

**Minutes of the Stronger Together Consortium Committee and The Forum  
Committee Joint Meeting.**

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008, 4.00pm - 6.30 pm, Room 3,  
RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS**

**Attending:**

Rajinder Sohpal (RS)	Chair
Peter Burt (PB)	The Forum
Malcolm Stone (MS)	The Forum
Nick Wooldridge (NW)	The Forum
Cecily Mwaniki (CM)	The Forum
Chris Turner (CT)	The Forum
Robert Paice (RP)	Stronger Together Consortium, RVA
Sarah Morland (SM)	Stronger Together Consortium, RVA
Nigel Hardcastle (NH)	Stronger Together Consortium, RFF
Alan Magness (AM)	Stronger Together Consortium, RFF
Mrs Mignon Michael (MM)	Stronger Together Consortium, Sakoma
Tim Clewer (TC)	Stronger Together Consortium, RCVYS
Anne Laing (AL)	Stronger Together
Anna Fowler (AF) from 4.30	Stronger Together

**Apologies**

Jenny Cottee	Stronger Together Consortium, Globe
David Bertram	The Forum

**Non-attending**

Vip Mair	Stronger Together Consortium, Sakoma
Laura Johnson Collard	Stronger Together Consortium, The Forum, RCVYS
Steve Masters	The Forum

## Summary of Actions

No.	Agenda Item	Action	Allocated to
1.	5a.	Involvement of RCVYS in Gun and Knife Crime event.	AM, RCVYS (TC or Ben Cross)
2.	5a.	Establish better statutory partner contacts to action EIAs	AL, MS
3.	5a.	Volunteers required for event planning sub-committees	ST, volunteers from the 4 Fora
4.	5b	Organise meeting on Year 2 planning	AF
5.	6a.	Revised estimate column included in all new financial reports	AL
6.	6b.	Big Lottery Fund Outcomes report to be emailed to ST/Forum Committee members	AL
7.	7.	Development of a ST website and 4 'stand alone' Fora websites	ST team
8.	7.	SM to send AL RCVYS research programme findings	SM
9.	7.	Amend marketing plan to make the promotion of each Fora more explicit	AL
10.	8.	AL and AM to organise priority A1 meeting	AL, AM
11.	8.	Follow up on RBC's new procurement policy	AM, AL and CT
12.	8.	Investigation into how to address homelessness priority	AM
13.	9.	Review Draft Forum Voices complaints procedure	AL, AF
14.	12.	Confirm volunteer in position of Forum Treasurer	AF
15.	13.	Project Manage consultancy project, starting with contracting consultant	AF
16.	14.	Disseminate skills audit and collate resulting data	AF

1. **Welcome and Introductions to Committee**  
Attendees were welcomed to the meeting and introduced themselves.
2. **Minutes of the Stronger Together Consortium Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

Item 11 of the minutes was amended to read “.... Reading LINk Board whose role is to oversee the programme for the Health & Welfare by using a wide....”

3. AL drew attention to the issues paper prepared to enable the members of both committees to understand the position of each grouping and the factor of wider fora interests which linked to both. A correction of Peter Bertram to David Bertram of Reading Credit Union was made. Particular note was made of the method of dissolution of the arrangement. The paper was accepted.

4. **Matters arising not already on this agenda**

SM noted that the change of date had not been communicated to those not in attendance at the meeting. She requested that minutes of the meetings be circulated as soon as was possible following a meeting, usually within approximately 2 weeks. This was agreed.

5. **Report on Timeline Actions and Updates**

- a. **Year 1 Actions Report & Update on Programme**

AL noted that the Action report showed comments up to date on the programme where appropriate showing a little detail of the activity. It was noted that SM & CT had not received the LSP newsletter and this would be rectified. Highlights and discussion followed:

The RCVYS-led Safeguarding event has been delayed due to lack of information from RBC. TC reported that Ben Cross from RCVYS is now on the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, and that RCVYS is as up to speed as it can be on the issue given the problems in the government safeguarding programme.

AL reported on alternatives for the next event, including one focusing on Direct Payments (Individual Budgets) and their impact on Older Peoples' services that are provided by Voluntary Sector groups.

AL reported that RFF is currently organising an environment event which will take place on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

AM is involved in a Churches Together event on gun and knife crime on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and offered to badge it as a RFF event. However, it was decided that it would be more appropriate to involve RCVYS as it is a young people's issue.

SM said that there is demand for First Aid courses at the moment. ST is currently supporting RCVYS in providing a variety of First Aid courses.

TC reported that it has been difficult to achieve SIAG objectives due to problems in obtaining EIAs (Equality Impact Assessments) from statutory partners other than RBC. SIAG work has subsequently been

delayed because of the lack of responses to EIA queries. (This issue was discussed further later on in the meeting)

SM raised a concern about the appearance of 'need approval from Sakoma exec' comments in the Year 1 Actions Report and asked how this is moving forward. AL replied that the new Sakoma exec has recently held their first meeting and that the next one is scheduled for 11.12.08.

