



## Agenda



### RedbridgeCVS

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### RedbridgeCVS is funded by



### MOPAC

Mayor's Office for  
Policing & Crime



### Wednesday 6 February 2012

#### RedbridgeCVS

5th Floor, Forest House,  
16-20 Clements Road, Ilford IG1 1BA

12.30pm: Lunch and light refreshments,  
Agenda starts at 1pm and finishes at 2.30pm

1. Introduction and apologies
2. Minutes of last meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Feedback from Voluntary Sector Representatives
5. Redbridge Conversation  
Deputy Council Leader Cllr Ian Bond on how to help communities have their say about the Council budget
6. Planning and Regeneration Core Strategy Review  
Matthew Maple on the Council's plans
7. Redbridge Council's Replacement for the Social Fund  
Paula Adams and Sharon Pingali explain the Council's system of emergency benefit payments
8. Future meetings of the Network  
Have your say on topics for future meetings
9. Any Other Business
10. Next meeting of the Network  
Wednesday 6 March 2013

#### Plus at 2.30 – Grant Funding Advice Session

Staff from the Lottery will be talking about their grant programmes, priorities, application processes and some of the common pitfalls that affect success.

# Minutes

## Minutes of Redbridge Voluntary Sector Network 5 December 2012

### 1. Present:

Nicolas Hurst	Frenford
Alan Banner	Redbridge Pensioners Forum
Angela Banner	Redbridge Pensioners Forum
S. A Granditer	Redbridge Pensioners Forum
Jagdev Purewal	Panjabi Centre
Rita Chadha	RAMFEL
Vera Hunt	Redbridge Voluntary Care
Avril Browne	RSCWO
John Browne	Scout Association
Kenzi Egeh	Somaliland Women and Youth Association
Kate Harrison	Run-Up
Diane Hackney	Run-Up
Colleen Hamilton	CAB
Peter Jones	LBR (Housing Services)
Stephanie O'Lewy	CHI
Nicola Towner	East Thames
Olakunie Siyanbula	Family Growth & Support Art
Fozia Hussain	Ubuntu Arts
Jessica Carrillo	London Community Foundation
Margaret James	Heart of Oak Judo Club
Pratab Gosai	Panjabi Centre
Kate Morale	London Community Foundation
Colin Wilson	RedbridgeCVS
Karolina Dylewska	RedbridgeCVS

### 2. Introduction and apologies

Colin Wilson, RedbridgeCVS, opened the meeting. Colin reminded everyone present that after the Network meeting there would be an opportunity to meet the London Community Foundation who fund voluntary organisations.

### 3. Apologies

Apologies were received from

Chris Wilson, Redbridge Pensioners Forum

Jackie Grieve, Redbridge Faith Forum

Ross Diamond, RedbridgeCVS

### 4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as correct.

### 5. Matters arising

Angela Banner raised a question regarding Scrutiny Meetings in January and February asking about dates and venues – Colin Wilson to check up on that and e-mail to Angela.

### 6. Feedback from Voluntary Sector Representatives

Nicolas Hurst brought attention to the timetable for buses running during the holiday period. He also said that TfL is doing a review of some bus routes and night services. The consultation period runs till 25th January at [tfl.gov.uk](http://tfl.gov.uk)

Colin reported that there were no external meetings to feed back from, but reported that the Council have noted the concerns from voluntary organisations in receipt of Council funding feeling that the monitoring regime was too demanding.

### 7. Welfare Rights Changes – presentation by Colleen Hamilton, CAB

#### Why change the benefit system?

- Costly (£12.6 billion for DLA alone in 2012/13)
- Complicated
- Disincentive to work
- Keeps people in poverty

#### The main features of the Welfare Reform Act 2012:

- Replacing six main benefits and tax credits for people of working age with Universal Credit (UC)
- Replacing some discretionary elements of the Social Fund with Local Welfare Assistance
- Replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with Personal Independence Payments (PIP) for people over 16
- Replacing Council Tax Benefit with Council Tax Support
- Introduction of a Welfare Benefits Cap

#### How Will Local Welfare Assistance Work in Redbridge?

- Council will operate some form of grant system
- These will NOT be loans and therefore not recoverable
- They are unsure of how it will be administered i.e. eligibility, how often someone can apply etc.

