

# **KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP MEETING**

**14<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

## **VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION FORUM (VOF) Structure**

This paper outlines proposals from the Voluntary and Community sector to revise the Voluntary Organisation Forum (VOF) structure from January 2008, to align it more closely with the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, and to strengthen the representational links between the VOFs and the KCP.

**FOR INFORMATION**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Kensington and Chelsea Social Council (KCSC) co-ordinates four VOFs, open to all voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups and organisations working in Kensington and Chelsea. These act as a community empowerment network, providing a mechanism for third sector representation and engagement with strategic partnerships in the borough, including the KCP.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The pace of policy change at central and local Government levels is rapid and has far reaching implications for the VCS. It is therefore essential that the arrangements in place for VCS engagement with statutory partners are effective, reflecting the decision-making structures that operate at a strategic level within the borough. The VOFs must provide the best possible platform to elect representatives, contribute to policy development and to channel the views of the VCS directly to strategic partners. The key way that this is achieved is through the KCP.
- 2.2 Currently, there are three 'mini' VOFs bringing together organisations with a common interest in three areas – children, young people and families; older people; housing and hostels. The rationale for the existing VOF structure is historical, evolving in response to previous need and priorities.
- 2.3 The main VOF meets quarterly, to work on issues of mutual interest.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 KCSC has been consulting the VCS on proposals to revise the VOF structure from January 2008. The main change is to refocus the Housing and Hostels VOF to include issues relating to 'communities', and reflecting the themes in the current Community Strategy and LAA on safer and stronger communities, equality and inclusivity. These are also themes picked up in the new

performance framework for local authority and local authority partnerships, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in October 2007.

- 3.2 Housing would continue to be a topic of interest for this VOF. Response from the sector has been favourable, and the main VOF meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December will be asked to endorse this change.
- 3.3 From January 2008, all VOFs will be meeting on a quarterly cycle, providing improved channels of communication between the VOFs, and between the KCP and the main VOF.

#### **4. KCP Representation**

- 4.1 Representatives from the VCS to the KCP are elected by the main VOF. The term of office for the current representatives comes to an end in December 2007 and the VCS wishes to thank them for the contributions they have made. The representatives have fed into a review of their role, undertaken by KCSC, to inform the election process, induction for new representatives, and effective communication.
- 4.2 There are five seats on the KCP for the voluntary sector – one filled by the KCSC representing the VCS as a whole, and four elected by the main VOF representing employment and training, art and culture, disability, and young people's organisations.
- 4.3 It is proposed that new representatives from January 2008 will have the following areas of responsibility – safer and stronger communities; disability, equality and inclusivity; children and young people; and adult health and well-being – aligning them with themes in the community strategy. This is subject to consultation with the VCS.

#### **5. Next steps**

- 5.1 The proposals will be considered by the main VOF meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December. New KCP representatives will be elected at that meeting.
- 5.2 An induction programme for new KCP representatives will be arranged by KCSC, with involvement from the KCP Support Manager.

#### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Steering Group is asked to note the contents of this paper.

#### **FOR INFORMATION**

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