Councillor David Perry in his capacity as Leader of Harrow Council and direct Portfolio responsibilities for Council Strategy and Partnerships commissioned this review in November 2015, to be carried out by Councillor Barry Kendler (Portfolio Holder Assistant for Transformation) in liaison with relevant Cabinet Members, senior officers and those working in the voluntary and community sector.

The review was principally to look at the past and current relationship with Harrow’s Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and our workings with them across all directorates.

Given a time of huge budget cuts on Harrow Council and the need for an ever closer working relationship with the VCS; both in terms of co-designing policy and service delivery, Harrow Council must formulate a coherent strategy and approach to making this all happen.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference and expectations of this review will be to formulate a set of recommendations, suggestions or comments on;

1. Improving the relationship between the Council and the VCS moving forward;

2. Understanding the current working relationship with the Adults, Children’s, Resources and Community Departments at the Council;
   - Current Service Level Agreements;
   - Current Discretionary Grant Funding;
   - Working Group / Service User Consultation Group Involvement

3. Fully understanding any current and future MTFS budget implications for the VCS in terms of:
   - Financial reductions from previous budget rounds;
   - Current financial reductions in 3 year budget round (2016-19)

4. Fully understanding any current proposals whereby the VCS will be approached to take on additional responsibilities to enable Council Departments to make service / budget reductions.

5. Learning all the current collective structures and how the Council has slowly withdrawn involvement in recent years i.e.:
   - Voluntary Sector Forum;
   - Harrow Community Action (HCA – Infrastructure Service);
   - Relationship between the large and small organisations;
   - VCS key players
6. What opportunities are there for the VCS to participate in co-designing of services and external consultations on a small and larger scale, whilst upholding the principle of ‘all sector’ input.

7. What resources may be needed to enable all of the above to occur?
   - Initial investment;
   - Any ongoing investment?

8. Establish what internal change may be necessary within the Council’s processes which need to happen in order to bring about positive change.

9. Explore opportunities on how the Council and the VCS working together could strengthen the role and services we share with other partners e.g. CCG.

10. Could procurement practices be improved which minimises waste and brings greater confidence and/or stability to the VCS?

11. What could be the approach to statutory service delivery and the ‘in-house vs further delegation’ debate?

12. Further considerations for the review could be;
   - How to ensure officer / member consistency with external messaging;
   - How could recommendations be monitored;
   - Timeframes for delivery of recommendations

The overall principle and aim of this review will be to support the creation of a new Council Strategy on working with the Voluntary & Community Sector 2017 – 2020.
Conclusions and Findings of the Review

The following conclusions and findings are set out under a series of questions, ordered in such a way as to give insight to the way the review was conducted and to help give structure to the overall review findings. Where recommendations are made, these are set out.

1.0 What opportunities are there for the Harrow Voluntary and Community Sector (from now on referred to as ) to participate in co-designing of services and external consultations on a small and larger scale, whilst upholding the principle of ‘all sector’ input.

1.1 There are opportunities for VCS to co-design services. There is no limitation to the extent of co-design as long as Harrow Council (from now on referred to as ‘LBH’) understands and manages the risks. The most cautious group (based on my interviews) were LBH officers, although they were generally supportive.

1.2 However, all the politicians interviewed and all the VCS people were very supportive and enthusiastic.

1.3 The benefits of this approach are as follows: - i) It helps to build trust between LBH and the VCS; and ii) LBH officers learn from organisations (VCS) who are part of and close to the community.

1.4 There are risks to this approach and most of them link to procurement. Can a VCS organisation work with LBH and co-design a service that is going out to tender? The answer is yes but what if that same VCS organisation wants to bid for the work?

1.5 VCS organisations can contribute toward co-design as part of a ‘market engagement’ exercise. What would not be permissible would be for one organisation only to solely be involved in co-design as that would mean the procurement could not be seen as open, fair and transparent.

