



# VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS FORUM

Thursday 10 June 2021  
 10:00am – 12:00pm  
 Online via Zoom

Chair: Angela Spence (AS)  
 Minutes taken by: Dhani Dhanoa

1	Welcome and Apologies	ACTION
	<p>Angela welcomed everybody to the meeting and ran through the agenda and meeting rules.</p> <p><a href="#">Agenda</a></p>	
2	<b>Network</b>	
	<p>Opportunity to catch up as we don't meet face-to-face. Attendees were assigned to breakout rooms and then will go back into main room after 9 minutes.</p>	
3	<p><b>Citizen's Panel &amp; The Council Plan</b>– Olivia Schelts-Harris, Head of Service, Putting Communities First, RBKC &amp; Erica Ballmann, Director of Corporate Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the Citizens Panel, its purpose, make up and activities?</li> <li>▪ Early findings from the recent consultation on the Council Plan</li> </ul>	
	<p>Olivia (OS-H) firstly discussed the citizens panel – regarding what it is, what it is about, how it works and what has been done so far. But first OS-H wanted to explain to attendees why she is talking about the panel and said there are three good reasons. Firstly, publishing results of consultation exercises on the council's website which might be useful for insights about what is happening in the borough. Also, in terms of understanding future needs of organisations beneficiaries. Second, the panel is going to be looking at big topics such as the council plan update which Erica will discuss in more detail, and there will be more, this is just the beginning. Thirdly, the council's community's department very much regard the voluntary sector as a strategic partner.</p> <p>What is the Citizens panel? It is a large broadly demographically represented group of residence who are regularly consulted on council priorities to assess their preferences and opinions. They have recruited 2,000 people, it is about democracy and community engagement, and how decision making comes together. RBKC have launched the citizens panel to find out what residents think about their services and key decisions affecting them.</p> <p>The panel has been set up to do four key things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To gather opinions, reflecting the different views of the different communities.</li> <li>2. Identify priorities to improve life in the borough.</li> <li>3. Address the standard of council services by asking about satisfaction and the way things are run. Then use that feedback to our lead members and have informed decision making.</li> <li>4. Shaping what the council is not just a tick box. The council's Charter for Public Participation is a document that was drawn up in part with input</li> </ol>	

from the voluntary sector including attendees at this meeting, which is also about standard the council sets itself in terms of being better at listening to and engaging with residents.

This panel was a recommendation the council accepted in 2018, however the key point is that it was decided last year that they would make sure there would be representation from all the wards. The panel will aim to reflect those who live in the borough across demographics such as ethnicity, age, housing tenure, disability, and sex.

The Council launched the first consultation exercise in April on the council plan refresh and will share a 'You said, we did' result of that in July, along with the next topic which is being decided.

In terms of recruiting the panel – it was a joint effort, working with market researchers to get the data and to contact people. As this was during lockdown there were lots of limitations, so had to get phone lists for people in the borough. Question was asked such as what is age, ethnicity, are you happy to be a part of the panel? OS-H said the voluntary sector for helping by recommending residents who could be a part of this. After lockdown residents were engaged on the streets too.

OS-H explained that the core business of the panel is respond to around four to five surveys a year on strategic cross-cutting issues providing data. The topics are going to be drawn from priorities councillors have identified and that residents have voted for, and what is heard from residents and service users. Between surveys the council will look for other opportunities to involve panel members. The council will want to do face-to-face activities like focus groups, participatory events and even budget simulators where you can work with communities to look at if you put money into certain areas how does that work out, and what are the trade-offs.

When recruiting for the panel the council used the opportunity to poll some questions around the extent to which they think they could influence decisions in their local area. This is a moot point as shown from the recent mayoral elections, only 40% actually went to vote so they know there is quite a lot of political distrust and apathy amongst voters. But have also found huge amounts of goodwill and volunteers. View the presentation for results.

Question from attendee – Does the demographic breakdown to represent carers too? OS-H said it does not as they have a lot of different demographics in terms of what they sought to identify and haven't asked people if they are carers. There are lots of compromises they had to make at the start of this because the data is already quite complex as shown in the presentation slides, and that was not an area they sought to understand. But as they have a newsletter and they do callouts to people on different things they could ask people to declare whether they consider themselves as a carer formally or informally. OS-H asked attendee to contact her directly to discuss in further detail.