A list of requirements and needs were documented during the Sakoma AGM's 'Global Café' event and this report has gone to the exec for discussion. There should be a list of actions from the Sakoma exec after the meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> December.

RS asked about progress with establishing a link with the Gypsy and Traveller community. AF responded that Yasmin Bador now has a contact at RBC to provide us with information.

RP asked AL what has been ST's biggest achievement so far and the biggest disappointment.

AL responded that she has found the progress of the SIAG frustrating. It has been hard to find the relevant contact at some statutory partners to deal with EIAs. She felt that some statutory partners (not RBC) see EIAs as a test on their management systems rather than of the service provided. The Police, in particular, have been very difficult to engage with in a meaningful manner. TC also mentioned that the local PCT deal with different boundaries from other Statutory partners, which made it difficult to establish contact.

Suggestions to deal with this situation included engaging local Neighbourhood Action Groups from AL, and MS offered to find a contact through the PCT.

RS revisited RP's initial question about successes by saying that although 'tricky', the Sakoma AGM had been well attended. AF reported that the Young People's event, organised with help from RCVYS and BACYP, had gone well with 25 attendees from 20 organisations and two new members joining RCVYS on the day. NH reported that SACRE work was going well and that there was improved representation from the Faith Forum on other committees and organizations. TC reported that there is increased awareness of the voluntary sector by local councilors, a sentiment shared by MS, who felt that councilors have become much more active in, and supportive of, the local VCS.

AL also highlighted that although the LSP cannot be classed as an event, it does require considerable time and effort by AL and Joanita Lwanga, including a lot of committee work.

In terms of planning ahead, AL asked for volunteers for sub-committees that could help in the planning of future events i.e. RFF Environment event and a joint event with an Older People's focus, possibly based around carers.

**b. Meeting on Year 2 Planning**

A meeting on Year 2 planning will take place on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Attendees were asked to take the Year 2 Plan to their relevant Forum committees for discussion and to gather feedback/suggestions. An invitation will be sent to the Chairs of the 4 Fora, although other interested committee members are welcome to attend. A light lunch will be provided.

PB asked if there would be a mid-term review of the ST project. AL replied that is part of the exit strategy programmed in for June 2009, but can be extended to incorporate a review.

Any review of the ST programme would be presented to the ST Consortium for approval.

**6. Stronger Together Programme Manager's Report**

**a. Financial Report - 8 months**

AL presented a Financial Report for the First Quarter 2008/9 including pre year costs. There has been some underspend, i.e. in salaries, due to the time needed to recruit staff. The upcoming Forum Development Consultancy Project accounts for the largest part of the current 'Development' budget.

ST will recruit a temporary member of staff to cover an employee's maternity leave.

Marketing spend will increase as we develop the new websites. Recent marketing spend has included the design and printing of a ST leaflet, and ST roll-up banners.

CT asked if it were possible to have a forecast column in the financial report. AL to record revised estimates as a result.

In response to a question from RP, AL explained that income is supplied to us in advance on a quarterly basis. If there are any difficulties with the 6 monthly report, funding would be held until those issues were resolved.

AL stated that there was a sum of £700 that was still 'under consideration.' This may be used in a joint purchase with Reading LINK of a new colour printer.

**b. Big Lottery Fund Outcomes**

The detail on which the report was based was provided at the previous meeting. RP had requested copy of the BLF report. AL to email report to ST Consortium Committee.

**c. LSP Forum Event**

TC reported that the local VCS experience of the recent LSP Forum event was mostly positive, but he had been disappointed that less than 10 of the 46 statutory sector target holders had attended on the day and that it had been very difficult to get them to engage with the groups exhibiting. SM asked if the target holders were aware of the system in which each VCS organisation exhibiting had identified and displayed the targets they delivered. TC said that they had been, but some target holders came to the seminars and did not engage with exhibitors. There had been some highlights, such as an invitation to RCVYS to present to SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators).

TC thanked the ST team for their planning work and all the local VCS groups who were at the event.

AL, Ben Cross and JL will be meeting to identify VCS groups who might join the LAA Project Team leaders on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009 in order to review the current targets. The intention is to enable target holders to engage better with target providers.

TC invited attendees to make known any target issues which he or Mike Martin would take to the LSP.

**7. Marketing and Communications**

AL asked for comments and feedback on the draft Marketing and Communications plan.

PB asked for an update on the websites. AL responded that a ST website would be developed within the RVA directory, but 3 'cloned' independent websites would be developed for each Fora, allowing for separation if so required. RCVYS has an already developed site. Some funding would be available for the development of the websites, and we hope to enlist the help of a volunteer from the IT sector.