#### How Will Council Tax Support Work in Redbridge?

Presenter's understanding was that after consultation the London Borough of Redbridge decided to do the following over the next 2 years:

- Council Tax Support will be restricted to 95% of council

tax costs for properties in bands A B and C

- If they live in band D and above, claimants will only get 95% Council Tax Support for a band D property
- Non dependent reductions will increase from £5 to £15 per week
- The cap on capital will be £10,000 as opposed to £16,000 now
- There will be no second adult rebate
- No change for people of pension age (based on age for pension credit)

There will be a hardship fund of £200,000 for people who are struggling (this might continue after the first year). The criteria for the hardship fund will be similar to that for Discretionary Housing Payments.

The full CAB presentation is available on the RedbridgeCVS website.

Q: If there is automatic transfer how does it work out with DLA?

A: If you get DLA and you are under the age of 65 and you will get to 65 within the transfer period, then you can stay on DLA, but everyone else will go on PIP.

Q: The company that is rolling out the assessment is trying to do it over the phone. We have been warned to make sure our staff do not discuss anything over the phone. There is a worry about people thinking it is just a chat and not realizing the importance of the conversation.

A: All of the initial assessments are being done over the phone so they can filter out those who are not eligible or do not fit the criteria, etc. They will ask about your name, immigration status and those sort of basic details.

Q: Half of my service users cannot speak. How are they supposed to be assessed over the phone?

A: I do not know the answer to that, but when you go in person for an interview they will allow you to take somebody with you. I imagine they will allow somebody to act on your behalf.

Q: There was a case of someone being called for face-to-face interview. That took a lot of organising, calling the ambulance, carers, etc. At the meeting they would not let the carer into the meeting as they wanted to speak with the person face to face which was impossible. It would be so much easier to arrange home visits.

A: There will be some home visits, although there will be less of them. The expectation is for people to come and have face-to-face meetings.

Q: Some people will tell benefits staff that they can take care of themselves, but in reality they cannot do it without their carer. There is a massive worry they will lose out.

A: It is a massive worry as they may lose the whole of the benefit; it has not been clarified if you will lose the whole benefit if there is a problem with only one part of it.

Q: Under DLA you have a flat rate benefit regardless of the care you receive. Under PIP it seems that people in care homes may lose their benefit because they have someone looking after them.

A: It might be the case that if you have someone officially caring for you it will be ok.

Peter noted that in the presentation Local Welfare Assistance was mentioned. The arrangement to administer it will need to be in place by April. The Council was originally planning for three different Council offices to do the work, but have now decided to use a tendering process.

Colleen clarified that the discussion was around grants for people and that LBR is likely to make grants administered and monitored through a third party. Those are most likely going to be non-recoverable grants.

Colin Wilson asked Colleen that whether it is okay for groups and individuals to contact CAB about these issues?

Colleen explained that training of staff is very expensive, but they are looking into doing some more training for the voluntary sector in the New Year. Another option is to arrange training for more people.

Rita reminded everyone that there is also Redbridge Advice Forum – 2 hour meeting every month with short seminar and discussion.

