

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

**Monday 15th June 2009, 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
Steve Masters (SMa)	The Forum
Sarah Morland (SM)	Stronger Together Consortium, RVA
Nigel Hardcastle (NH)	Stronger Together Consortium, RFF
Anne Laing (AL)	Stronger Together
Anna Fowler (AF)	Stronger Together
Jeremy Sandell (JS)	Incoming Director of Reading Voluntary Action
Tim Clewer (TC)	Stronger Together Consortium, RCVYS

Apologies

Laura Johnson Collard (LJC)	Stronger Together Consortium, The Forum, RCVYS
Chris Turner (CT)	The Forum
Alan Magness (AM)	Stronger Together Consortium, RFF
Mrs Mignon Michael (MM)	Stronger Together Consortium, Sakoma

Summary of Actions

No.	Agenda Item	Action	Allocated to
1.	2.a.	Informal meeting of the 4 fora chairs to evaluate ST progress	AF to arrange meeting
2	2.b (Q10)	Meetings with councilors	RS
3.	2.b (Q11)	Meeting of 4 fora chairs and other interested parties to discuss which statutory partnerships should have VCS representation	AF to arrange meeting

4.	6.b.	AF to ask for further clarification from consultant on some of the report recommendations, including mapping and best practice	AF
5.	7.a.	AGM checklist for RS and document on key LSP points for TC's AGM presentation	AL

The Chair opened the meeting by asking attendees to pay their respects to our late colleague Robert Paice with a short silence.

RS welcomed JS as a new colleague and welcomed AL back from sick leave.

1. Minutes of the joint Stronger Together Consortium/Forum Committee Meeting, 16th March 2009

These were approved by the committee

2. Matters arising not already on this agenda

a. Fora Chair meeting to evaluate ST progress

During a conversation with SM, Robert Paice had suggested that an evaluation of the Stronger Together programme, with a focus on the difference made by having designated co-ordinators, be carried out. An informal meeting of the 4 fora chairs will discuss this issue.

b. Statutory Sector Survey Analysis

AL reported back on the Statutory Sector Survey, where 14 responses were received, representing 35% of the surveys distributed. She highlighted the key points as being:

Q2 - There was a growing knowledge of the VCS, but there is need for continuous improvement.

Q3 - Respondents were confused as to the components of ST.

Q4 - The majority of respondents deemed the quality of service provided by the VCS to be good, although there is room for improvement.

A discussion followed in which the following points were raised:

- ST needs to simplify its message and sell its benefits. This could be done with more regular mailings

- There is still confusion about how RVA/ST/The Forum fit together. This could be countered by distributing and reiterating the 'map' of the ST consortium
- ST could offer a series of 'quick wins' or 'winning messages' to raise interest and engage with new groups. The example given was Rivas's training bursary as a means to engage with the VCS
- Breaking the 'too busy' cycle by which statutory partners feel that they do not have time to engage with the VCS
- Target key groups within the statutory sector that we want to influence
- Write a paper similar to the RFTRA 'outcomes budget' by which we put a price on the services the VCS provides (Alan Magness has already written a similar document for his LSP work)
- Establishing what is the 'hourly cost' of volunteering

Q5 - This comes under the general 'room for improvement' results of the report.

Q6 - Transferring knowledge of Forum representation still requires significant work.

Q7 & Q8 - Forum Voice roles will be developed through training. There is a course on facilitation skills scheduled for the Voices soon.

Q9 - 55% of respondents said that they would be willing to improve information sharing.

Q10 - Sharing information between statutory services and the VCS will be made easier with the launch of the new ST websites. SM, PB and RS suggested that The Forum need to meet now with councilors and engage with them before the new budget-making cycle.

Q11 - With regards to other opportunities for engagement with statutory services, it was suggested that the ST chairs and other interested parties (Steve Masters expressed an interest and TC suggested Lorraine Jocelyn of Rehab) to meet to discuss which statutory partnerships should have Forum Voice representation.

3. ST Committee Vacancy - RVA representation

RVA are unable to forward another trustee at this time, but the issue will be discussed again in the future. RS suggested that JS should attend these meetings in the meantime.

4. Stronger Together Programme Manager's Report

a. In the Yr 2 Q1 events, 'Greening Faiths' was a well-attended and successful event, which generated tangible outcomes.

The Forum Voice report forms have been revised so that both the report and expenses claim can be recorded on one form. These are already working well.

b. Upcoming events are the RCVYS and Forum AGMs (including rep elections) and the 'Hearing Voices' event. At the time of the meeting it was not known whether the Sakoma constitution consultation would go ahead, but work has started on the Sakoma AGM.

c. A training course of facilitation skills will be provided for the Forum Voices

5. Financial Report

No accounts are available as yet for Y2 Q1. There is a £25k underspend. RS asked the committee to endorse a change of grant form request so that this underspend may be rolled on to Y4 (either directly or year-on-year). Year 2 finances are proceeding as anticipated.

Part 2: The Forum and Wider Network

6. Forum Development Consultancy Project

AL highlighted the key recommendations from the Forum Consultancy Project:

a. Improved Communication and Promotion

It was suggested that this could be addressed using a 'Forum e-bulletin' or a series of link news emails similar to those produced by RCVYS. PR initiatives should also encompass the statutory sector, although our main focus is always the VCS.

b. Increasing access to the Forum and Stronger Together Partners: mapping touch points

PB asked that the consultant provide more information on what sort of mapping might be required and for which organizations.

c. Development of the Representative Voice role

Improvements will be made in 2-way communication through the ST newsletter, Voice reports etc.

Statutory partners need to be engaged at more than one annual 'showcasing' event. PB asked if the consultant could clarify who they

had identified as organisations with which The Forum could share best practice.

There was a query as to what was meant by “the Forum needs to vindicate representatives voted on by RCVYS” and where this idea may have come from.

d. Increasing Membership/commitment

There was a discussion on the breadth of membership of The Forum and it was decided that the current constitution should remain unchanged.

7. Forum AGM

a. Programme was approved with the addition of a review of last year’s priorities and timeline activities within the Chair’s report

b. Annual report approved

c. There are three Forum Committee vacancies, with two current candidates and the option of taking nominations from the floor at the AGM

d. There are candidates for all of the Forum Voice vacancies

8. Issues from wider networks

RBC has initiated a new ‘Climate Change Partnership’ which includes GREN

9. NI 7 Update

AL presented a short survey to be used to provide a more accurate picture of the local VCS and assess if groups are being provided with what they need. AL asked for any comments by 16.7.09.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Please note the change of time for the next meeting.

Monday 14th June 2009, 10 - 1 pm (lunch at 12.00), venue to be announced

The meeting ended at 6.30pm.