CT asked if there was a baseline to assess efficiency. SM suggested that the research she carried out for RCVYS, which included the

question ‘What do you know about the other Forums?’ be used as a baseline, although only RCVYS members were surveyed for the research.

RS voiced a concern that the plan was too ST-focused and should be used for raising awareness of the 4 individual Fora within the consortium. RP agreed that we should use marketing to help the Fora promote themselves. AL agreed to make this more explicit in the plan.

### **Amendment to running schedule of Agenda Items**

Before Nick Wooldridge had to leave the meeting, PB proposed, seconded by MS, that he be co-opted as a Forum Committee Member.

This was passed unanimously by the committees.

## **Part 2 - The Forum and Wider Network**

(There were some changes in the running order of agenda items in this part of the meeting to allow some attendees who had other commitments to leave before the end of the meeting).

### **8. Priorities group meeting conclusions**

A sub-committee had met in November to discuss how to action the priorities generated by the workshops at the Forum AGM in July 2008. AF drafted a timeline of priorities actions after the meeting. The following were discussed:

A1. AM and AL to book a meeting to start the development of a lobby paper to the LSP valuing the VCS input on strategic bodies and to establish the principle of reimbursement.

A2. Procurement: There is a request to support the search for funding, possibly through ChangeUp to pay for a consultant to establish/identify procurement opportunities and to facilitate the lobbying of statutory agencies. RS suggested Business Links as a useful source of information on procurement. AL will discuss the issue with Social Enterprise Berkshire.

RBC has recently reviewed its procurement policy which is due to be approved by councilors. AM, AL and CT to follow this up when a copy is available.

There was also the suggestion the local VCS should work through consortiums to win contracts, although this had the disadvantage of making them seem like a hastily-put together

organisation with no track record. RS suggested that the consultant could be used to investigate the best way to address this issue.

- C7. AM has approached FAITH and Cirdic about the possibility of organising a conference on homelessness. Due to a previous experience at an event which became very politicised, they were unsure whether a conference would be the best way to address this priority. However, AM to follow up whether this action is still viable, or whether it can be addressed differently.
- A3. SM stated that the creation of a resources centre for smaller community groups was on RVA's agenda and that there are ongoing discussions with RBC on this matter. There is also the possibility of capital funding from Change Up.
- B. The production of an advice booklet to be distributed to the home of every elderly person living in Reading is not strictly a ST issue as we support organizations rather than individuals. However, AL stated that ST was moving forward with the older persons agenda by targeting groups and issues and that it had offered to support the search for funding for this provision through a group such as Age Concern. MS suggested that a key issue for older people was loneliness.
- D10 This priority was actioned through the 'Young People - In a Different Light' event of 15.10.08
- D11 RBC recently held a parenting skills conference

RS requested that this paper be noted by committee members for review at a later date.

## **9. Draft Complaints Procedure**

This complaints procedure was drafted following a request at the first Forum Voice Gathering.

SM voiced concerns that the draft complaints procedure could be used to lodge a complaint against a ST team member, which could prove problematic as there is already a procedure for complaints against RVA employees. It would be ill-advised to have two complaints procedures for RVA/ST employees. AL said that Mike Martin agreed with this viewpoint. AL asked that this paper be withdrawn and she would develop a complaints procedure for Forum Voices only.

## **10. Forum Committee Minutes**

The minutes of the Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> September were approved.

A clarification was required on point 2a of the minutes. RS & PB (The Forum) and CM (for Sakoma) are now sitting on the Compact. It was noted that the 10 compact VCS seats were intended to cover the variety of organisations (small, large, voluntary, community) and appointments were sought to try to develop this balance.

RS asked about a missing action point, which was to inform the BLF on a minor variation due to the delay in the consultancy project. AL has already actioned this.

PB updated the committee on his intention to draft a strategy plan on Arts, Sports and Cultural priorities and he will attend an Arts and Culture Forum in January 2009.

## **11. Next Forum and Joint Events**

This issue had already been discussed

## **12. Appointment of New Treasurer**

It was agreed that a volunteer, Khurram Mumtaz, recruited through RVA's volunteer centre, should be approached on behalf of the committee and recruited as the new Forum Treasurer.

## **13. Development Consultancy**

The committee agreed that this proposal could be used for the consultancy project. AF to approach consultants identified in sub-committee meeting and invite to tender. AF to project manage the resulting consultancy project.

## **14. Skills Audit**

Answering a question from the Chair, AL explained that the skills audit would be used to establish which skills committee members and Forum Voices could already offer, and in doing so, establish where support through training may be needed.

The committee unanimously approved the Skills Audit.

## **15. Issues from the Wider Network**

There were no issues from the wider network

**16. Any Other Business**

There was no AOB

**17. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, 4.00 - 6.30pm

**The meeting ended at 6.30pm.**