

Question time event with Mayor and Council Officers

Friday 3rd February 9:30 – 1pm

**The Adiaha Antigha Conference Room
@ Hackney CVS, 24-30 Dalston Lane, E8 3AZ**

Present:

<p>London Borough of Hackney Mayor Philip Glanville (PG); Joanna Sumner (JS); Sonia Khan (SK)</p> <p>Health & Social Care Forum Alistair Wallace – Mobile Repair Service Krishna Maharaj – City & Hackney Mind Paula Yassine – St Marys Secret Garden David Holland – Age UK East London</p> <p>Children & Young Peoples Providers Forum Cathy Murphy – Parent & Toddler Network Ida Scoullos – Hawksley Court TRA Kome Owuasu – African Community School Nicola Butler – Hackney Play Association Claire Kelly – Hackney Playbus</p> <p>Safer Young Hackney Daniel Mussie – SkyWay Charity Jacqui Roberts – Shoreditch Trust Jo Carter – Immediate Theatre Janette Collins – The Crib Project Nicolette Nixon (– Morningside Youth Club</p> <p>Community African Network Thomas Bubi – African Support & Project Centre Amina Nalubega – Precious Lives Bosco Ssendegeya – Precious Lives Hawa Sessay – Hawa Trust Faisa Saeed – RISE/ Precious Lives</p>	<p>Hackney Refugee Forum Simin Azmi – Refugee Women’s Association Mehmet Guntav – Good Food & Mood Duygu Bozkurt – Minik Kardes Children’s Centre Yashar Ismailogu – Alevi/Halkevi</p> <p>Interlink Foundation Yocheved Eiger – Bikur Cholim Rob Blackstone – Kisharon</p> <p>LGBT + Forum Nell Andrew</p> <p>Hackney CVS Jake Ferguson (JF) Chairing Jackie Brett (JB) Rebecca Clarkson Beth Bolitho Ali Aksoy (AA) Paul Conway (notes) Shamima Aktar Monique Smith Caroline Buckley (trustee) Dominic Ellison (trustee) Eileen Bellot (trustee)</p>
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Headlines from the meeting

What the Mayor and Officers said:

- The grants programme is to be maintained in its present form in 2017/2018 and it is envisaged priorities will remain the same for 2018/19
- Important regeneration and employment initiatives are happening
- The Council was looking at ways of making the best use of its physical assets
- The Mayor and relevant cabinet member offered to attend a meeting with each network.

What the voluntary and community sector (VCS) said:

- An event like this one should take place every six months

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- The grants programme is important and should be maintained
- The VCS wants the opportunity to be involved in co-production around commissioning
- The sector regretted that One Hackney would not continue being funded by the CCG
- The VCS has expertise that the Council should tap into; the sector can help the Council meet the financial and other challenges ahead
- The VCS provides services which save the Council money, and this needs to be recognised.

Welcome

JF welcomed all delegates, and said that in Hackney CVS's 20th anniversary year it was great to see so many important networks and their members represented at the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was for the Council to update the voluntary and community sector (VCS) on the impacts of rapid change in Hackney, reflecting the wider world. Future meetings like this could be held twice a year. Having a new Mayor in Hackney made it an opportune moment to hear from the Council, and from network leads who themselves represent a much bigger sector. All perspectives mattered. There would be an opportunity for questions and answers. These are difficult and challenging times, but we are at least able to have these conversations.

Introductions were carried out, and JF invited PG and his colleagues to talk about the issues facing the borough.

The Council position going forward

PG said he would structure his remarks around the Council, the borough and the VCS. The Council was struggling with the impact cuts as was the VCS. £130million had been taken off the Council budget since 2010, and more cuts of the equivalent amount were on the way. There were financial pressures as a result, and challenges across a number of areas. The Council was 75% through the process of making savings, while trying to minimise the impact on services that residents need. We are at a difficult moment with finance, social care and the NHS. PG said that, despite this, the Council is still making long-term investment decisions, and thinking what the next four to five years will look like. It was certain that there would be no changes to the VCS grants programme, at least until 2018. The Council had worked with the VCS to shape priorities for the grants programme. Concrete assurances beyond 2018 could not be made, to do so would be wrong, but the grants programme was very important to the Council.

