

Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector Forum Constitution

1. Name

The name of the group shall be “Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector Forum”, abbreviated to the VCS Forum [the Forum].

2. Mission Statement

To bring together local voluntary and community groups to present an effective voice for Harrow’s non profit, non governmental sector in order to improve the quality of life for people and their communities.

3. Object and Aims

The purpose and role of the Forum shall be to encourage a stronger, more vibrant VCS in Harrow by:

- a. creating and maintaining links and networking opportunities between a wide range of VCS groups, for the sharing of information, mutual support and maximised joint working;
- b. enabling the views and concerns of Harrow’s VCS groups to be canvassed and represented to statutory sector bodies and other relevant agencies;
- c. empowering VCS groups to influence policy decisions and providing strategic direction for the delivery of services;
- d. acting as the conduit for consultation with the VCS by statutory sector bodies;
- e. ensuring that, regardless of their size, all Harrow VCS groups have equal access to relevant information about issues that affect them and are able to fully engage in decision making processes;
- f. developing policy statements that represent and benefit Forum members, based on researched evidence and consensus among members;
- g. supporting existing topic specific forums and groupings within Harrow’s VCS and encouraging new networks or forums to address any gaps;
- h. promoting good practice on equalities, community cohesion and environmental issues among Forum members;
- i. supporting the development and use of Compacts between the VCS and statutory sector bodies.

4. Powers

The Forum may exercise the following powers in furtherance of its aims:

- a. to appoint VCS Forum delegates as appropriate to attend meetings as requested or permitted by statutory sector bodies.
- b. to raise and hold funds and to invite and receive contributions from any source that shall not compromise the integrity of the Forum;

- c. To employ and pay such parties as shall be considered necessary by the Forum and within the Forum's financial resources (see clause 6a);
- d. to invite volunteers to assist in any of the Forum's activities;
- e. to seek (from appropriate sources) information, expertise and assistance in order to improve the effectiveness of the Forum;
- f. to carry out relevant surveys, research and consultations;
- g. to take all such other lawful actions as shall be necessary for the achievement of the Forum's aims.

5. Membership

- a. Membership shall be open to all bona fide voluntary and community groups based or working in Harrow, including local branches of national or regional organisations;
- b. Voluntary and community groups shall be defined as any not for profit group and organisation working for the benefit of Harrow residents or Harrow's built or natural environment;
- c. Political parties shall not be eligible for membership;
- d. A fee for membership shall be determined by at least 75 percent of registered members;
- e. Any group wishing to join the Forum shall submit a membership application, which shall be considered for acceptance at the next Forum meeting;
- f. Applications for membership shall appoint one named person to represent the member organisation at Forum Ordinary Meetings and in any Forum-wide voting procedure (an appointed deputy may attend and vote in the absence of the nominated representative);
- g. The Forum shall have the right to withhold, suspend or withdraw membership from any organisation:
 - not meeting the Forum's membership criteria
 - not upholding the Forum's commitment to equality and diversity
 - not adhering to the Forum's Code of Conduct and meeting rules
 - bringing the Forum into disrepute;
- h. Membership shall be renewable each year on receipt of a renewal application;
- i. An up to date list of current members shall be maintained and be available on request to any Forum member.

6. Administration

- a. The Forum shall be administered and managed in accordance with this Constitution by a Management Board elected from and nominated by the membership;
- b. The Management Board shall consist of:
 - a Chair
 - two Vice-Chairs
 - up to five VCS Representatives;

- c. The Chair and Vice-Chairs shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting (see Clause 9a) to serve for a term of one year. No individual may serve as Chair for more than four consecutive years;
- d. The Representatives shall be elected to serve for a term of two years and shall be eligible for re-election;
- e. Elections shall be carried out in accordance with procedures agreed by members at an Ordinary Meeting,
- f. A minimum of 50 per cent of VCS Representatives on the Management Board shall be from small groups, which shall be defined as those having not more than one full-time paid employee or equivalent;
- g. The Management Board shall:
 - meet as required but not less than six times per year
 - establish such rules and procedures as may be required for the orderly conduct of the Forum's business including standing orders for Ordinary and Special Meetings, formation of sub-committees, custody of documents and membership records
 - report in writing on VCS Representatives' activities and finances to Forum members via its Ordinary Meetings
 - make any necessary urgent decisions on behalf of the Forum between Ordinary Meetings
 - make recommendations to Forum Ordinary Meetings;
- h. No Management Board meeting shall take place if less than half of the Management Board members shall be present. No decisions shall be taken at a Management Board Meeting if less than five Management Board members shall be present. Quorum shall exist where five or more Management Board members are present.
- i. The Management Board may require that, in the event of absence from three consecutive meetings without an acceptable reason, a Management Board member shall be deemed to have resigned;
- j. In the event of a Management Board position becoming vacant between elections, Forum members shall elect a substitute to fulfil the role until the next full election process.