1.6 In terms of what opportunities exist, Adult Social Care and Children’s Services are enthusiastic to make co-design happen and they also see putting more work in the way of the VCS as their way of meeting the medium term financial strategy. So projects within Adult Social Care could start early in the new financial year.

1.7 With regard to other opportunities, it depends on how far the Council is prepared to go to form partnerships with VCS to deliver future services. I suggest the Council be really bold and look at Public Realm services where volunteering could take off and co-design can be part of that, although there is as yet no model for this nationally, so the Council would need to consider this in the context of not knowing whether large scale voluntary activity would work in public realm services.
1.8 I would see this initially as Park User Groups procuring cleaning and grounds maintenance services and also park security. Community Champions and Resident Groups could be formed into new VCS organisations to take on highways and footways cleaning. There is no limit to this as long as there are sufficient numbers of residents who could act in this capacity across the borough and the risks are understood by the Council in moving to such a design.

1.9 RECOMMENDATIONS – i) A pilot co-design project to be launched by 30-Sep-2016 in Adult Social Care as a model for the future. ii) The Chief Executive and his team are asked to look at other areas of Council work, especially within the Public Realm that could be performed by the VCS with a view to co-design these services by 31-Mar-2018.

2.0 What resources may be needed to enable Recommendation 1.9 to occur? i) What initial investment? ii) Any ongoing investment?

2.1 I find identifying how much the Council should invest to achieve co-design a very difficult question to answer. To answer the question, I recommend that a pilot project be carried out in Adult Social Care carefully noting how it works and the costs for both LBH and the VCS who take part. However, although this question, the way it is framed, appears to be about investment to achieve co-design I believe there are more fundamental questions to answer which links to achieving co-design and other issues as well.

2.2 The wider question is what should LBH be investing to enable the VCS to perform more effectively now and in the future. This relates to questions 6, 9 and 10. I will deal with investment for co-design and these other matters later on in this report.

2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – i) To answer what initial investment is required to achieve co-design, I recommend a pilot procurement is carried out in Adult Social Care and the costs and time for both LBH officers and VCS staff/volunteers is carefully recorded and assessed. ii) Whether ongoing investment is required can be assessed and estimated from the Adult Social Care pilot.

3.0 Explore ways in which the Council can create a formal structure or processes by which the VCS can bid for more external funding which the Council does not have access to but the VCS more widely do.

3.1 The implicit assumption in the question is that the VCS already bids for external funding and needs to do more. During my review, I was told by a senior Council officer that the VCS is one of the poorest in the London Region at bidding to Trust Funds and other sources of funding.

3.2 I explored the reasons for this and the evidence I obtained drew me to three conclusions. The first is that there is a history of dependence of VCS organisations on LBH funding and in some cases, organisations not being motivated to look and bid for funding elsewhere.
3.3 The second reason is the strong political links between past and current elected members and VCS organisations where these political connections can be used to support a case either for funding being retained or against potential funding cuts.

3.4 The third reason is structural. I learnt that a few years ago (around 2011) the Harrow Voluntary Service, a voluntary sector umbrella organisation, was restructured as it was seen by both the VCS and LBH as not doing a good job of developing the voluntary sector in the Harrow Borough.

3.5 The structure chosen is through a new umbrella group called Harrow Community Action (HCA), which won the tender for this work. The HCA describes itself (see its website) as "a consortium working to strengthen the voluntary and community sector." It goes on to say that, “its role is to provide an opportunity for Harrow voluntary sector organisations to work in partnership to secure larger contracts.

3.6 There is also the Voluntary & Community Sector forum (VSF) which describes itself as a body that brings together various groups to identify local issues of mutual interest and the need to work collaboratively to find solutions. Its purpose is to encourage a stronger, more vibrant voluntary sector in Harrow (See VSF web-site).

3.7 My opinion on these structures, based on interviews, is that they create a divide and, from my earlier observation (paragraph 3.2), clearly more needs to be done to try and improve the amount of money coming into the Borough. Although this is a target for HCA, where it set itself the target of bringing in over £500k of external funding to VCS groups in Harrow, given the growing financial pressures there is clearly a need for more external funding in Harrow.