#### [Presentation](#)

Erica (EB) presented on how the council drew on various engagements over the previous year to incorporate into the consultation with the citizens panel on the council plan refresh. Results were positive as the council had 587 responses including from the online system. The council has also done quite a wide range of types of engagements over the last 10 months or so which has

	<p>helped to understand better the key concerns/ priorities, and what people value most in their local community. This helps the council best plan how to both design and deliver services as well as how the council talks to people about those services and how it is done.</p> <p>Some of the headline findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When people were asked about priorities – understandable and in context with the last year – mental health and wellbeing were key as well as health services more generally. Also parks and leisure and more broadly their local environment.</li> <li>• When asked about the concerns about the pandemic and how that's impacting them and their wellbeing – this answer has been consistent over the last 10 months – people are still worried about the virus and expect that will continue for some time. When asked about the broader impact of social isolation and health and wellbeing, particularly how they use their resources and efforts – found a sense of inequality felt by residents in Kensington and Chelsea. But this has been debated throughout London and has been pre-existing in our society. This has now been exacerbated and exposed for people to really understand and the impact it has had on people.</li> <li>• Also, people were asked about what they would most need to recover from the pandemic. Response was about mental health, health and wellbeing so better parks and leisure areas, as well as helping local businesses. Also helping young people (16-35) particularly 16 – 24-year-olds who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and their prospects for the future. They are the biggest universal claimants in terms of the rise they have seen over the last year.</li> </ul> <p>The council are being transparent about how it makes decisions – the citizens panel and online system generally agreed with this. But added this must be a consistent and not just for now. These headlines have helped shape and update the Council Plan which runs from 2019 through to 2023. It is aligned with the council's medium-term financial strategy, making sure the council is working within the resources it has available to them and priorities/services are delivered in a way that is affordable. See presentation slides for process that has been undertaken.</p> <p>Main priority alongside recovery from pandemic is the Grenfell recovery and that work is ongoing. It has also shaped a lot of the council's thinking based on the learning from that tragedy over the last few years. Broadly the themes of headline priorities have not changed as shown on presentation slide.</p> <p><a href="#">Presentation</a></p> <p>AS thanked OS-H and EB for presenting.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Breakout Groups discussion</b>	
	AS explained to discuss any key areas raised from the previous presentations to feedback to our council colleagues.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Feedback from breakout rooms</b>	
	Group 1	

	<p>Council should aim to get ordinary people involved with the panel i.e., not people who are already leaders in their community because they already have a voice.</p> <p>Group 2 – There have been previous attempts at a resident panel, and it ticked a box, but the results were revealed how it fed into policy making.</p> <p>As a resident or a chairman of a resident’s association the Council Plan draft is already set in stone, and we have had no opportunity to contribute to that so how do you make this process far more open and what’s the role of other groups that are not on the panel in having an input other than commenting on the finished product when it is far too late to have any influence?</p> <p>AS added that in relation to the slide where OS-H showed the results of the panel and percentage that feel they influence decision making, it would be good to emphasise the percentage of those who say that they don’t feel this way. Also, in relation to the Council’s plan adding to earlier comments it would be good to see how the wider community engage with the Council Plan and but also how the council measure success in delivering the objectives set out in the plan. Final point was to do a parallel exercise – running focus groups with other panels and holding larger meetings and would the council be willing to hold these parallel exercises with residents who are not on the panel?</p> <p>Group 3 The group had a very broad discussion and touched on that there were quite a small number of respondents and discussed where the council could harness community representatives to spread the word.</p> <p>Also, to use the community and voluntary sector to push requests for information and feedback to their service users as another way to increase responses because just using website is a passive way to communicate with people.</p> <p>In addition, discussed the issue of covid recovery had brought to light a lot of issues that were there before, but the pandemic has exposed them even more including language and cultural issues.</p> <p>OS-H thanked everyone for their honest and frank feedback, and gave her contact information to contact her:</p> <p>Schelts-Harris, Olivia: CP-Communities: RBKC &lt;Olivia.Schelts-Harris@rbkc.gov.uk&gt;</p> <p>One final question asked was: Is the panel refreshed anyway even if people do drop off, and is so how often? OS-H stated they look at the demographic quarterly and annually investigate properly refreshing the panel.</p>	
	<p><b>5-minute break</b></p>	
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>RBKC New Partnership Model</b> – Michael Kennedy, Head of VCS &amp; Community Partnering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RBKC Proposed partnership model – partnership working with the VCS</li> </ul>	
	<p><a href="#">Presentation</a></p>	

Michael (MK) began with saying that feedback is key for this as want to know what a partnership should look like. This is the time to be the most critical and negative to make things better.