PG said that there were different kinds of VCS organisations:

- Those close to the statutory sector
- Smaller grants-funded groups
- Grassroots organisations with a lot of energy, which were mostly run on a voluntary basis.

The Council wanted to preserve and enhance what we have, and to alert the sector to change. There was not the appetite to make radical changes to infrastructure beyond 2018.

JS talked about The *Hackney A Place for Everyone* consultation. It had been carried out because the Council wanted to find out about how people felt about the borough, and how residents were responding to rapid social changes, and what barriers they face. The Council wanted to understand how best to manage savings, and the consultation initiated a dialogue which would be continuing. The consultation had been launched in March 2015, with a questionnaire sent to every household, and it had also been available online. In total 3,000 responses had been received. An e-panel had also been convened to take part in regular surveys, and this had looked at:

- The future of housing
- The night-time economy

- People living with disabilities
- LGBT+ community events
- People facing homelessness.

JS provided the headline figures:

- 90% of residents generally think that Hackney remains a cohesive place to live
- 70% of residents from different socio-economic backgrounds get on
- 50% of residents enjoy a strong sense of belonging – an increase from two years ago.
- 45% of residents think that Hackney has changed for the better
- 77% of residents are concerned about the affordability of housing
- 90% of residents think it is important that people from different background mix with each other.

JS said that the Council was dealing with perceptions of inequality, and the perception that Hackney was becoming a more unequal borough. There was a strong feeling amongst residents that the new businesses coming in were not for them in terms of employment opportunities.

JS noted that a schools consultation about the future of education in the borough was currently underway, and that over 2,000 responses had been received already.

JS said that the Council was also consulting with its own staff, looking at how staff were responding to the many changes which were taking place.

Building on JS's remarks PG said that he had had the opportunity over the summer, during the mayoral elections, to consider the consultation findings, the most important of which were around affordability, inequality, and access to employment. The biggest area of change was regeneration, and this year there would be several significant new programmes around employment. These had come about as a result of listening to the needs of residents, young people and employers. There would be 100 paid work experience placements for local 16-19 year olds. The Council was looking at the most effective use of a broad range of apprenticeships, and was asking businesses how they can be better supported to take advantage of apprenticeship programmes. The Council was also trying to address exclusion from employment, and PG said that there were stark divides in some parts of the borough. They were thinking about what the Council can do to complement the work of the VCS. Young people need to be told about the opportunities being promoted by the Council. A culture of confidence and skills building was needed. The Council was addressing changes handed down from central government in a variety of ways. London Living Wage, training opportunities and apprenticeships were all being actively promoted. Ways into Work was being relaunched, and zero hours contracts were being discouraged. The careers service was being improved.

On the Council's physical assets, PG said that conversations were taking place about the use of community halls. There was no one correct universal approach. Some halls are run by residents, and are succeeding in generating revenue which is invested back in the local community. There are 80 community halls in the borough, some of which are under-used. Pricing of hires and access need to be right, and there was the potential for the halls to be used by the VCS. The Council was not closing these facilities, and control of them was not being taken back in-house. PG said that the Council needs to generate income from its other physical assets. While trying to address the national austerity agenda, the Council do not wish to generate income by increasing Council tax, nor do they want to price out the VCS. The Council was also looking at the most effective use of its own physical resources, Keltan House was a success in this regard.

PG said that protecting the most vulnerable needs strong financial management. The good things about Hackney had come through strongly from the consultation. We all needed to stand up for excluded communities, and respond to the increase in hate crime and discrimination. The Council wants to reassure people about the things we value, and their decisions are not purely driven by how much things cost.

PG was clear that Council housing must be continued to be planned and built. 'Affordable' homes and rents are not in fact affordable. The private rented sector is unaffordable and unregulated. The Council was trying to develop affordable private rents (London Living Rents). They were addressing financial realities, and did not at present have funding for social housing.

Question and Answer session

JF said that the Council had described some difficult realities and also some welcome approaches. We would now be looking at some of the questions which had been submitted in advance. The Mayor and officers had agreed to respond by email to any questions raised which were not answered at this session.

