

# ENGAGING COMMUNITIES VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS FORUM

**Minutes of a meeting held Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2011  
10.00am to 12.00pm, Committee Room 2, Kensington Town Hall, W8 7NX**

**Chair: Angela Spence** (Kensington and Chelsea Social Council)  
*Attendance list attached*

1.	WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES	ACTION
	Angela welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies for absence were noted.	
2.	PRESENTATION: BIRKBECK UNIVERSITY OF LONDON (Garmon ap Garth - Outreach & Widening Participation Officer - Birkbeck, University of London)	
2.1	<p>After introducing himself to the forum, Garmon spoke about Birkbeck University. Birkbeck is a world-class research and teaching institution, a vibrant centre of academic excellence and London's only specialist provider of evening higher education. Birkbeck encourages applications from students without traditional qualifications and has a wide range of programmes to suit every entry level. Birkbeck is particularly attractive to older students, students who may work during the day or those who have family members to look after.</p> <p>Birkbeck works closely with VCOs, colleges, Housing Associations and Job Centres, and recently delivered an in house course at the Children's Centre in East London.</p> <p>Birkbeck offer courses that range from introductory level all the way to post graduate levels.</p> <p>Applicants don't necessarily require previous qualifications to enrol, however they must be able to demonstrate they have the ability to study at higher level. Applicants who are less confident about their ability can begin with an introductory certificate to help them settle into their academic lifestyle.</p> <p>There are grants available that can cover most, if not all expenses for part time applicants on benefits or low income, but this is expected to change in 2012, when course fees are expected to increase. However, students who apply in 2011 will be able to complete their full degree on the current funding system.</p>	
2.2	<p>Angela asked in 2012, if there would be grants to cover students' fees if they applied after 2012 and were on low income.</p> <p>Garmon said fees will rise after 2012; hence students are likely to fall into debt. He then explained that students will only be required to pay back the fees after they graduate and earn an income of more than £21,000.</p>	

2.3	<p>Anne asked if there are student finance advisors to advise applicants on eligibility and give general financial advice.</p> <p>Garmon said there is a lot of information available for students, as well as advisors for applicants to speak to.</p> <p>Anne also asked if there will be an interview process and expressed concerns that applicants may have a problem with low confidence.</p> <p>Garmon confirmed there is an application and interview process for all degree programmes, and the fact that students may have been out of education for a long time will be taken into consideration.</p>	
2.4	<p>Gloria asked for more information about the in-house introductory courses.</p> <p>Garmon said the in-house courses had been running for five years. The courses can be arranged if there are enough students (around 15) and a room.</p> <p>Gloria asked if there is support available for people who want to study, but can't due to child care responsibilities.</p> <p>Garmon replied there is financial support available for child care costs. He also stressed that students will be given the support they need to complete their course.</p>	
2.5	<p>Asked what the difference between the Open University and Birkbeck was, Garmon said the main difference is the Open University focuses on distance learning while Birkbeck focuses on face to face learning. The length of time for a part time degree course is four years, which is shorter than a degree at the Open University.</p>	
2.6	<p>Annemarie asked if it would be easier for mature applicants to get accepted onto courses and if experience would be taken into consideration.</p> <p>Garmon said there is no minimum requirement to get onto a course, so anyone can apply, and each application will be looked at individually on its own merits.</p>	
2.7	<p>Angela asked how the college works with the voluntary sector to promote opportunities at Birkbeck. Garmon replied they attend team meetings to promote the opportunities they offer, as well as through newsletters and websites.</p> <p>Garmon concluded by offering taster sessions where there is sufficient interest, and offered to visit organisations to speak to service users.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>PRESENTATION: COMMUNITY TRUST FUND (Ian Cann - Community Investment Manager Catalyst Gateway)</b>	
3.1	<p>In 2002 Kensington Housing Trust joined the newly formed Catalyst Group and in 2003 the Community Fund awarded its first payment. Since then, the Community Fund has been giving grants averaging between £4000 and £5000. The grants have been mainly focussing on Golborne and St. Charles wards as these wards were identified as most in need in the borough. There are normally two funding rounds, one in summer and one in winter.</p>	