3.8 Three of the Voluntary Sector representatives I interviewed, and a visit to a neighbouring Borough, drew me to the conclusion that we need to restructure the HCA and the VSF into a single structure. One way to do this could be with a paid member of staff or team, who could be co-located with the Council at the Civic Centre. I think the Council would need to finance the staff/team and the overhead costs and that this would determine the level of investment required.

3.9 The ultimate purpose of this change is to try and create a single body to represent the sector in a unified way. The support role of the VCS organisations through the HCA would be replaced by the staff/team and the co-location will build understanding and team-work between the Council and the VCS.

3.10 RECOMMENDATIONS i) Abolish the HCA and the VCS Forum and replace them with a single body; ii) The single body should have a team or a Chief Executive whose role is to improve joint working between the Council and the VCS; Ensure that all VCS organisations improve their ability and success at attracting external funding; iii) That overhead costs for the staff/team should be paid for by LBH on a three year basis and be reviewed on the basis of targets achieved; iv) The key four tasks for the new staff/team are a) build capacity and develop the VCS; b) advise and support the VCS on fund raising and general
due diligence; c) develop an approach to social enterprise; and d) provide all practicable support needs.

4.0 Establish what internal change may be necessary within the Council’s processes which need to happen to bring about positive change. NOTE: I have assumed that processes includes culture so I have interpreted this widely.

4.1 There are four key areas to examine to answer this question. Bureaucracy & Risk; Service Level Agreement’s; Trust and Political Interference.

4.2 Bureaucracy & Risk – Harrow Council, as with most public authorities, is bureaucratic in method and structure. This means decisions are made hierarchically by politicians, receiving advice from professional trained administrators. Decision-making follows national legislation and locally defined procedures. To people outside of local government decision making appears slow and wasteful in terms of the number of iterations a decision may have to go through before a decision is actually made. Bureaucracy creates two distinct issues for the VCS when dealing with LBH.

4.3 There is a major cultural difference between local authorities and voluntary sector organisations. I have worked for both and the way they think and decide things is very different. Therefore, if the plan or aim is to give more work to the VCS there needs to be a rethink about aspects of a local authority culture where it interfaces with the VCS.

4.4 Decision making by a Council, as already described is slow and is based on collective advice from a number of professionals. Voluntary Sector organisations are more focussed on making a decision to achieve an outcome which they believe will enhance the community they endeavour to serve. How the decision is made and by whom is not as important as achieving the outcome.

4.5 As partnerships with the VCS grow, many issues will arise where the VCS want guidance or a decision and they’ll want it quickly. Harrow will have to ensure that the information and decision-making lines within an agreement with a voluntary sector organisation are clear and timescales for making decisions are clearly spelt out. This will mitigate frustration by VCS organisations with LBH as decisions and enquiries are made clearly and quickly.

4.6 Also, financial decision making by Harrow Council seems very complex and long winded as it is. Literally, as one budget is put to bed the process starts on the next. Voluntary Sector Organisations need certainty and stability to plan as finance is not a given as it is for a local authority. A three-year MTFS helps but while external factors, such as Government tinkering, make medium term planning very difficult we need to review grant funding away from annual decisions, notwithstanding that LBH did deliver a three year grants programme from 2013/14 to 2015/16. (All the VCS representatives I spoke with want greater certainty for their forward funding)
4.7 Another bureaucratic problem for VCS organisations, which we can resolve, is the fact that the future budget is vague. Again, the 3 year MTFS helps but we need to do more training and explaining why we cannot share budget decisions with VCS in advance of the December Cabinet. It was clear to me, from my interviews that the VCS organisations want clarity and honesty. They feel they often get vagueness or spin.