What's the Council new strategy around homelessness and temporary accommodation as there are concerns in some communities about how it is being managed and monitored currently? (*Simin Azimi, Refugee Women's Association*)

PG said that there were some stark statistics about what is happening. The Council was dealing with this problem through a series of strategies. In 2010 the number of people housed in temporary accommodation had reduced to 1,200. This figure had now increased to 2,000, and this was result of government cuts to social welfare and housing. The end of tenancies was the main cause of homelessness. The Council cannot place people in the local private rented sector, while they wait for permanent accommodation, due to increased rents. There is a Council hostel in the borough or more settled accommodation outside Hackney. There is little the Council can do in the short-term other than directly providing more temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation had no cost to the Council in 2010, it now costs them £6 million, and £35 million a year is paid to private landlords in the borough. Hundreds of homes on estates have been developed as temporary accommodation and the Council is trying to improve the quality of these facilities – there are separate rooms but other facilities are shared, so they are not ideal for family placements. The Council is working towards providing laundry facilities, childcare and internet access. PG said that there may be opportunities for the VCS to provide other services which were needed.

Simin Azimi thanked PG for the opportunity to engage in dialogue. She said that the Refugee Women's Association operated London-wide, but was based in the borough in Ashwin Street. Simin said that her organisation knew the issues that their clients face, and suggested that improvements could be made with communication channels to the Council. She said that members of the co-op Mace Housing had a huge say in how things are run, and Mace's ideas had been used by Camden Council. Simin suggested that PG contact Mace for further information.

PG said that he knew Mace Housing, who also bring empty shop units back into use. The Council position was to retain its assets not to transfer them to third parties like MACE. The Council was using resources to bring empty properties back into use. There may be opportunities for Mace if there are empty privately-owned properties which they could redevelop. The Council was actively horizon-scanning what other boroughs do.

Would you be willing to establish a 'taskforce' comprising public sector commissioners (largely NHS and local authority) and voluntary sector representatives to develop recommendations about how we can use the Social Value act to achieve cost efficiencies across the public sector, improved delivery capacity by the voluntary sector and deliver better long term outcomes for residents? (Claire Kelly, Hackney Playbus)

PG responded that the Council was willing to have these conversations, especially given the changes in commissioning which was a significant area of VCS activity. Social value plays a part in commissioning and this needs to be fully understood. The approach was taking some time to roll out, but this was being done, e.g. it is becoming a condition of leases now that the London Living Wage is paid to the staff of companies which were tenants in Council-owned property.

Claire Kelly said that we all need to think collectively about the outcomes we are trying to achieve. The Council would benefit from using VCS expertise to inform commissioning processes. There were opportunities for the co-production of commissioning, gathering input at the beginning of the process, and developing the commission jointly. Short-term funding was a wasteful approach. Service users need to trust the provision, which in turn needs to be durable. Taking short-term approaches makes it hard for small groups to build good staff teams. Hackney Playbus had benefitted from CCG monies, but these were only ever for one year's funding. Larger organisations would be awarded funding for longer periods. Co-production should start by looking at the change we are trying to achieve.

PG said that there was so much uncertainty at the moment, in turn creating nervousness within the Council that the money will not always be there to be disbursed. PG acknowledged that this could be a barrier to long-term thinking. Public health had changed radically. The approach Claire was advocating was not always possible.

Claire said that there had to be an appetite for this sort of approach. The VCS could help devise outcomes, irrespective of funding. We all want social inclusion. There could be better substantive conversations involving health commissioners, the VCS and the Council. Current processes were wasteful and could be improved.

JF said we could think after the meeting about how these conversations might best be facilitated.

Jo Carter (Immediate Theatre), said that these conversations had taken place ten years ago in relation to COMPACT and the principles were already on paper.

SK responded that was although this work has been done before it needed a fresh look as the context was so different.

There was a more general conversation among delegates about the fact that VCS suggestions were not always listened to. The Council was unable to share much information, but there were also blocks at Council level to simple ideas from the VCS that would make a difference. Frustration was expressed that the Council did not always talk to the right organisations with the relevant expertise. This had been reflected by the meeting about social value – there seemed to be a culture of scepticism in the commissioning team about social value.

JF said that one of the principles of co-production was about letting go of power, and that the Council was missing opportunities to get the VCS perspective.

