

## Harrow Strategic Partnership

### Compact Monitoring Form

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Agency: Voluntary and Community  
Sector Forum

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Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008

#### Details of monitoring issue:

I attended the Grants Advisory Panel meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2008 as interim Voluntary and Community Sector Representative. There were a number of serious concerns which I tried to raise but felt that they were not properly considered and taken into account in the decision making process.

Towards the end of the meeting, after all the officer's recommendations had been discussed, the Chair asked if they could go through the "other items". There was a brief discussion and the Chair said "as it's quite late I'll get straight to the point – I would like to recommend that the Girl Guiding group gets £4,000 and the same for KSIM" These two applications had been ruled out by officers as they did not meet the criteria. The legal advisor was asked for clarification and said that

- a) in relation to a decision being made on the night, if they wanted to make changes to the published criteria they would need to show that they had been fair, transparent and a process had been gone through. There would need to be consultation with the voluntary sector and the decision would need to take account of the Compact.
- b) for a change outside the meeting, they would need to be clear and take account of organisations that may have been excluded from applying by the criteria and they may be open to complaint or a legal challenge by other groups.

Another member argued that other groups may have applied if they knew the criteria would not be adhered to. The Chair advised that the council are big enough and strong enough to fight off any challenge. There was lengthy discussion about this issue and **I advised** that the integrity of the panel and their ability to apply their own rules may be brought into question if they decided to arbitrarily change the criteria in order to include particular groups.

Another member stated that they felt it was fair and could be defended.

I advised that it was not my understanding of the concept of fairness to arbitrarily change the criteria to include specific groups. The Chair also stated that she didn't think the council could treat these two groups differently from each other so both should get the same.

The Chair circulated copies of a letter from Girlguiding Middlesex North West to all Members (except me) and read out an appeal letter from K.S.I.M Senior Citizen Association and said the council are not frightened of a legal challenge as they had funded these groups before and asked to agree £4,000 each.

The proposal was agreed unanimously on a vote.

I asked if this was now an appeals procedure.

These two groups were recommended for £8,000 funding in total by members who had not seen or considered their applications or any Officer's reports.

This related to Appendix 5 – groups which were not eligible for funding. Appendix 4 was not discussed at all – groups which were eligible but Officers had not recommended for funding.

The Chair asked the legal advisor to come up with a form of words to allow them to make exceptions to the criteria, she is happy with the 80% rule "as long as there's a little get out".

1. This breaches Statutory Sector action point 3 “to ensure fair and equitable guidelines for all members of the panel to follow”
2. This breaches one of the main aims of the Compact “The main aims of the Harrow Compact are to build on existing partnerships and develop the relationship between the sectors through mutual respect and trust so that they can together provide more effective services to local people and communities within the borough.”
3. This breaches one of the main Objectives of the Compact “Ensure equitable access to resources”
4. This breaches one of the main Principles of the Compact “We agree that genuine partnerships across the sectors require integrity, objectivity, understanding, accountability, openness, honesty and collaboration and a recognition of the equal value of their respective contribution.”

There was a discussion about the Afghan Association of London (Harrow) application and whether their members were in Harrow or London. One member argued that the council could get a copy of their database to check. I advised that this would breach Data protection and Confidentiality rules. The Chair argued and legal advisor confirmed that it would be OK for someone to go to the organisation and look at their database without taking any information from it.

5. This breaches Statutory Sector action point 5 Respect the independence of the sector

Harrow Somali Women’s Action Group- one member commented that they had tried to “get them all under one group” and the Chair advised that they had “done well at this”. The grant recommendation was approved.

6. This breaches Statutory Sector action point 5 Respect the independence of the sector

Persian Senior Citizen Club – There was a discussion about whether they serve the same people as the Harrow Iranian Community Association. The Chair advised that “this must be an older group as they use the old name – Persia”. The Chair recommended that they should ask if they could “marry up”. The grant recommendation was reduced from £2,000 to £500 (restoration of the 10% cut last year but no inflation).

7. This breaches Statutory Sector action point 5 Respect the independence of the sector

At the beginning of the meeting I didn’t know whether I should be declaring a personal or prejudicial interest as I wasn’t there to make subjective judgements on individual applications. I felt that the Chair was bullying me into deciding without any advice on the matter. The legal advisor couldn’t direct me but explained the principle which didn’t really clarify things for me and I was told by the Chair that I was “lucky to have advice”. I declined to commit without further clarification but agreed to leave the room when Link Up’s application was being discussed (which I would have done anyway of course). The Chair did say part way through the meeting that the previous VCS rep had been very helpful in commenting on individual applications.

8. This breaches Statutory Sector action point 3 “to ensure fair and equitable guidelines for all members of the panel to follow”
9. This breaches one of the main aims of the Compact “The main aims of the Harrow Compact are to build on existing partnerships and develop the relationship between the sectors through mutual respect and trust so that they can together provide more effective services to local people and communities within the borough.”

If applicable, specify which compact "code(s)" are affected? Overall Code and Funding Code
Supporting documents attached: <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / No
Details: Grants Advisory Panel meeting 5 <sup>th</sup> March 2008 papers pack
<u>Please return form to:</u> The Compact Monitoring Steering Group C/O HAVS The Lodge 64 Pinner Road Harrow HA1 4HZ