**Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance**

Thursday 31st March 2022 10:00- 12:00

Online

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| **Welcome and introductions:** Steve Phaure, CVA’s CEO introduced the event  The CVSA has been having conversations about partnership working for the last two years, exploring how we can work with young people, families and residents to do what is best for our community and how we can make the most of our assets by maintaining the fantastic work that the Voluntary Sector has done during COVID to address mental health and food poverty.  When the new Mayor of Croydon comes into post, how can the Voluntary Sector continue to deliver services that are so preventative and contribute to solve the challenges the Mayor will encounter?  This will not be a Hustings but an opportunity for VS groups to discuss the content of the Manifesto, which will be brought to the new Mayor when elected. |
| **Discussion:**  **Q – Croydon Voluntary Action -** Is it possible to have an agenda of growth for the voluntary sector rather than one of campaigning against cuts, year after year? We would like to explore this today with two of the candidates: Val Shawcross and Jason Peery.  **Q** **– Age UK Croydon –** What does the Mayor of Croydon do to make sure that Council officers always apply full cost recovery to funding and do not dictate how delivery should look like?  **Q** **- Croydon Neighbourhood Watch -** The VS is expected to look for funding opportunities but is constantly delivering and lacks the time; the Localities model gives the scope for Croydon Voluntary Action and the Council to approach businesses for us.  **VS** – The Council can do several things, despite the economic limitations it is experiencing:   * Using CVA expertise for training on fundraising * Bid itself for funding * Provide funding for CVA to support groups in setting up trading arms * Support, with CVA, joint procurement * Call out the local business community to donate into funds that could potentially be managed through Localities * Ask the Planning department to review the Section 106 offer, which is not clear at the moment   With regards to the point of full cost recovery, there is a need for training for the Council’s leadership on how to work with the voluntary sector and we could help with that.  **JP** – A true partnership approach will make the difference. We can support the voluntary sector, with Council officers, to write bids.  A discussion is needed on what resources there are, what we want to deliver and we can move forward. It’s all down to proper partnership work, that is cost effective and flexible. I am interested in:   * Early intervention rather than crisis provision * Empowering the Voluntary Sector by using community assets, assisting with external fundraising, seconding in, joint commissioning with the community. It is time for an enormous resetting and for the Council to work with humility and recognise professionalism in the community. * Using the Localities model |
| **Q – Communities First Foundation –** There is a real lack of usable space for community groups across the borough, that is consistently brought up as a barrier by small grassroots organisations. A building in New Addington used by a boxing club has recently been shut. We need to look at long leases. We need candidates to sit down with CVA to look at community assets with CVA, end a culture of closure and lack of consultation.  **Q – Croydon Voluntary Action -** Even for larger voluntary sector organisations, leases are not agreed/renewed/provided on paper or signed. This is blocking them from applying for funding to funders like Viridor Credits, that we hosted in a Meet the Funder event last month.  **Q – Croydon Drop In –** The Council has assets and resources through Section 106; it needs to stand back and elaborate that clear issue of sustainability in an Asset transfer model that is accessible for everyone. They can look at the NCVO sustainability model and work in partnership with the sector to achieve it.  **Q –** **Friends of Selhurst Park** **–** Green spaces are a valuable community asset and needs funding.  **VS –** I understand it is easier for larger organisations to obtain a lease and manage it. We can look at creating a Community Assets Trust that can give legal and technical support to small groups wanting to run a community building.  **JP –** I support the management of assets by the voluntary sector and appreciate the case of the boxing club building that was closed as there was no real consultation. |