Ida Scoullos (Hawksley Court TRA) said that the Council has a problem in this regard. While the CCG was making efforts to get the VCS at the table, she had been trying without success to get a place on the Health and Wellbeing Board. The VCS was being perceived as a threat, not an asset. The outcomes the Council wants are not necessarily the ones which her organisation is trying to achieve. Community groups work every day with families, but are too often not given the chance to input their knowledge. The VCS knows the people, the families and what they need. The Council comes with an agenda, and is not always prepared to listen. New tenancy agreements for the TRA had taken a long time to produce. The TRA manages a community hall but cannot get the funding to employ a dedicated worker.

Jocheved Eiger (Bikur Cholim) said that the Council tends to make generalisations across all communities, but these are not always applicable. Broad brush strokes did not always work, and cuts had been made to services accessed by the Orthodox Jewish community, including to services which had been thriving.

Ali Aksoy (Hackney CVS) said that there was not commissioning suitable for groups which support refugee and migrant communities.

PG responded to both previous points, saying that the Council was providing generic universal services. With commissioned services, significant savings would have to be made over the next three years. It was difficult to see how the Council could preserve all services.

JF said that these conversations must take place continually, and that targeted services could save money in the long run.

PG said that when he had met refugee and migrant groups, housing, employment, children and ESOL provision had all come up. Dedicated funding would not come back. If particular services were not working for any communities then the Council needs to hear it.

JF said that the Council needed to pay attention when community groups were telling them that alternative approaches might be necessary for particular communities.

Alastair Wallace (Mobile Repair Service) said that smoking was a particular problem amongst older Turkish and Vietnamese communities, which did not benefit enough from commissioned services.

Cathy Murphy (Parent and Toddler network) said that the best use of resources would be gained by getting the VCS in at the beginning. The Council was not doing enough to promote cooperation. There were issues around social value, as well as support and cooperation. Organisations did not want to be perceived as inefficient.

Eileen Bellot (Hands Inc) said that continuity arrangements need to be in place when Council staffing changed, and that there were inefficiencies when this was not the case. Procurement teams need to be present during conversations with commissioners. The Council needs to look at the bureaucratic issues which cause inefficiencies. The VCS has been around a long time, and has expertise which is not being used enough. One Hackney had been a brilliant approach. The question needs to be asked all the time: what are we doing to co-produce?

PG said that Eileen was right to put procurement alongside commissioning. The challenge with community halls is that there is no budget to maintain them. A system must be devised whereby they can pay their own way. Commercialisation will have to increase. Tenants in the borough were

getting a 1% rent cut, creating a deficit in the housing budget. Some buildings have not been properly maintained, or are not properly DDA compliant, and these issues need to be addressed.

Cathy Murphy said that there are groups which have been working in the borough for 40+ years, and are part of the education system, professional organisations run on a shoestring which are saving the Council money. TRAs are not necessarily geared for commercialisation and are not feeling properly recognised. The value added by the VCS has to be reciprocated in some way.

Nursel Tas (Derman) said that culturally specific services are important, although she understood the pressures the Council was under, and the resulting drive for generic services. Language barriers were a big issue for the Turkish and Kurdish communities. Suicide was a big problem in these communities, and was preventable. The Council, health services and VCS have to work together.

Duygu Bozkurt (Minik Kardes Children's Centre) said that her organisations had been running drop-in sessions. The Council had decided to run the service from its own premises, and Minik Kardes, better connected in the community, was no longer involved. Transparency and inspection was needed for the Council's own provision.

PG said that smoking cessation and targeted work with the Turkish and Kurdish communities was still being funded by the Council. It is not that these services are not valued. Smoking cessation was not funded statutorily by public health, a false economy because of the impact smoking has on health services.

Duygu said that Minik Kardes can deliver universal services. PG said that these services were still being delivered by a different part of the VCS.

Nicola Butler (Hackney Play Association) said that we should forget the importance of grants. Awards of two years' funding is a welcome development, making it easier to seek match funding. More realistic monitoring requirements were also welcomed. HPA had been commissioned by Young Hackney and feel lucky to have that. The commissioning process was difficult for HPA, as it is not that suitable for small groups. The Council needs to look at making it easier for them to deliver this work as part of partnerships. A lighter touch approach to commissioning, and to the sub-contracting of smaller groups, is needed.