4.8 The process of risk analysis needs to be reviewed. In my view, the Council are going to need to take more risks in granting work to VCS organisations, therefore, the risk analysis process needs to reflect that the Council, in pursuing closer working with voluntary sector organisations as a key objective, has to take greater risks and reports need to effectively analyse and outline those risks accurately, and transparently. This does throw up further risks around the culture of trust between the VCS and the Council and if a closer working relationship is to be formed, the sharing of information needs to improve, and both elected Members and senior officers need to be confident that they can do this without this information then being used outside the spirit in which it has been shared.

4.9 **RECOMMENDATIONS:** - i) Review the interface between local authority culture and VCS culture and analyse where local authority bureaucracy and decision-making damage building a closer and more effective relationship between the Council and the VCS; ii) Review the decision making and information giving processes within the Council where it interferes with improving the relationship with the VCS and building transparency and trust; iii) Use the three-year MTFS process to give VCS organisations, working with or funded by Harrow Council, greater certainty about medium term finance; iv) That all agreements/SLA’s need to be reviewed to identify where individual VCS organisations have more than one agreement with LBH. The outcome should be a streamlining towards one agreement per VCS organisation; v) The risk analysis techniques need to be reviewed with the objective of making them more transparent and identifying that the Council has to take greater risks in future.

4.10 **Service Level Agreements** – Services or functions that are provided by a VCS organisation are working to a Service Level Agreement (or SLA). An SLA is a contract, although not drafted in quite the same way as a contract.

4.11 I have reviewed many of these SLA’s and most of them read just like a contract. They have standard sections such as Health & Safety; Third Party Rights and many others.

4.12 To me, the key part of the SLA is at the back of each document, the specification. The specification is where Harrow Council define what they expect the VCS organisation to deliver over the period of the agreement. Having read many of these agreements, it is clear that many of the objectives can be tightened in their language. To illustrate my point here is an objective from a SLA picked at random; “This project is to support all under-achieving school children in all core subjects in Harrow, and provide classes for young children (defined as
age 4 – 11) on weekends at the Somali Community Centre in Harrow. The project hopes to see a definite improvement in school attainment”.

4.13 The problem here is the word, “hopes”. It is both vague and unmeasurable. The indication to the provider is we hope they’ll improve school attainment but it won’t matter if they do not. The wording of the clause fails to indicate who the client group are. Also “definite improvement” is not measurable.

4.14 **RECOMMENDATIONS** – All VCS SLA’s need to be reviewed with the objective being to remove all specification clauses that are vague and unmeasurable. The Council can only ensure it is obtaining value for money by getting clearly defined outcomes from its agreements.

4.15 **Trust** – My review has clearly indicated that there is a lack of trust between senior staff in the VCS (and their Board/Trustees) and the Council. I have examined what leads to this mistrust to make recommendations on how to improve trust.

4.16 The problem from the VCS perspective is summed up in the following comments, extracted from CEO’s during interview. i) VCS needs LBH to give strategic leadership/aims/direction, need better dialogue. ii) Messages from LBH to VCS inconsistent, not sure what the key messages are; iii) View from the VCS is that politicians do not share or, do so reluctantly. The Council needs a strong message on their key aims/messages; iv) Communication, not enough engagement/dialogue. v) Council should talk openly about what the VCS is doing; vi) Who do we speak to in the Council, lack of consistency, VCS needs to deal with one person; vii) LBH need to have a strategic approach, the Council need to be leaders and a critical friend as this will make a fundamental difference.

4.17 These comments show what the council need to change. There needs to be a review of how we liaise and respond with the VCS organisations with the objective being to ensure that in future we message clearly, where we cannot respond we explain why, and that we respond informatively. The consistency issue should be resolved by the Chief Executive’s restructure in 2015 which has made the Divisional Director – Strategic Commissioning responsible for liaison and contact with the VCS.

