

Looking OUT!

'Contributing to One Camden'

Volume: 1 Issue: 3 July - Sep 2006

Third Sector Review Looks at Community Cohesion & Building a Voice for Citizens

The 'Review of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration', which was announced in May 2006, dovetails with the creation of the Office of the Third Sector (based in the Cabinet Office) and will be chaired by Ed Miliband MP (the Third Sector Minister). Distinct from previous efforts, the 'Third Sector Review' will take a wide-ranging looking at the sector and focus on its achievements, funding, relationships with Government and future needs. It will also cover six thematic areas: community cohesion & building a voice for citizens, partnership working to deliver a shared agenda, promoting innovation & enterprise, creating a culture of volunteering & mentoring, future role of the sector in delivering public services and creating a sustainable resource base.

The community cohesion & building a voice for citizens theme focuses on ways to empower diverse communities in decision making and how best to support the sector to reflect the communities it serves. It also focuses on skills development in the sector and the structures needed to support this. The theme will explore ways to promote wide-ranging community participation and how the sector can support this. It will also explore the involvement of faith communities, how to ensure other diverse communities (including black & minority ethnics) are properly represented in the VCS and look at diversity within the context of community cohesion.

Presently, the review is in its consultation stage and is looking to gain a wide range of responses on the above issues, as well as those relating to the five other themes. As part of this a number of consultation events will be taking place including one in London on 18 September 2006. Responses to the consultation will be published in November 2006 and will feed directly into the full review.

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Looking OUT!

Editor Team
Monica Olusola

Looking OUT! is a publication of the
Camden BME Alliance

Enquires to:
Camden BME Alliance
44 Hampstead Road
London NW1 2PY
Tel: 020 7388 6030
Fax: 020 7388 6040
Email: info@cbmea.org.uk
www.camdebmealliance.org.uk

An opportunity knocks

Potentially, the Third Sector Review creates a huge opportunity for Camden's voluntary & community sector. The thematic nature of the review will help ensure that a wide range of areas such as community cohesion & community empowerment are given appropriate focus and attention. As such, the sector is encouraged to contribute enthusiastically to this process. But what will it deliver in the end? Hopefully, it will deliver a new strategic approach to supporting the development of the sector (at least at national level). Ideally, this will be backed up with a hard-edged commitment to restructure the funding framework supporting the voluntary & community sector as well additional resources to strengthen capacity. At last, the promise of a new beginning... or will it be another false dawn?

A window into the future

The sign off of Camden's local area agreement (LAA) is a significant milestone for the borough of Camden and its various voluntary & community, statutory and public sector organisations. Get used to it, every indication is that LAA is the means through which Government proposes to manage local public service delivery and test how effective partners are at improving the well being of people living in their areas. For voluntary and community groups, the LAA framework provides us an open window to see what the future will look like, in terms of opportunities for greater partnership working, whilst at the same time being subject to more intense scrutiny and accountability. In future years we expect to see a wide range of funding streams pooled into the LAA framework, with voluntary and community sector providers required to demonstrate how they meet LAA objectives. What we know, we can prepare for.

A call for clarity

In his feature article on the neighbourhoods agenda in Camden, CBMEA member Lincoln Lim notes that the borough has seized the opportunity to make early running on the neighbourhoods agenda. However, it is not altogether clear how Camden proposes to develop this agenda locally. Meanwhile, local communities and the voluntary and community organisations providing services to them see these new arrangements being put in place, without a clear sense of what it all means for them. Not quite a recipe for confusion, but neither does it inspire confidence. Of course it is important that the neighbourhoods agenda is successful in Camden, however, this success will to a large extent depend on providing greater clarity on the direction and scope of this agenda.

PEOPLE in the NEWS

Mayor Leads Tributes as Camden Remembers

One year on from the 7/7 London bombings, Camden's Mayor, Jill Fraser, led a short ceremony in Russell Square Gardens. The Mayor, who was joined by Council representatives as well as faith and community leaders, paid tribute to those who lost their lives in the bombings and underlined the need for Camden to stand united and strong against such acts.

All Change in Whitehall

Significant changes have taken place at Central Government level as they affect the communities and voluntary & community sector agendas. Following the abolition of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Ruth Kelly has been appointed Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Meanwhile, Phil Woolas is the new Minister in charge of Community Cohesion. Elsewhere, a new Office of the Third Sector has been created in the Cabinet Office. The new Third Sector Minister is Ed Miliband.

... and All Change in Camden

In the first full Council meeting, following the recent local elections, Councillor Keith Moffitt (Liberal Democrat) was voted Leader of Camden Council and Councillor Andrew Marshall (Conservative) was voted Deputy Leader. Councillor Marshall will oversee the Equalities and Community Development agenda as Executive Member.

CBMEA Director Becomes LSP Representative

CBMEA is now one of the four Community Empowerment Network representatives sitting on Camden's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). CBMEA sits on the LSP in its capacity as an Executive Board member of the Community Empowerment Network. Monica Olusola, CBMEA Director, is the officer representative. This key role provides a unique opportunity for CBMEA to make a significant contribution to the development of stronger communities in Camden.

Neighbourhood Maze

CBMEA Member Lincoln Lim offers a reality check on the neighbourhoods agenda

So here we are. The neighbourhoods agenda is well and truly upon us. Government has spoken and Camden has responded, setting up neighbourhood partnerships and supporting these partnerships with (not insignificant) funding. Is this the way of things to come? If so, what does this mean in terms of service delivery? Is each partnership going to be devolved its own neighbourhood budget? If so, what does this mean for small community groups who operate on a pan-borough basis (in a wide-range of neighbourhoods)? Will we be required to make multiple applications for funding or just one? Perhaps most puzzling of all, how does all this link into the local area agreement agenda?

