

**Next Generation Community Connect  
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council  
Community Action Hinckley and Bosworth**

**VCS PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS REPORT**



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**Purpose:** To give an overview of the VCS Partnership progress; to give an overview of the development process thus far; to provide summarised feedback from the VCS Workshop; to analyse this feedback and information to provide an evidential basis for the future development of the VCS Forum and Commissioning Board.



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## **1.1 Introduction – VCS Development Analyst**

The Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership (VCS) is broadly that Next Generation Community Connect (NGCC) and Community Action Hinckley and Bosworth (CAHB) are working together with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) to develop a successful, transparent and collaborative VCS Forum and Commissioning Board. This Partnership will provide and maintain a mechanism for capturing the voice of the VCS, enabling collaborative partnerships and effectively allocating funding based on identified needs and values.

I began working on the VCS Partnership project in January 2013. I was employed by HBBC as a Research Analyst intern, tasked with a mapping exercise to uncover how many VCS organisations and groups were currently active in the Borough. Very limited information existed prior to this.

The project evolved to include the creation of a VCS Database and a VCS Contact Directory which lay out the names of the VCS organisations, what their activities are and a range of contact details. Significant work and time went into producing each database, which currently contain, as of the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, 1,162 VCS organisations.

During the project, I attended the VCS Partnership meetings between NGCC and CAHB, contributed ideas and had the responsibility of independently producing minutes of those meetings.

I completed my internship at HBBC in April 2013. My internship was then extended to working within NGCC but with the role of VCS Development Analyst. I am now responsible for using the information gathered in the VCS Database and elsewhere within the process, such as the VCS Initial Group Meeting, VCS Consultation Questionnaire, and VCS Workshop to inform the development of the VCS Forum and Commissioning Board.

Being new to the area of Hinckley and Bosworth and new to the VCS itself, I have been able to offer a fresh, objective and independent outlook on the VCS Partnership, the

gathering and use of large sources of information and on the development of the VCS Forum and Commissioning Board.

**Due to this, I have been asked by NGCC, HBBC and CAHB to produce this report in aid of the themes of transparency and objectivity that have run throughout the project thus far.**

**Ben Darlow**

VCS Development Analyst

Research Analyst

**28<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

## 1.2 Lead Officer's Overview – Next Generation Community Connect

In August 2012, following the submission of the Next Generation Community Connect's (NGCC) vision and strategic aims for 2013, negotiations commenced with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) to form a partnership between Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council, Next Generation Community Connect and Community Action Hinckley & Bosworth (CAHB) to:

1. Create a robust mechanism that enables the knowledge and expertise of the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) to be recognised and shared across the VCS enabling positive partnerships and sustainability.
2. Form a new vibrant, pro-active Forum for the VCS that would be representative of the collective aims and objectives of the VCS. In turn the VCS Forum's and HBBC authority's aims and objectives, will collaboratively align to develop and form the new Locality Commissioning Board.
3. Continue the development of a local VCS Hub, complementing the new statutory hub.

Both NGCC and our partners CAHB , recognised in the early days of this partnership that we had a mammoth task ahead, particularly that our main objective was to include as many of the VCS in the Borough as possible no matter how small!

- Initially the partnership tasked Ben Darlow, a University Intern, to create a comprehensive data- base as there were only around **380 VCS bodies listed**. To date Ben has identified **1,162** and still rising, with contact details for around 2/3rds.
- We held an **initial steering group meeting of around 10 VCS representatives** which came from different themed areas of the VCS. The purpose of this was to explore ways in which we could ensure inclusion and transparency which was paramount to the whole process.

- To capture the thoughts, opinions and ideas from the wider VCS, we held a VCS Workshop with **invitees from approximately 50 key organisations from across the Sector**. The invite included an overview of the partnership,
- a recent press release, and a consultation questionnaire covering the opportunities to have a collective opinion on the proposed VCS Forum and future Commissioning Board.
- With regard to the wider 1,162 identified VCS organisations, we have sent out as many as practicable, with the overview, press release and the consultation questionnaire.

I feel that this is a very exciting time for both the VCS and the Authority in Hinckley & Bosworth and I am confident that this will be an effective approach to the VCS/Authority relationship and bring new opportunities for a vibrant VCS services within our Borough, and ultimately be a cost effective approach to the funding of the Borough's VCS organisations.

**Shani Smith**

Chief Officer – Next Generation Community Connect

**28<sup>th</sup> May 2013**



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### 1.2.1 VCS Organisations Statistics – Table

Category of Organisation	Number of Organisations
Aging Population	52 (4.4%)
Arts, Culture and Heritage	26 (10.5%)
Community Cohesion	69 (14.2%)
Community Safety	19 (1.6%)
Disability	83 (7.0%)
Environmental and Animals	47 (3.9%)
Families	19 (1.6%)
Health and Wellbeing	84 (7.0%)
Housing	18 (1.4%)
Learning	31 (2.6%)
Recreation	70 (5.8%)
Rural Transport / Access Equality	2 (0.17%)
Sports	245 (20.5%)
Unknown / Other*	7 (0.59%)
Young People and Children	225 (18.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,162</b>

\*There is evidence to suggest these organisations exist but not what their activities are.

