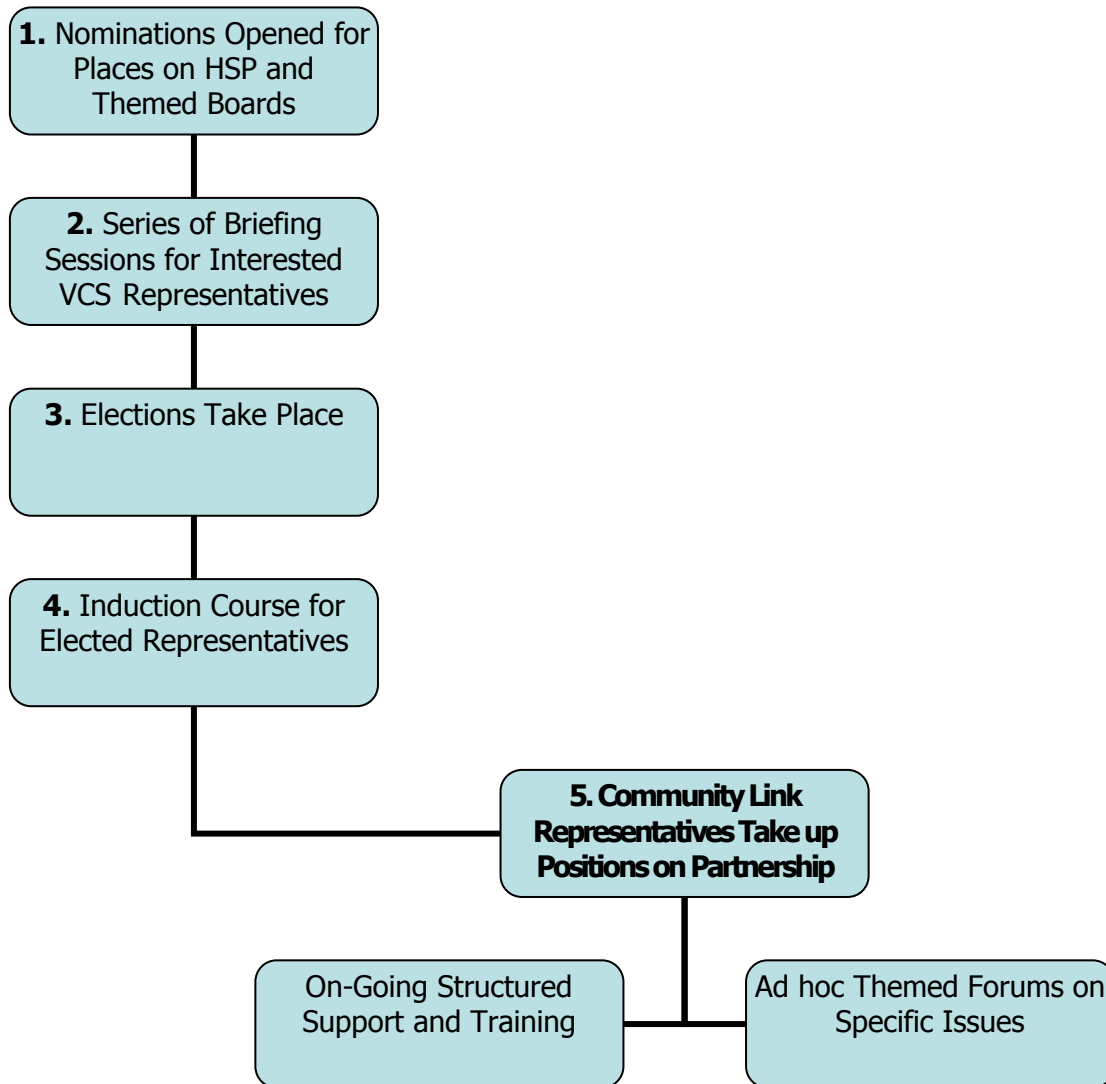
(ii) Induction

Once elected, all representatives will be required to attend a compulsory induction training course before taking up their positions. The aim is to ensure that representatives fully understand the role of the partnership, its legal structures etc and the policy environment in which it is operating. In other boroughs this course is between 2-3 days in duration and offers a certificate at the end in recognition of the time and investment from community representatives. This has been seen to improve the confidence and commitment of community representatives and encourage a wider cross section of the community to engage.