So many questions but so few clear answers. And that's the problem. The neighbourhoods agenda has developed with little clarity as to how a broad range of potentially tricky issues are to be resolved. Lacking too is a systematic step-by-step approach explaining, what is happening now, what will happen in the future and what the implications will be.

This is not to say that the notion of empowering communities and neighbourhoods to have a greater say in setting the priorities, budgets and determining who provides services in their areas is anything but a good idea. Rather the issue is making sure that both objectives and intentions are communicated more clearly. For example, what role does the Council propose to play in the new set up - an arbiter, regulator, benevolent auntie/uncle? Clarity on issues such as this enables voluntary and community organisations to begin to engage the debate in a more meaningful way.

As a service provider to a pan-borough minority ethnic community, I am concerned that, unless there is greater transparency, my organisation's ability to provide seamless services could actually be undermined by the neighbourhood agenda. The effect of course being that neighbourhoods will make it harder, not easier and create exclusion and confusion, when it should increase opportunity and clarity.

These may appear to be relatively minor points of detail to both Whitehall and the Town Hall, yet they have major implications for local communities and the various voluntary and community groups serving them. It's time to unravel the neighbourhood maze.

Much Stronger

CBMEA Director Monica Olusola profiles the VCS role in LAA development

It is easy to argue that the most meaningful contribution that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can make to the local area agreement (LAA), is through the stronger sub-strand and outcomes such as promoting social cohesion, community involvement and empowerment. True, the sector can indeed make a huge contribution towards these outcomes, however, our contribution is much bigger than this.

In reality, a stronger community is one that promotes the health of its population & safeguards the well being of older people and increases opportunity for economic development and enterprise. It is one where people feel safe & secure and where the life chances of children & young people are increased. In essence each of the other three LAA themes provide the building blocks for a stronger community. If this is indeed the way in which LAA should be viewed, then logically, the VCS contribution should also be integral to how these other outcomes are delivered as well.

It does not end there. In order to maximise the benefits of the LAA, we need to ensure that there is a clear "read through" between the various LAA blocks. We need to understand how increasing inter-generational activity between children & young people and older people can help to increase both understanding and respect. We also need to recognise how promoting a healthy working age population can help ensure that people are better able to benefit from the economic opportunities available to them. Similarly, we can make a significant contribution to a safer Camden when we increase life outcomes for children and young people living in the borough.

For the VCS, this is a logical not radical interpretation of what LAA should represent. Indeed it rightly shows that the VCS has a crucially important role to play as a policy developer, service planner and provider. With this in mind and to ensure the success of Camden's LAA, it is critical that the resources and energies of the sector are not focused purely on the stronger sub-strand as we have major contributions to make within and between all of the LAA priority themes.

FEATURED Promotions

Advertising in

Looking OUT!

CBMEA intends to develop a wide and dedicated readership for 'Looking OUT!'. The publication is being circulated across our membership as well as to our many partners. However, we anticipate that 'Looking OUT!' will be read by many more organisations and groups, both within and outside the borough.

CBMEA welcomes groups and organisations that would like to advertise or promote their activities in 'Looking OUT!'. There are no costs attached to this and requests will be dealt with on first come first served basis. However, specific preference will be given to CBMEA members and voluntary and community groups, based and operating in Camden.

Should you choose to promote or advertise in 'Looking OUT!' we would also ask that your promotion reflect the stated aims of this publication. Examples of the types of promotions or ads we would be willing to include are:

- Local events or forums taking place in the borough or requests for help in organising events
- Recruitment e.g. for volunteers and management committee representatives
- Relevant publications

For more information call: 020 7388 6030 or email: info@cbmea.org.uk

Upcoming Events

Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in the development of Camden's LAA: The way forward

Date: 20th August 2006

Time: 1:00pm - 4.30pm

Venue: Voluntary Action Camden

For more information: email dturnbul@lvac.org.uk

Third sector review: policy regional event

Date: 18 September 2006

Time: 11.00am - 4.00pm

Venue: TBC

Keynote Speaker: TBC

For more information:

vcs.rsvp@hm-treasury.gsi.gov.uk

Engaging young people in positive activities to promote community cohesion

Date: 19 September 2006

Time: 9.00am - 4.20pm

Venue: Barbican Centre, London EC2

Keynote Speakers: Dr Mark Verlot (Head of Public Policy, Commission for Racial Equality)

To register: 0845 056 8341

SIGNPOST



The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is a national umbrella organisation supporting the voluntary and community sector. In terms of its facilitation role, NCVO provides a wide range of services including: publications, events, and funding information. It also publishes a monthly magazine 'Voluntary Sector' (VS) which is available via subscription.

NCVO also plays a lead role on the national agenda. For example, it undertakes key research, supports campaigns and acts as policy champion for voluntary & community sector issues.

Details and information on these and others can be accessed via the NCVO website www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

CBMEA Quality Publications

CBMEA produces a number of quality publications including:

POLICY PROFILE - Our regular policy briefing

SPEAKI - Our opinion piece on topical issues

For more information contact us on:

Tel: 020 7388 6030

Fax: 020 7388 6040

Email: info@cbmea.org.uk

Website: www.camdebmealliance.org.uk