

Name of meeting/event	Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA) Exploring the voluntary sector role in key policies
Date & time of meeting	Wednesday 15 July, 10am- 12pm
Organised by	Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)
Chairman/Facilitator	Steve Phaure, CEO, CVA
Minute taker	Sarah Burns, Head of Communities (shared), CVA
Venue	CVA Resource Centre, 82 London Road. CR0 2TB

Attendance: Please see attached document for the full list of attendees:

#croydonVA #CVSA

Steve Phaure welcomed and introduced the meeting.

Digital Inclusion

Cllr Mark Watson, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety & Justice, spoke about the growth of the internet and how commercial services, such as utilities, are now operating online. Those who are not online are missing out on services and lower rates. Cllr Watson spoke about how the internet can support a sense of social connection through online communication tools such as Skype.

Croydon Council needs to save £100 million in the next 3 years and online services save the council money. Therefore, digital inclusion is important. People need to have the skills, connectivity to the internet and accessibility. Croydon Council has 93,000 people signed up to the Croydon app. 'My Account'. The Croydon app. makes it easier for people to report issues to the council, for example, there is a noise app. that can record the level of noise considered to be a nuisance.

For the full presentation see the following link:

<http://www.cvalive.org.uk/cvalive/assets/documents/cvsa-digital-inclusion-present>

Q&A

Q I attended a Purley and Coulsdon group who expressed an interest in starting up a 'digital inclusion' group, is there are support/funding for this?

A Up to £5k available from the Active Community Fund and there is often support from business.

Q Peter Cox, Croydon Communities Against Trafficking and Trustee of Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association. Agree that digital is important to everyone but it does not replace human contact.

Q Joseph Media, our research and experience is that people need support to learn to understand their devices. Most have phones but don't know how to use them.

Q Robert Elston, Status Employment, it's interesting how many people are engaging with the council's app. It would be good if the council started to think about the groups that could most benefit and design useful apps with them e.g. in Gloucester there is a disabled people looking for employment app.

A There is good practice out there so let's adopt it. Tech City involved, possible pro-bono work with communities.

Social Value in Commissioning

Sarah Ireland, Director of Strategy, Communities and Commissioning spoke on the commissioning intentions for the VCS. Croydon's current administration is the only administration in the country to include social value in their manifesto. The strategic context of the Croydon Challenge is liveability, independence and growth. The strategic commissioning framework is 'cost or buy'.

For the full presentation see the following link:

<http://www.cvalive.org.uk/cvalive/assets/documents/cvsa-commissioning-presentatio-2>

Q&A

Q How and when can people access information and grants?

A It's on the council's website but if you give us your contact details we'll send you the link; www.croydon.gov.uk/thirdsector.

Q Guy Pile Grey, CVA Trustee. Will the council be gifting equipment to the voluntary sector? Smaller groups are often in need of equipment.

A What support do you need? We can talk to our suppliers. The council will always have big suppliers as they provide value for money. Small and medium sized organisations can make the most through supply chains. The principles are to be applied to the VCS. European funding should bring changes to the VCS.

Sarah Ireland agreed to come back to CVSA in September.

Gateway services involving the voluntary sector

Mark Fowler, Director of Gateway & Welfare, LB Croydon, stated that 16,000 Croydon residents have been affected by changes to welfare support with between £50- £480 loss of benefit per week. Of the 16,000, Gateway services have helped over 5,000 households with an action plan to a sustainable way forward. Further welfare reforms are on the horizon. What information and advice is available? An effective referral process to the VCS will be needed.

For the full presentation see the following link:

<http://www.cvalive.org.uk/cvalive/assets/documents/cvsa-commissioning-presentatio>

Gateway third sector referral form:

<http://www.cvalive.org.uk/cvalive/assets/documents/gateway-third-sector-referral>

Q & A

Q Over the last 9 months there has been lots of ineffective communication, sometimes the intent is good but it transpires as lip service. Information is not accessible enough.

A The council is organising itself differently. It's a big cultural journey as council officers have to support people with options. It changes the way people feel about delivering services. 16,000 households have £8 million less welfare support.

Q It's important that people make use of their local Councillors. Social interaction is crucial.

Q Universal credit is a time bomb!

Q Can we have information on the referral process please?

Growth and Regeneration

Matthew McMillan, Resources Department, LB Croydon, on Town Centre Developments. We are experiencing the highest take up of commercial space. The council is investing £50 million into the public realm. The council is investing in green businesses and creating 700 jobs. 'Boxpark' was recently launched in Shoreditch and a similar initiative is proposed for Ruskin Square. There will be 80 units in Croydon, 80 new businesses, 240 new jobs. The council is looking for a pop up space on London Road. Davis House will be part of the new development as, of course, will the Westfield/Hammersmith scheme. Croydon's town centre will remain open throughout the development. College Green, around Fairfield Halls, will be improved to be a world class space. What was 'Taberner House' will make space for 420 affordable homes build by the council's own development company. There's lots of development and it's about making it work for local people.

For the full presentation see the following link:

<http://www.cvalive.org.uk/cvalive/assets/documents/cvsa-croydon-town-centre-plann>

Q&A

Q Shops/rates are different in Croydon. What's in place to manage the risk to local business?

A The development is estimated to bring in an extra £10 million to Croydon. We're not anticipating that people will be priced out but that the development will support current business with a larger customer base.

Q What about green spaces, sports and youth facilities?

A There will be 28 new public spaces.

Q What's your definition of affordable housing?

A It's 80% of market value, the average home is currently £260k. Our focus is to keep it affordable. Build more homes, quicker and better.

Q How can we ensure the VCS is included? How will VCS link in?

A There is a job brokerage service. Developers need to give a proportion of jobs to local people.

Q When buying in activities and sports for children and young people, will they be involved?
Croydon has a strong children and young people sector with a wealth of experience.

A We will pursue this with Sarah Ireland's team.

Q When will you arrange this service provision? When can we expect information on commissioning?

A It's at an early stage at the moment with a target of most of the work to in place by 2021. It is at least 12 months before the procurement process will start.

Q Will this development impact on more deprived areas?

A The pilot is central but the same model will be replicated in local hubs, such as Thornton Heath.

Q Was the table tennis in The Whitgift Centre a council initiative?

A It is a Sports England and Leisure Services initiative but we're looking to adopt lots of initiatives such as pop up cinema on roof tops. Croydon will be more lively and for everyone.

Business items

European Social Investment Funding Steve Phaure is in the final stages of completing a partnership ESIF application and invited those who have not yet declared an interest in being a partner to speak with him at the end of the meeting.

Elections CVSA holds elections every 2 years to democratically select VCS representatives onto Croydon's key strategic partnerships. CVSA elections are to be held this September/October and the confirmed strategic representative positions are as follows:

8 x VCS reps.- Stronger Communities Partnership

2 x VCS reps.- Health & Wellbeing Board

1 x VCS rep.- Safer Communities Partnership

Next meeting: TBC