| **Mental Health provision in Croydon - discussion**  **Mind in Croydon** – Philippa Thompson talked also on behalf of the recently formed Mental Health Alliance. We have an extremely vibrant and knowledgeable voluntary sector in Croydon but the pandemic has drastically increased loneliness, social isolation, bereavement, complex long term conditions, resulting into a mental health crisis. Demand for advocacy at Mind in Croydon has tripled in the last 2 years. Mind in Croydon has opened, in collaboration with the BME Forum and working in an integrated way with primary and secondary care, a shop at the Whitgift Centre that provides open access to mental health support to any resident in Croydon. This is an example of the value of the Voluntary Sector: we provide early intervention and preventative approaches in local communities.  We are also resourceful and flexible: an example is the Mental Health Alliance, which was created by local Mental Health VS providers wanting to make a difference and bring residents’ voice into systems/processes. We are made up of 20 groups at present and are focusing on area of need to share resources as well as best practice and hopefully have a say on how funding is allocated. One of such areas is the transition phase into adulthood for young people turning 18.  **JP** – The knowledge is in the community and we need to work together.  **VS** – I appreciate the role of the Voluntary Sector and how it has been coherent and had taken a strategic approach when looking at early intervention for young people. Would like to see more Health and Well Being Centres in other areas of Croydon, that are open to all, like yours. Including in mosques and other trusted environments.  **Q -Croydon Drop In –** 16+ is an important age for young people becoming adults. The Council has to release resources, we know where the problems are and referrals are up at unprecedented levels. You have to help us unlock resources.  **St.Christophers -** Fantastic working going on in Croydon. So important we invest in the young to support them going forward and help prevent crisis care.  **Croydon Neighbourhood Watch -** Strongly support better funding for Drop In and Citizens Advice Bureau. All our work depends on our potential recipients and their advisers (doctors, social workers, etc) knowing what is on offer. Part of this also is better communication through the media --- and a prime example is improving the very poor council website, near impossible to use. |
| **Advice Services - discussion**  **Q – Citizen’s Advice Bureau –** There is a cost of living crisis across the country at present. Households were already under pressure before the big energy price increase was coming into play and only 20% of UK adults are stating they are prepared to deal with rising costs. CAB has been going for 82 years in Croydon and has always been a crisis service, working with the least resilient residents. However, we have seen a massive increase in support requested (for example, a 57% increase in people needing support with utilities) in the last year. The Advice sector is under huge strain in the borough and is way too small for Croydon’s demographics and needs, particularly now that crucial welfare advice services like the Gateway team have been closed at the Council.  **JP -** The Voluntary Sector is delivering amazing services to the community. The solution is in partnership working and looking at providing funding in a different way. The Council should not add to the burden of VS.  **VS –** We are seeing levels of poverty that did not exist 10 years ago. The rise in the cost of living will create a tsunami of desperation. We will have to work together and support Food banks as well as the advice sector. Croydon needs big advocacy with the Central Government. We are structurally underfunded.  **Mind in Croydon -** Thanks Claire for highlighting the clear and evidenced links between poverty, isolation and deprivation and mental health. This expresses exactly why we need to ensure that the funding imbalance in healthcare funding is urgently addressed at ICS level. Val is right to identify structural underfunding over decades.  [**Croydon Covid-19 Mutual Aid**](javascript:co(%22org%22,%20%2245848%22,%20%22%22,%20%22%22)) **-** Levelling up should start with the poorest and fairer funding should be in every part of the country.  [**Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association**](javascript:co(%22org%22,%20%229504%22,%20%22%22,%20%22%22)) **-** There is a clear divide between North and South of the Borough. There is a higher level of deprivation north of the Borough, not least amongst older people, who have suffered from reduction and withdrawal of services. What plans do the candidates have to bridge this gap for older people?  [**Old Lodge Lane Baptist Church**](javascript:co(%22org%22,%20%2229973%22,%20%22%22,%20%22%22)) – There is a high level of deprivation in the south of the Borough which often gets overlooked because of the myth that the South is ok and well off, which is not true.  We are working with very high levels of deprivation on a weekly basis in 'leafy suburb' Purley and Kenley.  **Mind in Croydon –** Agree, we are in conversation with healthcare funders about extending our Mental Health and Wellbeing Space into the south of the Borough. Let's stay in touch.  **Croydon Voluntary Action –** There is money in the local system that can be used differently. We need to shift resources to the Voluntary Sector and we need a strategy of growth/investment locally on all those themes.  **Mohammed Mir -** We need to reduce the clear gap there is between the community and the Council. Councillors need to continuously connect to their residents, not only during election times.  **Q –** [**Croydon Covid-19 Mutual Aid**](javascript:co(%22org%22,%20%2245848%22,%20%22%22,%20%22%22)) **–** How do candidates plan to make sure that funding is allocated to Croydon from the Central Government in fairer way?  **Q – Edwina Morris -** How do candidates would go about rebalancing the health budget allocation across SWL, given that the other SWL boroughs are over their allocation share and Croydon is below ours?  **VS -**We need to do it all together; sing from the same book.  **JP –** The new Mayor needs to take the challenge to the Government. |