4.18 Another aspect that causes mistrust is the fact that matters have to be kept private or confidential before they become a decision. This is a different culture to how the VCS works and also, some VCS organisations do not understand how Councils work. Therefore, effort needs to be made to explain why certain questions, such as the future budget, cannot be answered while they go through a political process. I recommend a Code of Guidance be written on how to respond when a VCS organisation asks questions that cannot be answered because of the need for privacy or discretion.
4.19 How we communicate and our willingness to communicate in an honest and open way will fundamentally shift the trust issue towards a more positive outcome.

4.20 **RECOMMENDATIONS** — i) Review the communications between the Council and the VCS and involve the VCS in the review; ii) Ensure the review delivers an open and transparent dialogue between LBH and the VCS in future; iii) Divisional Director – Strategic Commissioning to establish a communications code of guidance which includes guidance on how to communicate when a matter is confidential.

4.21 **Political Interference** — These are some of the comments I received on the issue of political interference. i) Q – Are there blurred lines between Councillors and the VCS? – A Yes! And politicians should not champion their ‘pet’ voluntary sector organisation as the funding is public money; ii) The 2010 – 2013 Administration grants programme was affected by individual Councillors fighting the corner for their favourite VCS organisation; iii) Certain VCS organisations will want Harrow Councillors on their Board.

4.22 Equally, I recognise that a number of VCS organisations are not just delivery organisations, but they lobby on behalf of their client group, which is completely understandable. However, this can impact on the trust between the Council and the VCS as sensitive information that could be shared in order to support greater working relationships could then possibly be used against the Council. There are currently limited rules and constitutional codes around lobbying on behalf of a VCS organisation against the Council, and in order to establish better working relationships, this could be looked at in order to support better working relationships. Again, this would be something that should be co-produced between the Council and the VCS.

4.23 **RECOMMENDATIONS** — i) That a Code of Conduct is designed between the Council and the VCS which helps support a better working relationship between the VCS and the Council building on the Compact.

5.0 **Explore Opportunities on how the Council and the VCS, working together, could strengthen the role and services we share with other partners; eg: CCG.**

5.1 From all my interviews there are three quotes that are relevant here. i) A senior Council officer – Opportunities must be appropriate – Appropriateness decided by what a VCS organisation can bring; ii) Councillor – Yes, lots of opportunities; iii) A VCS CEO – The Council need to develop the market; Tender bids need to be decided on quality, not just price and iv) Council need to develop a strategy that prioritises the areas for growth in work by the VCS.

5.2 This review will form the basis of a strategy. That strategy must identify the key areas for the next 3 – 5 years where the Council wants to develop the market with the VCS. Obviously Social Services, both Adults and Children’s are going that way but the percentage of Social Services revenue (less than 5%) is
relatively small. What areas of the work of Social Services do the Council want to outsource to the VCS over the next 3 – 5 years?

5.3 Other areas are advice, especially on welfare and debt and also the Park User Groups, street and footway cleaning. There is no limit to the ideas, it’s how practical they are and what needs to be done first.

5.4 The role strengthening is covered by Section 3 above. The new structure outlined there can include the Clinical Commissioning Group but, again, this has to fit in with priorities as determined by the strategy that will come from this review.

5.5 **RECOMMENDATIONS** – i) The opportunities are theoretically unlimited but this review should lead to a strategy which, in turn, will prioritise the areas the Council want to develop; ii) Social Services is the area furthest ahead so they should identify where next as the proportion of their work carried out by the VCS is relatively small; iii) Other areas will be identified through the Strategy; iv) The involvement of the Clinical Commissioning Group is a possibility and we need to work with them whilst considering how the priorities of the Council are best delivered.

6.0 **Could procurement practices be improved which minimises waste and brings greater confidence and/or stability to the VCS?**

6.1 From my interviews, these are some of the key comments on procurement. i) Procurement from Adults and Public Health is not as tight as it could be. ii) We (LBH) need to make sure there is social value in contracts where we want the VCS to bid. iii) A neighbouring local authority has put in a local connection in their contracts.