## 8. Council Housing Allocation Policy – presentation by Peter Jones, Redbridge Council

#### Legal Background:

- Localism Act 2011 s.150 introduces requirement for Local Housing Authorities to prepare a Tenancy Strategy
- Tenancy Strategy to be published by 15 January 2013
- Strategy to be kept under review and modified from time to time

#### Policy Context:

- Enabling social housing to be offered to those most in need
- Assist in tackling overcrowding by reducing under occupation

#### Preparing the Tenancy Strategy:

Council is required to:

- Consult with tenants and other stakeholders
- Allow a reasonable period to comment – should be 12 weeks according to Redbridge Compact, but time constraints mean 8 weeks consultation

#### Flexible tenancies:

- Should be five years or more (in exceptional circumstances could be 2 years)
- Would only apply to new tenancies – does not affect existing tenants
- Need to decide on what level of under occupation would lead to non-renewal, also what levels of income would lead to non-renewal
- Ending flexible tenancy requires six months notice to be served, to coincide with end of fixed term
- Non renewal is not meant to cause homelessness – tenants to be signposted to private renting or

home ownership or offered smaller accommodation appropriate to needs

#### **Allocations Policy:**

- Local housing authority can stipulate new categories of qualifying and non-qualifying persons as long as consistent with Equality Act 2010
- Proposal for LBR to exclude all applicants who are not in housing need as defined by Reasonable Preference
- Exclude all out-of-borough temporary accommodation placements
- Introduce minimum two year residence requirement (except for those owed full statutory homeless duty)
- Introduce element of "Community Contribution" – priority for those fostering or adopting with support of children's services, armed forces personnel etc
- On line registration

#### **What the changes will mean in practice:**

- LBR retaining lifetime tenancies for present time
- Some Housing Associations adopting flexible tenancies – will need to monitor how they are operated in practice
- Profile of advertised properties will change – mix of lifetime tenancies and fixed term flexible tenancies
- Approximately 7000 households will be taken off the housing list – have no housing need as measured by Reasonable Preference, or have been resident in LBR for less than two years
- Move to Online registration will improve consistency, reduce fraud, free up staff time to focus on households in housing need

Q: Who are the people you have already fed this information to?

A: Everybody on the housing list.

Q: Including those in temporary accommodation?

A: Yes

Q: Does that not mean that you have pre-empted the outcome of the consultation?

A: No. We want to work up some proposals and what we want to achieve. We will take them to the cabinet and once agreed, go out and consult and then review the outcome of the consultation and take that back to the Cabinet.

I would be surprised if people said they want us to adopt a flexible tenancy and not a lifetime one, although a lot of Housing Associations are saying we should.

Everything that we put in that report is no secret and I have been briefing on it at various multi-agency forums for about 12 months, so there is no real surprise. In terms of the actual affected households, we are in contact with all of them and we will see what they say.

Q: Isn't the purpose of the strategy to increase housing stock?

A: It is separate issue in a way. The issue about affordable housing supply is a huge one in the borough. We have had a target for at least 500 new homes a year for the last 2 years. We have never managed to achieve it. There

is always an issue around the land in the borough – whenever there is a patch of the land available there are always arguments over whether there should be affordable houses or shops. We are trying to address those arguments and take them to Cabinet to argue at the political level. If we had more affordable housing in the borough that would ease a lot of the pressures.

Q: Over 65s who have lived in their houses for over forty years and now there is an underuse you are asking them to move?

A: Existing tenants are not going to be affected with the changes.

Q: Are these changes the same in all boroughs?

A: No, it is just Redbridge. Other boroughs are probably persuading tenants to move by finding a nice one bed, paying moving costs, paying to have gas and electric switched off and switched on, etc.

Q: Do you do transfers and exchanges?

A: We do. We call it a mutual exchange. We think we are going to see a lot more activity in that area. You can either apply on the council list for the tenancy to transfer, or you can bid for the properties that are available, or you can go on the mutual exchange website.

Q: Do you transfer the tenancy if the tenant dies?

A: That is called succession and at the moment you can have one succession. What tends to be an issue is when you want to have a second succession so we are looking at those on case-by-case basis.

## **9. Future meetings of the Network**

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Angela Banner requested an update on information on introducing the Local Policing Model and how is it working. Colin Wilson to ask Liz Pearce for feedback/presentation.

## **10. Next meeting of the Network**

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Wednesday 6 February 2013