## 1.2.2 VCS Organisations Statistics – Pie Chart

### VCS Organisations - Statistics





## **1.3 Overview and VCS Consultation Workshop Report**

### **1.3.1 Introduction**

There have been a significant number of steps within the VCS Partnership process leading up to the VCS Consultation Workshop. The VCS Partnership has held a significant number of meetings between its partners and with HBBC officers. In addition, there have been numerous meetings relating to the planning and preparation for the Council Executive presentation.

The first core step was the mapping exercise and research that went into the VCS Database and Contact Directory. Over the course of 3 months (January – April 2013), I used a methodology that had 2 core trunks. Firstly, I liaised with large organisations, gathered their information and contact details which provided further leads, funnelling down to the smallest organisations.

Secondly, I undertook a large internet canvassing exercise, browsing over 2,500 unique websites and targeting research at a number of key VCS themes and services. The groups found were then verified by either contacting them or by confirming their recent activities. The current verified database stands at 1,162 organisations.

Utilising this information, NGCC and CAHB then invited approximately 12 core representatives from across the VCS to attend a VCS Initial Group Meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013. This was to be open and transparent in discussing initial ideas and thoughts for the development of the VCS Forum and Commissioning Board.

Next, NGCC sent out a VCS Consultation Questionnaire, on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013, to approximately 500 VCS Organisations in order to engage in an effective consultation and gain as much feedback and information as possible regarding the VCS Forum and Commissioning Board development.

To further the process of consultation, NGCC and CAHB organised and sent invitations to approximately 50 core VCS representatives, inviting them to attend

a VCS Consultation Workshop. The aim of this workshop was to gather feedback and information to analyse, the results of which will be discussed below.

A current step that is in progress is the invitation of another set of core VCS representatives to attend a VCS Forum Steering Group, the agenda currently includes a discussion of a core value set and a presentation of this report.

### **1.3.2 Main VCS Consultation Workshop Report**

The VCS Consultation Workshop took place on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013 and was an all-day event held at the Concordia Theatre. There was an impressive attendance of approximately 30 people and all were enthusiastic, constructive and proactive throughout the day.

The purposes of the workshop were to share information with the VCS on the Partnership development to date; to capture the local voice of the VCS in shaping the VCS Forum and Commissioning Board and to gather general thoughts on its development.

There were 5 core sessions throughout the day. Session 2 involved group discussions about what makes a vibrant and effective VCS, Session 3 was a SWOT analysis of the VCS, Session 4 was an exercise where groups had to rank certain functions in order of importance, Session 7 was discussing a VCS Forum Model, Session 8 was discussing a VCS Commissioning Board Model and, finally, Session 9 was an activity where the responsibilities of such a Commissioning Board were discussed.

Discussed below are the core themes and feedback from each of the group exercise sessions.

### 1.3.2.1 Session 2: What makes a vibrant and effective VCS?

In this session, the groups had to choose 1 of 4 perspectives (VCS, Local People, HBBC and National Government) to look at the question of what characteristics a vibrant and effective VCS has. Out of the 5 tables, 4 chose to the Local People perspective and 1 chose the VCS perspective. This in itself demonstrates that the consensus that Local People are core to the vibrancy of the VCS.

The following is a visualisation of the core themes of the session, the bigger the word the more important the theme was within the exercise.



#### Key Feedback

- There was an emphasis on the importance of values of social equality and inclusion within the VCS.
- The VCS needs a strong infrastructure to be able to be at its most vibrant and for its services to be the most effective. Moreover, there should not be any gaps in service provision or duplication of those services.
- For the VCS to be effective there needs to be a system of more efficient funding and better use of resources, both human and financial.
- There needs to be collaborative working both between VCS organisations and between the VCS and the Local People.

- There needs to be a way to find out what the needs of the Local People are effectively and to meet them with valuable and high quality services.
- Throughout all of the above, there needs to be a simple, transparent, non-bureaucratic process that is sustainable and responsive to need.

### 1.3.2.2 Session 3: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis of the VCS

This session asked each group to produce a SWOT analysis, outlining the current SWOTs of the VCS. Below is a table highlighting the core themes:

#### Strengths



#### Weaknesses



#### Opportunities



#### Threats



### 1.3.2.3 Session 4: Importance of roles and functions ranking exercise

Within this exercise, each group was given a set of cards with possible roles and functions for the VCS Partnership on. The aim was to rank each potential activity that the VCS Partnership could or should be doing, from the most important to the least important. Some core activities were highlighted as important by all groups.