6.2 I have not studied our procurement practice or rules but, based on past experience, local authority procurement is normally cautious and pragmatic, given the legal position that councils have to act within. However, as there is a need to develop a strategy, it is important to see how our procurement processes can be better communicated and understood within the VCS.

6.3 Assuming Harrow is no different to my past experience, I believe that our procurement practices need to have a focus on achieving the following outcomes: - i) that local VCS organisations are not undercut by bigger national charities and companies; ii) that there is more flexibility on the assessment of financial viability; iii) that work streams, where there is a common thread, are brought together; iv) that greater stability is given to VCS organisations through our future procurement so they can plan medium to long-term; v) That the right balance is struck between value and price.

6.4 **RECOMMENDATIONS** – That the strategy deriving from this report will include a section which sets out how we use procurement to achieve the objectives outlined in 6.3 above.
7.0 What would be the approach to statutory service delivery and the 'in-house vs further out-source' debate? Can the Council go further thus achieving efficiencies?

7.1 This has been a very hard question to answer. I have not found the answer from my questioning.

7.2 My honest view is that the approach to service delivery will not be significantly different whether the function is statutory or discretionary. The main difference is the risk analysis as the Council, any Council, will not want to be exposed to legal challenge if a statutory service is not delivered effectively by a charitable provider. However, that has always been true.

7.3 Private companies have been, and may well continue to be poor in providing statutory services. To mitigate this, there needs to be an effective balance between good contract clauses that provide a good legal framework to work within but not so rigid or risk averse that VCS organisations are deterred from tendering.

7.4 The in-house versus outsource is a political debate. Everything could be outsourced in theory but, my problem with outsourcing is that most Council staff are trained to provide services not to manage contracts. Providing a service, especially a sensitive human service like Adult Social Care, through a private provider can be fraught with problems, especially if the provider feels the contract is not adding to their bottom-line. That is why outsourcing to charities, while still risky, is a preferred alternative to private companies or large national charities as the VCS is part of the community and is operated by, in most circumstances, by local people, as well as providing better value for money.

7.5 I certainly believe that outsourcing to VCS organisations will be cheaper as the VCS is less expensive, so there are savings to be made. It is impossible for me to estimate but as part of developing a strategy existing procurement in Adult Social Care could be researched (to estimate savings) and other areas could be modelled to estimate potential savings.

8.0 Further considerations for review could be: - i) How to ensure officer/member consistency with external messaging; ii) How could recommendations be monitored; iii) Timeframes for delivery of recommendations.

8.1 I have tried to address the trust issue in section 4.15 onwards where I talk about trust. The question here is how to ensure officer/member consistency. The honest answer is that the sought after consistency can never be guaranteed.

8.2 The reason for my uncertainty is the awareness of life in a political environment. The controlling Party can and will change in the future, and so will the message. This is political reality. Also, personalities change. I have received comments from many I have interviewed about the fact that the difference in personalities involved, past and present, has a material impact on relationships and that this has had an impact on funding and work-streams.
8.3 I have attempted to address these problems in section 4.20 onwards. I would recommend that a corporate objective be designed about greater transparency and the need for consistent messaging but this cannot guarantee anything if political control were to change in the future.

8.4 Monitoring of recommendations, once agreed, should form part of the Corporate Plan or, an annual or half-yearly report to Cabinet by the Portfolio Holder.

8.5 In terms of time-frames, I suggest that the strategy, emanating from this review be introduced in 2017-2018 and that a clear objective is to embed the changes outlined in this review as fast as possible. While speed is risky, the faster a new concept is implemented, the more embedded a process becomes and an embedded process is more likely to survive future political change, although it is equally important that it is of the requisite quality and is bought into by the VCS.

8.6 **RECOMMENDATIONS** — i) Implement and embed the strategy as rapidly as is practicable so that the new approach to the VCS and the new structure is implemented, ideally by 31-March-2017. ii) That the Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement has to report to Cabinet, half-yearly, on progress on implementation; iii) In terms of timeframe see 8.6.i above.