SK said that there were recurring themes being discussed about the Council and VCS having a systematic dialogue. SK, JS and Jonathan McShane had met the Hackney CVS Board to discuss how to develop a more systematic dialogue. What was agreed was that different levels of conversations were needed. The plan was to embark on a scenario planning exercise with the sector to identify the big strategic issues for the sector and to begin to identify ways to address this. There was also a commitment from this meeting to look at the more immediate concerns and issues, some of which have been aired today. The aim would be to adopt a new voluntary sector strategy, in parallel to adopting a new Community Strategy setting out a vision for place. In terms of culturally specific work, the equalities team has produced guidelines about the need to meet culturally specific needs, and this does not necessarily have to cost more. Scrutiny was producing a plan on working with migrant communities, and delegates were invited to contact SK if they would like to receive a copy of the plan when it was finalised.

Hawa Sissay (Hawa Trust) asked what the Council is doing for survivors of female genital mutilation (FGM). Hawa said that not having a clinic in Hackney was regrettable for a big borough. This should be everyone's business. Hawa Trust has a small venue funded from outside the borough, but the way FGM happens ticks all the boxes for abuse.

JF asked Hawa how many FGM survivors there were in Hackney. Hawa said that this information had not previously been recorded, but now it was estimated that there were 3,000 + survivors in the borough.

PG said that the Council, in conjunction with the City of London Corporation had produced a strategy for tackling FGM from 2016-19. Bringing together various agencies, the strategy focussed on both prevention and treatment. Regarding a clinic in the borough, this was a conversation that needed to be had with the Homerton, not the Council, and was probably unlikely in the immediate future. A separate building would not be the best deployment of space. Scrutiny work looking at FGM was on-going. JF said that Hackney CVS could help Hawa with sending messages to the sector.

Hearing from the VCS Network chairs about their plans and challenges for 2017

JF opened this segment of the meeting, asking what support do network chairs need, in order to work better with the Council.

Alistair Wallace (Health and Social Care Forum; 130 organisations in the HSCF)

Alistair said that network members included large and small organisations, both local and national. The One Hackney & City model had shown that the sector could drive change. At the co-production meeting with Council heads of services, all the examples given were about the VCS. Funding reductions, and changes in infrastructure and governance would mean One Hackney being largely unfunded. Organisations which had made a positive difference would not now be funded. Going into a new financial year, with aspirations to continue VCS involvement, it now looked as if there would be no budget or structure to support this. The HSCF needs to be supported to take part in strategic and local developments. We need to be able to provide training for staff and volunteers. Co-production cannot happen overnight, but it is starting to happen, a proper plan and strategy for it needs to be formalised. There needed to be improvements in the way that services are delivered. There is now a sense that the VCS is invited to the table. Appropriate matrices are needed. Not everyone accepted the positive contribution made by the VCS. The Council commitment for maintaining its grants programme for the moment was welcomed, but the programme could be developed further, rolling it out into mainstream services and local initiatives.

Nell Andrew (LGBT+ Network)

Nell said that that this network had been set up two years ago, with support from Hackney CVS. The network involved residents and relevant projects. Funding was an issue, and it could be hard sustaining the necessary administration, and determining when to meet and in which venues. Achievements included the creation of a directory of LGBT+ projects and services in Hackney <http://www.hcvs.org.uk/index.php?category=14&sec=62&page=410> A community conversations event had taken place at the Arcola, and issues had been identified around racism within the LGBT+ community, generational issues, homophobia and hate crimes in connection with the night-time economy. There had been an article in The Independent about school pupils receiving adverse comment or treatment from teachers; the network had contacted the safeguarding leads for local primary and secondary schools as a result. There had been a Council initiative to provide rainbow lanyards, visibility being an issue when it comes to services. Research had been carried out two or three years ago into the health and wellbeing of these individuals, where they were shown to come out badly in the stats. Some shifts in language were needed. There was the relationship of the LGBT+ community with 'old Dalston' and 'old Hackney' to consider. It was desirable to avoid network members competing with each other.

Bosco Ssendegeya (Community African Network)

Bosco said that this network had been around for two years, but the organisations in it had been around much longer. The network existed to help black Africans have access to services. The condom project and signposting had been examples of successful delivery which had met a demand. The network was concerned about continuation funding to deliver these important services. They were serving a large community and the condom project was providing a useful revenue stream for the organisations involved.

