**BVOAG Representative response to future engagement following the Grenfell Tower Tragedy**

This short paper seeks to highlight the opportunities for change in relation to community engagement and how we use the upcoming BVOAG meeting for discussion.

Following the fire and the events which followed we believe we are now facing a future which will continue to be challenging and often volatile. Whilst we recognise the obvious challenges facing the council we also see this as presenting a real opportunity to reflect on what can be done differently to support the rebuilding of the community.

The tragedy and what has followed since constitutes the chance for change in community engagement and to find ways to gain a deeper understanding of the social issues which face our local community. We believe the time is right to question what this actually means and what it could look like. We don’t propose to have the answers but feel it is an important basis on which to start the discussions.

BVOAG has existed for many years and has been a valuable place for dialogue between voluntary sector representatives and Cabinet members. One of its primary aims is to enable a healthy working relationship between the sectors built on the understanding of how the other sector works.

As representatives some of we have had the possibilities of exploring some of the issues important to us as providers of services and for most recipients of council funding. We would now welcome the opportunity to look again at how truly representative BVOAG is not only in who sits around the table but also in the dialogue that takes place and the outcomes we want to achieve. We would welcome the discussion on how we can work together to reach all parts of the community so they have a voice on the issues that matter to them and in particular those who may feel they have no voice.

The new leader’s statement made on the 19 July stated that the ‘*culture of the council will change’* and that *‘We (the council) should be at one with our community groups, listening to their experience and expertise’*

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and to assess what this could mean at a practical level.

KCSC is also in the process of recruiting a post which will be dedicated to working with the voluntary and community sector and with wider stakeholders in partnership in direct response to what has happened but with a vision for enabling renewed engagement through learning and culture change.