9.0 *What can the Council do to establish an agreed way forward with the which can positively create long term financial sustainability and a move away from Council reliance. For example this could include commercialisation encouragement.*

9.1 I have attempted to answer this question in Section 3 above where I comment on existing structures for the VCS and how they need to change and how we need to change our support in terms of staffing.

9.2 **RECOMMENDATIONS** — i) Implement the recommendations made in paragraph 3.10 above.

10.0 *Can we identify the capacity voids in the voluntary sector?*

10.1 The answer to the question is yes, we can. I will quote from the questions as they are enlightening.

10.2a) There is a lack of specialist voluntary organisations; there is a lack of capacity to train and develop VCS organisations (4); a lack of variety of services from the VCS. b) Fundraising (4). c) Leadership (2).

10.3d) Lack of support by LBH; e) Bid-writing; f) Creativity.

10.4 **RECOMMENDATIONS:** — The question does not ask me, but how to address these issues is covered by Section 3.0 above.

11.0 *What can we learn from other Boroughs?*

11.1 To answer this part of the Terms of Reference, I visited the neighbouring London Borough’s of Brent, Ealing and Hillingdon.
11.2 I was generally impressed with what I learnt about Brent and its Voluntary Sector. Brent had problems with its Voluntary Sector 5 years ago but a new community leader took over at the beginning of this decade and he has brought everyone together.

11.3 Also, Brent have a paid CEO who runs the voluntary sector forum and provides the professional support and advice that is lacking here in Harrow. Also, the CEO, who is based at the Brent Civic Centre, works to ensure the Council and the Brent Voluntary sector work together. The collective organisation run by the CEO is the Brent Council for the Voluntary Sector and all voluntary sector organisations are encouraged to join. To join, a voluntary sector organisation has to apply and be elected.

11.4 Membership is free but not all Brent voluntary sector organisations are members.

11.5 An example of good Brent practice is their advice contract. The previous contract was jointly delivered by Brent Mencap and Brent Age UK. Brent Council were not happy with the quality of service delivery so they re-tendered it on a network model where Brent residents can self-service. The new advice system was developed with the Brent Voluntary Sector working as partners on a co-design model.

11.6 Other examples of good practice we could aspire to is: a) The Youth Service – The Brent CEO for the voluntary sector in seeing that the Council were struggling to maintain a Youth Service created the Brent Foundation. Services were re-directed to this Foundation. This has prospered as the Brent CVS has levered in external funding alongside Council funding. This is what we in LBH want to achieve.

11.7 Children Centre’s – Now run by Barnado’s. In terms of tendering Brent contracts, where the Council want a CVS bid is worded to target local organisations. Again an objective for Harrow Council.

11.8 Finally, the politics in Brent appear cleaner, in terms of the CVS. No Grants Committee. All decided by Cabinet. Another example given is Cllr Butt, the Brent Leader, supports personally Food Banks but he is not asked by the providers to assist with funding.

11.9 In general, I did not find that the other two local authorities, Ealing and Hillingdon had anything material for LBH to take on-board.

11.10 **RECOMMENDATIONS** – i) Organise a more detailed study of Brent practice including visiting the CVS CEO. Also look at some of the contracts that are working to a model we aspire to.

Finally I owe a debt of gratitude to Labour Group Officer, Ms Victoria Fernandes, who has organised and ensured I have all the information I need.
Also thanks to Chris Spencer and his team, Cllr Margaret Davine, Cllr Sue Anderson, Bernie Flaherty and Chris Greenway, Alex Dewsnap, Mike Howes, Cllr David Perry, Michael Lockwood, Marianne Locke, Cllr Simon Brown, Cllr Anne Whitehead, Nigel Long of HAD, Mr Deven Pillay of Harrow Mencap, Ms Tajinder Nijjar of Harrow CAB, Ms Carol Foyle – Harrow; and the London Borough’s of Brent, Ealing and Hillingdon for their time, patience and hospitality.