

THCVS 2022 Annual General Meeting Minutes

25 April 2023, 1.30pm to 3.00pm online

Welcome and introductions

Mike Smith welcomed and thanked everyone for attending. He then introduced the agenda.

Trustee elections

Vicky Scott (CEO) gave thanks to the two trustees are standing down, Mohammad Rahman and Louisa Vickers-Mills. She invited the 3 trustees who are standing for re-election to say a few words:

- Chris Ley
- Selina Uddin
- Mike Smith

Influencing change: guest speakers

Vicky Scott introduced the three guest speakers from the Disparities project:

- Sayeeda Ashraf – Shewise
- Rev James Olanipekun , Christ Apostolic Church
- Jama Omar – Somali Senior Citizens Club

The meeting then split into breakout rooms to discuss how we can influence change and what is needed from THCVS. Some of the emerging themes were:

How can we influence change and what can THCVS do to help.

Discussions ranged widely from how to make our voices heard where the decision makers are (and in spaces we might not have thought to get involved), to the need for statutory partners to build trust with the VCS. It was acknowledged optimism around equitable partnerships was low and that they need time and money to develop, and that time to talk and be represented is harder and harder as organisations are just trying to keep going. We don't need lots and lots of meetings. There is conflict between the voluntary sector giving quality support while local authorities just want to have big numbers to say that they are achieving well. If you want both quality and quantity, current processes need to change.

There is a sense that there are people in statutory sectors who view us as working with the VCS because we are not qualified to work in the statutory sectors. We are less reliable/qualified. In reality the reverse is true. There is an issue about the misunderstanding/confusion about it being called the VCS and assumptions that if its volunteer is it amateur and not robust enough.

Long-term sustainable funding is also an issue, but it was noted that funders are more and more considering funding long-term, unrestricted funding, with the ability to be flexible.

Groups were highlighted that need support: BAME women (noting the recent ROSA report that only a small proportion of funding goes to women & girls), environmental and housing.

There were also discussions about who to influence, e.g. public services, Council, health, housing, connecting with the City, local residents, councillors, funders. It was also suggested that government should allocate funding directly for the VCS.

What can THCVS do more of?

- More partnerships and more collaborative initiatives, and connecting organisations
- Many meetings seem to have the same people attending and the same people presenting/holding the space, it would be worthwhile to invite those heard seldomly and give them the 'stage' to express what they are working on and going through.
- More community events that meet community needs.
- THCVS could do a mapping exercise on the state of the voluntary sector. a health check of the sector. We are working hard on a shoestring. Before we influence change we need to find what's happening at grassroots level. Many people don't realise how many VCS groups Tower Hamlets has to offer and how diverse they are.
- Research on commissioning.
- Help to navigate the system and cutting red tape
- Model of influencing - collating voices and mapping needs to reduce over-consultation

After the breakout sessions there was a Mentimeter for people to input what they thought the most important issues and actions coming out of the discussion were (see Appendix).

THCVS achievements and accounts 2021-2022

Mike Smith (Chair) presented the annual report. Headlines include:

- Securing the resources to be more resilient and sustainable: 272 groups and organisations were supported; 23% of inquiries were related to funding; £140,000 secured by 25 organisations
- Supporting groups to develop their digital and online capabilities: 16% of all inquiries were related to digital support; 7 organisations were supported with developing their websites and CRM databases; 5 organisations supported to new digital communications tools
- Connecting with each other and with public sector partners: supported 4 partnerships (Friends of Limehouse, THICN, Exmouth Social Club and Play Association); 19% of inquiries were related to partnership working, supported 508 people across 33 events to connect with other sectors.

- Strengthening the influence of disadvantaged communities in local decision-making and planning: the Equalities Hub supported the six equalities networks; the Disparities project provided a community of practice for ethnic-minority led leaders working with statutory partners to improve access to health services; the Cornerstone project involved residents in planning and decision-making within statutory services.