3.2	Ian said that there are a few changes to the scheme expected to be implemented this year. One of the main changes to the scheme is that the maximum grant size will be reduced from £5000 to £2000. In addition, Catalyst will commission larger projects that reduce the impact of poverty in areas where Catalyst have housing stock. They are aiming at a ratio of 70:30 commissioned projects to small grants and have a total budget of £300K for the next 3 years.	
3.3	Ian was interested in hearing the views and opinions of forum members on the proposed changes, namely the reduction of the grant, how the spending is monitored and the number of funding rounds a year. He said that Catalyst want to be transparent about the changes and want to get the message out in a positive way.	
3.4	Gloria asked how service providers can get involved.  Ian said that anyone that wants to get involved can contact him, and he would be happy to talk about the needs of the community. He also stressed that Catalyst would be delighted for groups to work within the estates regardless of whether funding is being received or not.	
3.5	Annemarie asked what Catalyst's aims were around mental health.  Ian said it was an area the association was expressing more interest in and said they would love to see a response regarding it.	
3.6	Tasio suggested as the community grant is a small grant and there are only two rounds a year, perhaps it should be a bit more flexible as, if a group missed the deadline they would have to wait a further six months for the next round.	
3.7	Robin pointed out that there was quite a lot of resistance against the Wornington Green developments and asked if that had changed.  Ian replied that while the resistance had been extremely vocal, it has always been very small in number. There was no resistance when it came to re-housing tenants and there wasn't any need for court proceedings against tenants.	
3.8	The deadline for the next round of applications is 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2011.	
3.9	KCSC was asked to provide Ian's contact details along with the minutes if this meeting. See below  <b>Ian Cann</b> Community Investment Manager Email: Ian.Cann@catalystgateway.org.uk Tel: 020 8964 6439 Mob: 07525 905 262	
<b>4.</b>	<b>BREAK AND NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY</b>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>INTERACTIVE SESSION: PARTNERSHIP WORK &amp; COLLABORATION</b>	
5.1	The forum divided into four groups and participated in an exercise aimed at better understanding partnership work and the benefits of collaborating with other organisations.	

	<p>The four groups discussed amongst themselves and wrote down ‘what they felt their organisation can offer others’ and ‘what they felt their organisations needed help with’.</p> <p>Due to the lack of time, the groups didn’t have the opportunity to share what they had written down with the rest of the forum.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b>	
6.1	The minutes of the previous meeting held 12 <sup>th</sup> January 2011 were agreed.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>	
7.1	<b>Kensington &amp; Chelsea Partnership (KCP):</b> Meeting held 8 <sup>th</sup> March. Main agenda items included a presentation by Tony Redpath on Launch Pad Project, an update on the tri Borough proposals by Melenie Marshman and an update by Nicola Weaver on the government’s localism agenda and the Big Society.	
7.2	<b>Borough Voluntary Organisations Advisory Group (BVOAG):</b> Meeting held 14 <sup>th</sup> March. Main topics for discussion were the K&C Compact, brief discussions on the Tri Borough developments and transitional rent increase for council tenants from April 2011. Brendan O’Keefe also updated the group on the Employee led mutuals pathfinder project for RBKC Youth Services.	
7.3	<b>Main VOF:</b> Meeting held 1 <sup>st</sup> March. There was an interactive session preparing questions for the 10 <sup>th</sup> March Tri Borough meeting with Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell. A second round of elections for KCP and BVOAG Reps was held. Elizabeth Usher – Focus K&C gave a presentation on the giving green paper.	
7.4	<b>Community, Engagement and Inclusivity Partnership:</b> Compact launch event which will take place on Friday 13 May, 12-2pm in Kensington Town Hall, Committee Rooms 3-4. Further details to follow shortly	
7.5	<b>K&amp;C Local Involvement Network (K&amp;C LINK):</b> Meeting held 24 <sup>th</sup> March. Discussed local health watch pathfinder proposal from DOH which all current link bodies can consider. Agreed the work plan for 2011/12 which will see work undertaken through a joint staffing structure with Hammersmith and Fulham. 3 Research reports currently being finalised on homelessness, domestic violence and access to GP.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>	
8.1	Robin updated the forum on a meeting with Nick Clegg and a doctor, in which LINK was present. Robin was disappointed at what was supposed to be a listening exercise. He felt they did most of the talking and didn’t listen and added that representatives of the third sector had lost interest.	
<b>9.</b>	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>	
9.1	<b>13<sup>th</sup> July 2011</b> , Committee Room 3&4, Kensington Town Hall	

# ATTENDANCE LIST

Engaging Communities Voluntary Organisations' Forum Meeting  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2011, Committee Room 2, Kensington Town Hall

## 1. Attendees

	Name	Organisation
1	Tasio Cabello	Age Concern Kensington & Chelsea
2	Garmon ap Garth	Birkbeck University of London
3	Ian Cann	Catalyst gateway
4	Francis Oppong	Chapter 1
5	Mingzi Shi	Chinese National Healthy Living Centre
6	Faziry Mafutala	Dalgarno neighbourhood Trust
7	Annemarie Freude-Lagevardi	Kensington & Chelsea Mental Health Day Services
8	Angela Spence	Kensington & Chelsea Social Council
9	Mohammed Miah (minutes)	Kensington & Chelsea Social Council
10	Mamusu Bangura	Kensington & Chelsea TMO
11	Robin Tuck	Local Involvement Network K&C (LINK)
12	Colin Kelly	Royal London Society for the Blind
13	Gloria Elliot	Virtual Engine Training Enterprise
14	Sardia Joseph	Women's Trust

## 2. Apologies

	Name	Organisation
1	Fosdicka Crankson	Volunteer Centre Kensington And Chelsea