| **Localities’ agenda: Sarah Burns, Director of Communities**  CVA has been bringing together since November 2021 a range of stakeholders to harness the community’s energy we have seen during the pandemic and recognise expertise in the 6 Croydon Localities. Six Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) have been created to work in partnership, be part of the solution, develop and act on a local Community Plan.  We have had 35 events, with CVA and Croydon Council co-chairing. These events are balanced by the work of Community Builders, who work on the ground and speak with residents on the margins, who cannot attend the sessions to input.  We have had 318 unique VS groups attending and 444 members of staff from the Council, Public Health, the Police, schools and residents.  We have started in each Locality by creating connections and looking at what each area had in place. We now want to look for opportunities to influence longer term funding and commissioning. Our communities are keen to work in partnership and see tangible actions to their proposals.  We are now wanting to see more local ownership and are looking for local leaders in each area to chair/co-chair the LCPs. We have recently appointed two chairs for Croydon North East and Magdalene Adenaike (Music Relief) is here with us to talk about their vision for the area.  **Music Relief** – Nicole Godez and I have been elected as co-chairs for Croydon North East. We are keen for the LCP not to be a talking shop and to speak for the residents, who have the expertise to prevent and be pro-active in raising to local challenges and opportunities. We chose three key priority themes for the area: Later Life, Mental Health and Young People and are organising sub-committees for each one of them.  **VS –** This type of local networking makes people more resilient and is a great opportunity for Councillors to hear from residents and community organisations. I support a growth of local democracy.  **JP –** I agree. The needs will be different in different localities and it is important that the community drives the agenda. The Localities model needs to go into the Council’s constitution. |
| **Young People - discussion**  **Anthony King** – It’s paramount that the new Mayor looks at the great work done in the Voluntary Sector for local families on low income and young people. Family poverty will impact young people’s choices; when a mother of 4 is working 3 jobs just to feed her family and pay the bills, her teenage children will look at criminality to buy what they cannot afford.  We need commitment that there will be investment in the Voluntary Sector. The impact of funding cuts to groups like Legacy Youth Zone is severe.  We need a grassroots approach; I would advice the new Mayor to have someone from the community sitting in advisory capacity in their team.  **Floating Counselling –** As a counselling agency we have found ourselves having to support families with their basic needs before we can even touch on their emotional well being. Our clients are struggling to pay their household bills and have to decide between heating and food, particularly the elderly. You need to support these families as this escalates into crime.  **VS –** It is about anti poverty work, we need to mobilise resources to schools, re-commission Legacy, listen to young people themselves and make sure the Council receives advice that is relevant.  **JP –** It comes back to partnership working at grassroots level, where the knowledge is. We need to tackle the exclusion pipeline, look at mentoring for young people. I am looking at setting up Mayoral advice to have the community at the decision making table.  **Q -** [**Residents Scrutiny Panel (New Addington and Fieldway)**](javascript:co(%22org%22,%20%2210364%22,%20%22%22,%20%22%22)) **–** When can elderly people expect their Blue travelcards to return to Orange travelcard. The Orange one was created during COVID and limits residents on when they can travel. I also wants to mention that I sit on different residents panels and we are not treated with respect.  **VS –** Will come back to you on this one Marlyn, I have to check. I really appreciate respect is central to our relationship.  **JP –** I will also have to check Marlyn. Thank you everyone for your time, great learning experience today.  **Croydon Voluntary Action –** Thanks everyone, we will continue these conversations through our Manifesto.  **Close** |