(iii) On-Going Training and Support

The post holder coordinating Community Link will provide on-going briefings and policy support to the elected representatives. This will vary in its delivery, depending on the needs of the elected representatives on each partnership structure. It could include pre-meetings, written briefings, email forums, notice boards to exchange views and opinions etc. The role of officer employed to support the representatives will be to ensure they are given customised support to ensure the most effective contribution to the partnership.

Support Process Flow Chart



Web Portal and ICT Support

HAVCO through support of ChangeUp (lead partnership for the delivery of the Haringey Local Infrastructure Development Plan) have developed a web-portal for the voluntary and community sector in Haringey. This also has linkage to sub-regional activities across North London. The web-portal has been branded Community Link.

The aim is to further develop the website to link closely to the work of the community engagement function and bring added value to the forum. The website will offer the elected representatives and the wider VCS the following benefits: -

- Policy briefings
- All minutes and agendas for the HSP and Themed Boards
- A notice board where elected representatives can exchange views and experiences and ask for advice (not open to public)
- Consultation opportunities with the wider sector

- Email bulletins of information arising from the partnership and key priorities for influence
- Notice of meetings and themed forums

As funding has been secured for this through the Home Office, this would offer real added value to the development of new systems within the HSP and support the e-government agenda.

It is recognised that some representatives may, for reasons e.g. disability, require added support/training to fully access ICT opportunities.

Implementation Timetable

There is a commitment to ensure the new proposed systems are explained to existing HSP community and voluntary sector representatives, the wider voluntary and community sector and those of other statutory partners before a final decision on a new model of community engagement is agreed in July 2007.

The timetable for information dissemination through formal structured events and written feedback is as follows: -

Existing community representatives	April/Early May 2007
Wider voluntary and community sector	Late May/Early June 2007
Statutory Partners	Early June 2007
Development Phase Begins	Late June 2007
Community Links Launch	September 2007
Elections	October 2007
Representatives Take Positions	November 2007

Proposed Community Link Forum Terms of Reference

Community Link Mission

To increase the quality of services meeting local need and community cohesion through greater engagement and influence

Community Link Objectives:

- (i) To support community representatives on strategic partnerships

- (ii) To work with stakeholders to identify how the voluntary and community sector can contribute towards delivery of targets within the LAA and Community Strategy
- (iii) To collate views of the voluntary and community sector on strategic issues, ensuring they are fed into the debate through the HSP and other fora
- (iv) To engage frontline organisations so they have enough information and the systems to influence policy
- (v) To support community needs assessment by members of Community Link in order to influence policy
- (vi) To propose solutions where things could be better
- (vii) To support better partnership and collaborative working
- (viii) To support statutory agencies and the partnership in clarifying the role and expectations of the voluntary and community sector in Haringey
- (ix) To support the voluntary and community sector to understand the balance between campaigning role and service delivery
- (x) To build trust, understanding and clarity between elected Councillors and representatives to see how they can co-exist to build a better society

Role of HAVCO

- a) HAVCO's role is to represent the interests of the voluntary and community sector but empower and support Community Link to speak for communities
- b) HAVCO would be the lead and accountable body for the service, and therein have overall power to revoke the membership of Community Link Members who breach the terms of reference and / or the agreed code of conduct

Community Link Membership

- Membership of Community Link would be separate to HAVCO's membership
- Membership is free
- Only constituted voluntary and community organisations in Haringey and/or serving Borough residents can be in membership
- Members need to be signed up to and adhere a code of conduct as part of membership approval
- There will be no automatic right for Community Link members to get a place on HAVCO's board. They would have to become full HAVCO member and stand as normal in order to achieve this

Summary

The environment for all agencies is changing dramatically and there are increasing pressures to meet the needs of local communities through closer partnership and collaborative working. The Community Link proposal aims to ensure that Haringey has the best systems for effective representation of the voluntary and community sector. It will be responsive and listen to its members and be subject to regular review.