MK stated that work had begun on developing the partnership model in February 2021. What the council is seeking to do is to work not only with the VCS but to bring together a broader partnership that works with other people who can help them solve problems. Think about the type of problems that are emerging for residents due to re-opening/covid such as not having enough social connections, not having enough money and for example getting them in a position where they can buy food.

The council, NHS and VCS cannot completely solve the problem but can certainly start to look at these problems together and try and diagnose them together and look at what can be done together to solve some these issues.

What the key features of any model needs to be:

1. Any model or structure that is introduced to deal with the long-term issues and recovery from Covid that is transparent.
2. Staff in government functions working within a partnership where there is accountability back to the partners, so they attribute meaningfully and make decisions in the room. It is unfair to ask independent organisations to have accountability, and so with model they are trying to make a set standard principle such as mutual respect and treating each other as equals that will underpin it.

The work to be done with the NHS and VCS will only as good as the council work with.

Questions: JB asked for voluntary and community organisations to get involved properly they will need to make something they don't have a lot of which is time and the resources that go with that. How is the council going to try and get more for less with the projected cuts to the VSSF fund?

MK stated that there is a bit less money in the grant scheme. Do you take risk with your funding and fund as many of the new organisations as possible? In which case a lot of the established organisations suffer. Or do you go to the other extreme. The council need to work with organisations like KCSC on resilience and find other sources of funding. In the meantime, we have brought in funders from the borough and across London and what the council has heard from them is there is an interest in funding within RBKC.

MK believes there needs to be a space for people to bring more ideas about what to fund and how to work not only in partnership with the VCS to solve problems but to work openly with other funders to make as many sources of funding available.

AS said not every organisation has the capacity potentially to engage in this model and funding enable and organisations to be able to give time that is required for this. There is recognition that this model does have barriers in terms of participation because of where we are now.

MK added not everyone is going to have the time or the resources to have like a weekly meeting but that it is more about bringing people together to ask what you are working on and to seek solutions.

AS said, there is an opportunity to have a meeting just about the partnership at some point before, they begin to progress it further.

JB pointed out about the imbalance between the voluntary sector and the council which was shown in the presentation and to discuss this further when a bigger meeting is organised.

7	<b>Impact of Covid-19 on minority ethnic communities</b> - Busayo Twins, Policy and Voice Development Officer, KCSC	
	<p><a href="#">Presentation</a></p> <p>Busayo (BT) stated that she started looking into investigating the economic impact of Covid-19 on RBKC's black residents from when the pandemic first hit. The initial national data started to reveal that this demographic had been disproportionately impacted in terms of employment and general financial security. Local statistics were KCSC wanted to find this out. To also understand what implications this has on the sector – how we work with these groups, how we support organisations and needs that will need to be addressed when the community starts to open again?</p> <p>BT organised a series of focus groups with organisations that work within the borough asking them what they have observed with their black members – asking what data they might have collected, have they heard anything formally or informally, discussing their experiences. BT chose organisations that purposely work with black residents. BT felt the focus groups were better than conducting surveys as at this point residents would be having survey fatigue.</p> <p>The conversations in the groups focused on the existing barriers e.g., social exclusion, structural discrimination, employment and the use of informal networks and VCS to find support should they face financial insecurity or job loss. The groups also discussed how the pandemic has affected mental health particularly for this demographic.</p> <p>AS thanked the presenters and attendees for attending the event.</p>	

## Attendance

	Name	Organisation
1	Angela Spence	KCSC
2	Busayo Twins	KCSC
3	Dahabo Isse	Dadhiye Somali Development Organisation
4	Dhani Dhanoa	KCSC
5	Eman Yosry	LWCCN
6	Farid Mall	Groundwork London
7	H Tweed	Native Spirit Films
8	Iain Cassidy	Open Age
9	Jenny Greenfield	KCSC
10	Julia Hamilton	Age UK Kensington & Chelsea
11	Joe Batty	KCSC
12	Khalid Ali	Hodan Somali Community
13	Lily Moghadam	Shelter
14	Maria Levya	New Citizens Voice
15	Michael Bach	Individual
16	Nicola Butler	Young Kensington & Chelsea

17	Patricia Alert	World's End Under Fives Centre
18	Roohy Shahin	Persian Care Centre
19	Rosana Ordoubadi	Dalgarno Trust
20	Sara Barrett	ACAVA
21	Sheona Alexander	Volunteer Centre Kensington & Chelsea
22	Victoria Borwick	Kensington & Chelsea MP
23	Vittoria De Meo	For Women CIC