The Treasurer, Eleanor Healy-Birt provided a summary of the financial position and referred members to the annual accounts for more detail. Headlines from the 2021/22 accounts:

- Income was £513,245, up from £459,879 in 2020/21.
- Expenditure was £454,781, up from £441,189 in 2020/21
- There was a surplus of £58,464, up from £18,690 in 2020/21
Unrestricted reserves stood at £89,466, up from £56,161 in 2020/2021

Mayor's Community Grants update

Peter Vittles (Development Officer) gave an overview of the Mayor's Community Grants programme and the support that THCVS would be offering and shared a link to the training sessions and the first online resource.

The Mayor's Community Grants programme is a £3.5m fund which is now open. The deadline for applications is 12.00 noon on Monday 5 June. The five priority areas are:

- Tackling the cost of living
- Accelerating education
- Culture, jobs, business & skills
- Investing in public services
- Empower communities and fight crime

The maximum amount groups can apply for is £40,000 but it is possible that successful groups will not receive as much as they apply for.

THCVS support available up to 5 June:

- Training sessions across the borough and online
- Drop-in sessions
- Resources
- 1-1 support (email info@thcvs.org.uk)

Vicky Scott announced that all the voting resolutions had been passed.

Appendix

Mentimeter results for how we can influence change and what can THCVS do to help.

How can we influence change? 31 Answers Mentimeter

Facilitating a directory of CVS members and services they provide for the community	A network of mentors to get the right support and advice	Communication Knowing what's out there to connect
Encourage collaboration and network campaign for unrestricted /core funding	Build profile of residents voice and needs to reduce over consultation	List of organisations and what they do. Opportunities to showcase the wonderful work done by the cvs organisations.
Connecting organisations together so they can support each other across the Borough	Networking Collaboration with all charities Making all organisations available to network Stronger voice someone to get in the face of the funders	Summary directory of working groups where influence takes place, with a line on what topic/purposes

How can we influence change? 31 Answers Mentimeter

Cross sector partnerships - learn from each other: funding that allows time to develop partnerships and try things out over time. Flexible long term funding	Collaborating with others across the sector as well as across statutory and corporate sectors	Connect organisations together
We need from THCVS - more partnership - more collaboration And when there are network meeting to invite those heard seldomly	Help setting up a registered charity	Have good information on what other groups are doing
Networking opportunities	Collectively we can speak truth to power, especially the local authority, and challenge things we are unhappy with, coming up with ideas of how to do things better.	Make consultation with the community both relevant and meaningful. Don't let policy makers use consultation as a way not to take action to change things.

How can we influence change? 31 Answers Mentimeter

Through listening to the needs of community members through funding and supporting longer and more meaningful periods of research, development and community outreach.	Continuing to facilitate a directory of available grants	Spence to learn and talk
Effective networking: THCVS to promote networking, sharing of community organisation details, events which empower the sector, etc.	Insights into the workings of the council are invaluable. The VSCYF is a great forum for this and Alex's work is crucial.	Well organised, key events: events which promote networking, or which build sector skills or opportunities
Influencing is not possible without a level playing field. Involvement has to be real, and adequate support provided. THCVS should intentionally remain a conduit, where influencers are tagged.	THCVS needs to be a presence at the big tables and a voice for the community voluntary sector to express how the work of CVs is essential to the wellbeing and welfare of the community	Campaigning: leading discussion with policy-makers and funders to improve the structures within which the sector works

How can we influence change? 31 Answers Mentimeter

Change is constant, voices at the decision table is essential, and THCVS ensures unheard voices are amplified.	Building trust and relationships, networking/coproduction, hearing voices of seldom heard, implementing changes - evaluating and giving feedback	1 Tick idea of the dirctry of wrking grps (wrkshp 3), 2 Our TRA need spprt running a prtntshp, (cmmnity building mngmnt ctte inflected by council) plus 3 The Premise Forum needs restarting.
Premises Forum cont. LBTH proposed changes 2016 onwards are in a muddle and their models either abandoned or not working. We need at least an update is outcome of conversations I am having.		