7. Finance

- a. All funds raised by or on behalf of the Forum shall be used only to further the aims laid out above;
- b. An appropriate bank account shall be maintained and operated in the Forum's name at a bank agreed by the Management Board;
- c. The Management Board shall keep competent records of all the Forum's income and expenditure;
- d. The Management Board shall appoint a minimum of three signatories from among its members. One signatory shall be the Chair. No more than one member of any organisation may be a signatory at the same time; all instructions to the Forum's bank shall require two of the three agreed signatures;
- e. The Management Board shall review the Forum's financial records and associated documents through a standing item on its agenda;
- f. At each AGM, the Management Board shall prepare an independently examined financial statement detailing the Forum's finances during the previous financial year to 31st March.

8. Ordinary Meetings

- a. Ordinary Meetings of the Forum shall take place six times a year and shall:
 - be open to all Forum members
 - discuss issues of collective concern to VCS groups in Harrow
 - agree priorities, actions and policy statements as appropriate
 - appoint VCS delegates to local partnerships or other key strategic bodies
 - arrange presentations and open question and answer sessions with councillors, council officers and representatives from other statutory sector bodies where appropriate;
- b. Agendas and papers for Ordinary Meetings shall be distributed to all members not less than 14 days before the meeting;
- c. Elected councillors, representatives from statutory sector bodies and other non-members may attend Forum meetings as observers subject to invitation by the Forum;
- d. Any individual with an external interest in any item to be discussed by the forum shall declare this before the meeting and withdraw from discussion as deemed appropriate by the meeting;
- e. All Ordinary Meetings shall be minuted and the minutes be distributed to all members within two weeks of the date of the meeting. The minutes shall be made available to any member on request.

9. AGM and EGM

- a. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) open to all Forum members shall be held every year within 90 days of the end of the financial year;
- b. Agenda and papers for an AGM shall be distributed to all members not less than 28 days before the meeting;
- c. At each AGM, the Management Board shall present an independently examined financial statement detailing the Forum's finances during the previous financial year;
- d. At each AGM members shall elect a Chair and Vice Chairs for the following year in accordance with Clause 6c above;
- e. Items or motions for the AGM agenda must be received in writing by the Chair not less than 35 days before the meeting;
- f. The AGM shall vote on any motions, recommendations and proposed amendments to the Constitution;
- g. An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), open to all members, shall be held if 20 per cent of members submit a written request for such a meeting to the Chair, with the details of the matter to be discussed and reasons why it cannot be considered at a Management Board meeting, Ordinary Meeting or AGM;
- h. An EGM may consider only the matter(s) for which the meeting shall have been called;
- i. The Chair shall arrange for the EGM to take place within 28 days of the request being made;
- j. Notice of an EGM shall be given to all members not less than 14 days before the EGM;
- k. All AGMs and EGMs shall be minuted and the minutes distributed to all members within two weeks of the date of the meeting. The minutes shall be made available to any member on request;
- l. No AGM or EGM shall take place if less than 15 member groups shall be present.

10. Voting Procedures

- a. Any motion shall have a proposer and a seconder before it shall be voted on;
- b. Only members of the Forum present may vote at any meeting;
- c. No member group shall exercise more than one vote per decision;
- d. Voting at all meetings shall be by a show of voting cards, except that elections to Management Board positions shall be by secret ballot;
- e. A simple majority of votes shall carry any decision;
- f. The Chair of the meeting shall maintain a neutral position and shall hold only a casting vote;
- g. The Management Board shall have the power to issue and adopt standing orders and/or rules for the Forum, provided they shall be consistent with this constitution and agreed at the next AGM.

11. Amendment

- a. The Constitution may only be altered at an AGM or at an EGM called for that purpose;
- b. Any proposed alteration to the Constitution must be received in writing by the Chair and must be supported by at least ten Forum members;
- c. Notice of the proposed changes must be distributed to all members not less than 14 days before the meeting at which they shall be discussed.

12. Dissolution

- a. The Forum may only be dissolved at an AGM or at an EGM called for that purpose;
- b. Members may vote to dissolve the Forum, provided the Management Board shall have given all members not less than 14 days written notice of a proposal to do so;
- c. Any remaining funds and assets of the Forum shall be given to an appropriate organisation to be agreed by the meeting at which the decision shall be made.

**Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector Forum Constitution adopted in 20XX.
To be reviewed at intervals of not more than five years.**