PG asked about One Hackney, nearing the end of the financial year without continuation funding. A show of hands in the room showed that about half the people present were from organisations which had been funded by One Hackney. JF said the programme had been funded on a non-recurrent basis by the CCG. Alastair Wallace said that dialogue was needed between the quadrant teams and the Integrated Independence Team. The VCS had shown great energy in delivering on the One Hackney Framework, but now the sector was waiting while the Council and health services determine next steps. JB said that activities funded by public health had been very successful, and that the sector had been paid by outputs and had drawn down the maximum level of funding for the year. JF noted that if these successful activities had been delivered by a private company, instead of the VCS, then the work would have been more likely to be properly resourced.

Ida Scoullos (Children & Young Peoples Providers Forum; c.400 organisations in the CYPPF)

Ida said that there were a number of areas she wanted to discuss: the education sector, early years provision, health and housing. The Council needs to take network recommendations seriously; the network was talking to clients, parents, all relevant parties, and network members know what the issues are on the ground. There was no children's home in Hackney; this was a big issue as children were being placed across the country. Perpetrators of domestic violence are being left in the borough while their victims are moved. There is a Council DV service but it is not fully meeting need. Accredited workforce development training is needed for the staff of community centres and youth clubs. Parents and young people need to be supported to become the next workforce. Without funding, none of these things can happen. A paid administrator/volunteer coordinator is needed for these groups. A voice is needed on the Health and Wellbeing Board, and Ida repeated her request to represent the sector at these meetings.

Daniel Mussie (Safer Young Hackney)

Daniel said this network was five years old. The Young Black Men (YBM) work would be developed over the next year, and support was needed from the Council to do this. There is some duplication, and the work of the VCS is not always properly recognised. A mapping exercise needs to be carried out, for example around employment/Ways into Work. The network was able to engage young people out of work over the last year. The VCS needs to be seen as an effective support mechanism. Expectations need to be realistic, and an acceptance that young people out of work for a year need the right support.

PG said the right conversations were starting to happen. He was keen to get to the point where referrals are two-way. PG noted that the Council has a direct relationship with investors, a relationship which it was right remained a Council responsibility.

Ali Aksoy (Hackney Refugee Forum)

Ali said that HRF was trying to raise the voice of refugee and migrant communities. There were problems around cultural and religious sensitivities, for example some cultures would not access DV provision. Ali had already carried out research into the interpreting and advocacy needs of migrants, and was now looking at mental health issues experienced by migrants. A further piece of work was about to start, at the request of the Council, on the issues of vulnerable migrants. Ali said that HRF

had a membership of 90 organisations previously; this was now down to 40 organisations due to closures, and the Somali community was not represented. The Council had made an undertaking to welcome 25 Syrian refugee families to Hackney, but so far only three families had been housed here. Ali was a member of Hackney Borough of Sanctuary, which was providing two flats for Syrian refugees but this was a slow process. HRF needs better continuing contact with the Council, and is not currently funded. Simin Azimi commented that the VCS is providing services which save the Council money, and this is not properly recognised. In the case where a private company was managing temporary accommodation, and HRF had registered a complaint, the Council had questioned the complaint's validity. HRF is in a position to see things from the perspective of client groups and the Council needs to take their views on board. The Council and VCS need to cooperate better.

PG said that the Council should be carrying out the activities around employment. Services are not out-sourced to the private sector; Hackney are an in-sourcing local authority. A new framework had been set for temporary accommodation contracts. The Council would be monitoring the performance of these contracts, which would not be extended if delivery was not effective. The Council would be interested in hearing network feedback if services were not being properly delivered.

Jocheved Eiger (Bikur Cholim)

Jocheved thanked Hackney CVS for bringing everyone together, and said that the issues we face are the same, so it is vital that these conversations do happen. Being able to participate is a strength of the sector, and Jocheved said she was proud to have been part of the conversation.

JF closed the meeting, and thanked everyone for taking part. He said that Hackney CVS would be pleased to host another meeting like this in six months. PG offered that he and the relevant cabinet member could attend a meeting of each network to hear their issues and concerns in more detail.

Meeting ends