



Haringey Strategic Partnership (HSP) 13 November 2007

Community Link Forum (CLF) – Update Report

Background

The Partnership commissioned research for a new community engagement framework in March 2007. In May the existing Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) representatives that are members of the main Board/Thematic structures decided that the wider voluntary and community sector should be consulted about the proposal.

The **Community Link Forum Reference Group** which consists of the HSP/Thematic Board's voluntary and community sector representatives began to meet to agree a consultation plan with the wider sector. Two approaches were agreed; Consultation Events were held and managed by the Reference Group in July 2007 and a Consultation Questionnaire was developed and distributed to 800 voluntary and community organisations, with another 150 sent to Haringey's Federation of Residents Association membership.¹

- The results from the questionnaire and consultation events have been evaluated and indicate that there is broad support for the Forum.
- The Proposal that was agreed at the HSP on 19 July 2007 included the revisions that came out of the consultation which broadly included:

- 1) Clarification of the definition of 'constituted' groups
- 2) Co-option option arrangements (to the HSP/Thematic Boards)
- 3) Amending the compulsory training/induction programme so that it is tailored to the experience and skills of representatives.

HAVCO, as the accountable body for the Forum, had to agree the budget and work programme² for the project. These documents were ratified on 13 September 2007, due to the August recess.

Progress 1 - Policy

The CLF Reference Group recognises that influencing policy is critical to the Forum's success and they have already begun to discuss key issues such as the Local Area Agreement and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF). In line with government intentions regarding community empowerment, the Forum intention is to strengthen representation at the HSP structures enabling '*more active participation in decisions and in the design, delivery and assessment of local services and policies.*³' To

¹ See Appendix 1 & 2

² See Appendix 3

³ Taken from the Local Government Association's Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success – October 2007

achieve this effectively a community *empowerment* strategy must develop as a progression of community engagement.

The Community Link Forum aims to support existing and future voluntary and community HSP representatives. However, like other voluntary and community projects, funded via the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), or whose funding is dependent on the outcome of negotiations around the LAA, funding for 2008/09 for the Community Link Forum and other projects has not yet been secured.

Issues such as the priorities for the LAA, what will replace NRF and the possible need for transitional arrangements are already on the agenda of the HSP's community and voluntary sector representatives. Representatives have identified the need to secure adequate funding for community engagement, community empowerment and other community based activities for 2008/09 and future years. Clear, transparent, effective and timetabled arrangements - for engaging HSP voluntary and community sector representatives, and the Partnership as a whole, in the LAA negotiations for 2008/09 - 2010/11 and discussions about the future of, or replacement of, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund - need to be put in place, as soon as possible. The CLF reference group is keen to work on the refresh, prioritisation delivery and the monitoring of the LAA process.

Progress 2 – Management and Resources

In October the following full time positions were recruited to manage the Forum – the Community Link Forum Coordinator and a Project Assistant. Their primary aims are:

- To develop a Code of Conduct for CLF members
- To enable existing representatives to meet regularly and are aware of current policy
- To manage the elections for future voluntary and community representation at the Strategic Partnership/Thematic Boards
- To launch the CLF to the wider sector
- To develop a clear identity for the CLF, promoting its benefits
- To develop a training programme for voluntary and community sector representatives

The Reference Group have met regularly since May and have been involved in shaping consultations across the sector. Discussions on policy and on how best to brand the Forum (see draft logo at the top of this report) were addressed at their October meeting; a structure for networking meetings will be discussed at their next meeting scheduled for 20th November.

As part of an outreach strategy the CLF staff, have been tasked with conducting a mapping exercise to identify voluntary and community organisations, particularly those who are already engaging in existing Thematic Groups and/or Forums, ensuring that they are aware of the Forum and encourage membership.

Progress 3 - Publicity

Information about the Forum, the Forum's Agreement has been posted on the **Haringey Community Link** web portal, which is a central information hub for the public and Haringey's voluntary and community sector representatives. The web portal is being upgraded so that voluntary and community sector HSP

representatives can use the portal to exchange views. In the meantime VCS policy papers, notices of HSP meetings etc are currently available.

In September the web portal was promoted through an advertisement which will remain at New River Sports Centre at White Hart Lane – this promotion will be open for 18 months.

Progress 4 – Next Steps & Election Process

A draft work plan has been considered by the reference group and the critical dates for the achievement of elections to the Forum (as noted in the report to July 07 HSP) have been incorporated. As the membership of the CLF is independent of HAVCO information and publicity documents are currently being developed to enable voluntary and community organisations to join the CLF.⁴ Meetings have already been held with the Electoral Reform Services (ERS) and an outline of the election process and schedule has been devised. The nomination process is likely to commence on 15 January 2008 with results available at noon on 21st March 2008.

⁴ See Appendix 4