**Developing a VCS Borough Strategy**

**Collaborating, in terms of between VCS Groups and the VCS and Local People**

**Listening to and capturing the voice of the local people in the Borough**

**Communicating with VCS Borough Groups and bringing them together**

#### Key Feedback

- Developing a VCS Borough Strategy was ranked as the *most* important by 3 of the 5 group tables.
- Communicating with VCS Borough Groups, Capturing the voice of the Local People and Collaboration were ranked within the top 4 most important by each of the 5 group tables.

### 1.3.2.4 Session 7: The VCS Forum Model

In this exercise, each group was asked 3 questions, to encourage thinking and discussion about the form the VCS Forum should take: (1) What should the VCS Forum be doing? (2) Who can/should participate? and (3) When/how frequently should the VCS Forum meet? Below are visualisations of the core feedback to each question:

(1) What should the VCS Forum be doing?



(2) Who can/should participate in the VCS Forum?



(3) When/how frequently should the VCS Forum meet?



## Key Feedback

- There was an emphasis on the importance of the VCS Forum bringing together the VCS, representing and consulting the VCS and bringing both the VCS voice and voice of the local community to the VCS Forum.
- The VCS Forum should also be about the facilitation of networking between groups with an eye to collaborative working, partnerships and the pooling of knowledge and expertise. This would also go towards the identified important aim of avoiding duplication of services.
- It was seen as very important the VCS Forum effectively filtered relevant and accurate information to the VCS Commissioning Board. It should also select the VCS members of the Commissioning Board.
- The VCS Forum should set the core values of how it should work as well as have the aim of promoting awareness of the VCS in the Borough.
- It should work alongside the Commissioning Board to develop a funding application process that is accessible.
  
- The VCS Forum should be open to all VCS organisations but in several ways of participation. This could be attending the Forum itself or attending a localised themed category meeting and sending a representative to the Forum.
  
- The main consensus was that the Forum should meet quarterly but with allowances to meet flexibly or specially if necessary for whatever reason.

### 1.3.2.5 Session 8: The VCS Commissioning Board Model

This exercise was similar to Session 7, in that it asked the same 3 questions but directed at the VCS Commissioning Board: (1) What should the Commissioning Board be doing? (2) Who can/should participate? and (3) When/how frequently should the VCS Commissioning Board meet? Below are the visualisations of the core feedback to each question:

#### (1) What should the VCS Commissioning Board be doing?

Allocating.Funding  
Seeking.Funding  
Specialist.Knowledge  
Transparency

#### (2) Who can/should participate in the VCS Commissioning Board?

Main.Body  
Expert.Body  
VCS.Specialists

#### (3) When/how frequently should the VCS Commissioning Board meet?

Quarterly  
Response.to.Need  
Special



## Key Feedback

- It was felt that the VCS Commissioning Board should be actively seeking funding as well as effectively and transparently allocating it.
  - In general, the Commissioning Board should enable transparent processes.
  - It should also utilise the specialist knowledge that the VCS Forum will be able to filter to it.
- 
- It was the consensus that there should be some kind of main or core body consisting of selected VCS representatives and key HBBC officers.
  - There should be an body of co-opted experts that change depending on the nature and theme of the funding being discussed.
  - There should also be a body of VCS experts in the themed area of the funding being discussed.
- 
- The consensus was that the Commissioning Board should meet in response to need but potentially quarterly as a starting point.

### **1.3.2.6 Session 9: The model for funding allocation within the VCS Commissioning Board**

This exercise asked the groups to think about how the process of funding allocation should be made by the Commissioning Board and what should inform its decision making process. Below is the visualisation of the core feedback within the exercise:

**Proportionate  
Value  
Circumstances**

#### **Key Feedback**

- The consensus was that decisions regarding funding should be made on the value and circumstances of the case, rather than through a rigid structural process.
- There should be considerations in regard to proportionate funding based on the amount and type of the funding as well as what theme the VCS group is from. This will be to prevent disproportionate funding.
- There should be 1 Commissioning Board that deals with multiple funding streams, rather than multiple Commissioning Boards that each deal with 1 funding stream.

### 1.3.2.7 VCS Consultation Questionnaire Analysis

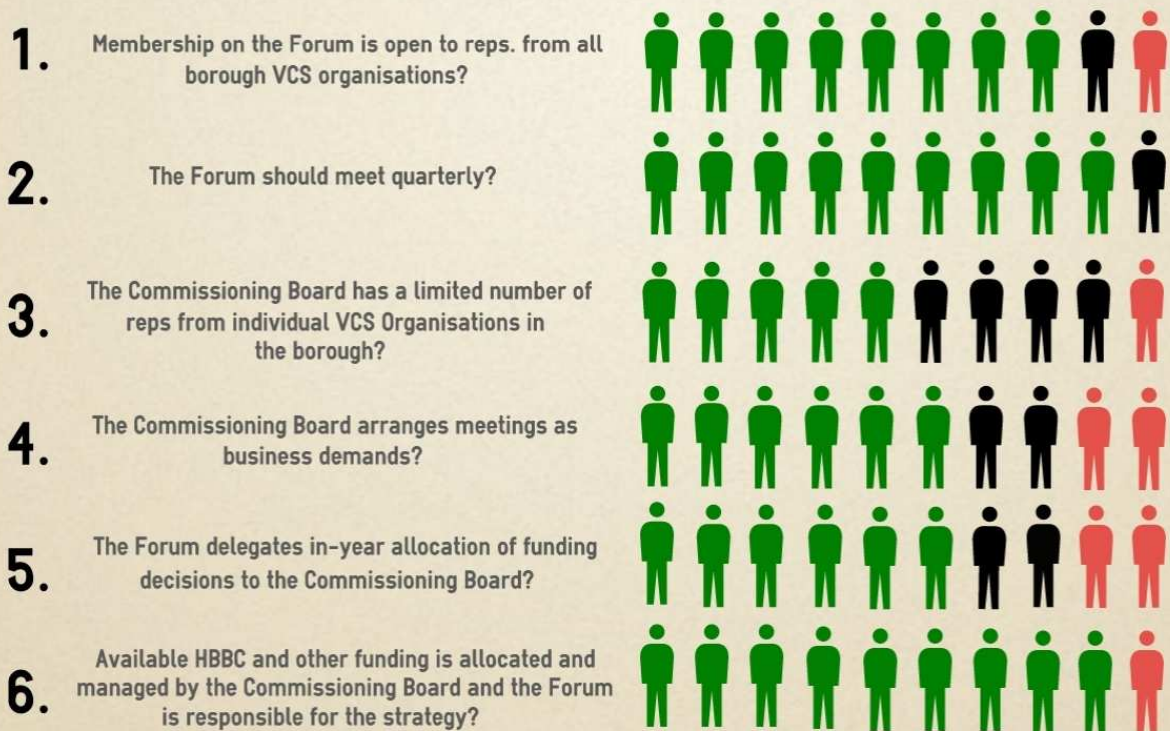
## VCS Questionnaire Results

Over 450 Questionnaires were sent out to a wide range of people across the VCS

There were 3 core question sections:

- » VCS Commissioning Board
- » VCS Forum
- » Allocation of CB Funding

A number of questions were asked, below are the key responses:



Green indicates agreement, Red indicates disagreement.  
Black indicates neither agreement nor disagreement

## 1.4 Conclusion and Summary

It is clear from the consultation, both the Questionnaire and Workshop, that there are some core principles that the VCS value above all others. These are collaborative working and partnerships and the provision of sustainable and high quality services, which are key to the effectiveness of voluntary services in the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough. The individual VCS organisations in Hinckley and Bosworth are dedicated and their people are knowledgeable but this expertise is not being utilised efficiently or effectively across the Borough.

These organisations understandably have their own agendas but this was identified as a key weakness and counter-productive to collaboration. This process has shown there is desire and enthusiasm for stronger partnerships. A further weakness is the financial insecurity facing VCS organisations in the Borough, there is no guaranteed system of efficient funding and it is difficult to work together when there is limited capacity.

A VCS Forum and Commissioning Board would go a long way to solving these issues, the needs and voice of the VCS would be heard through the Forum and answered through the Commissioning Board. A guaranteed process would be in place to enable effective and efficient allocation of funding. This would lead to higher quality services being provided, as a whole, by the VCS and thus the VCS would become more vibrant and effective.

The Forum could meet quarterly and be made up of key representatives from each of the categories of the VCS. The 1,162 groups could work and meet locally amongst their category to select perhaps 2 people to represent them at the Forum. It would be a mechanism to encourage networking and collaboration and would capture the needs of the VCS and translate them to the Commissioning Board.

The Commissioning Board could again meet quarterly but consensus was nearer it meeting in response to need. Its goal would be to effectively, efficiently and transparently allocate funding based on value and circumstances. It would be made up of a main body of VCS representatives selected by the Forum and core HBBC officers, a changing expert body of specialists depending on the category of funding and a VCS specialist body of voluntary experts in that category.

It is an exciting time for the VCS in Hinckley and Bosworth and the development of a VCS Forum and Commissioning Board is breaking new ground in the area, and possibly the country.

**Ben Darlow**

VCS Development Analyst

Research Analyst

**28<sup>th</sup> May 2013**