



# 2019/20 Annual Report

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Janet Tibbalds*



**W**elcome to the Community Links Bromley (CLB) annual report for 2019/20.

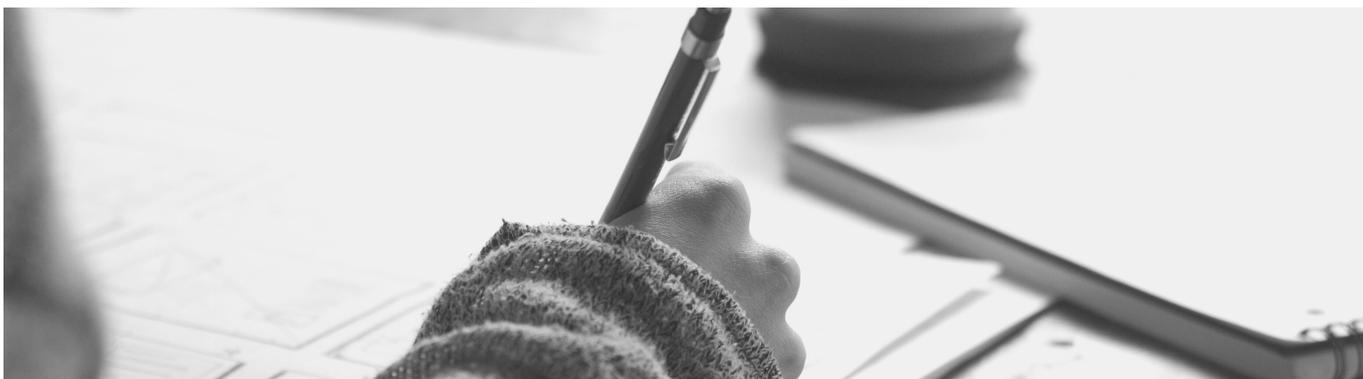
Like so many other organisations, it will be the very final weeks of 2019/20 that will define the year for CLB, as the world felt the impact of Covid-19 in spring 2020. The pandemic and the measures put in place to deal with it presented acute challenges for the sector and our members.

Locally, we can be proud of the way our members and the local community responded. The volunteer mobilisation was immense and heart-warming. As the year came to a close, we worked with the Borough to develop Bromley's COVID-19 Volunteer Programme, matching volunteers with people who were unable to get to the shops, pick up prescriptions or walk their dogs because of government guidelines indicating that they should stay at home.

As an organisation, we responded by providing practical advice to local organisations. In concert with a range of other local charities, we took active steps to highlight the impact on the sector's finances and delivery that the pandemic was having. This resulted in a significant package of investment from business locally.

The Chair of the Charity Commission recently remarked that "this outpouring of charitable endeavour has served to remind us that charity, at heart, is about the impulse to support other people, strengthen a community or promote a good cause". We echo these thoughts and see it every day in our work.

The year saw change at the top of our organisation with the appointment of a new Chief Executive to succeed Colin MacLean. Colin stepped down in September after 8 years in the role, with so much achieved on behalf of the sector. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Bromley Third Sector Enterprise and this organisation will continue to play an important role in local health and well-being in Bromley for years to come.



**"this outpouring of charitable endeavour has served to remind us that charity, at heart, is about the impulse to support other people, strengthen a community or promote a good cause"**

- Chair of the Charity Commission for England and Wales

He was replaced by Christopher Evans. Christopher brings nine years' experience as Chief Officer at another infrastructure organisation.

He has worked for over 20 years at senior management level in the charity sector. This experience and proven ability to improve quality standards and monitor service delivery is a welcome addition to the team.

We also saw additions to the team at the Big Local Mottingham and commenced the recruitment to two posts, a Funding and Development Officer and a Cornerstone Project Worker.

Whilst the recruitment for the latter posts paused during the initial phase of the pandemic, both posts have now been filled. The result is an important increase in

capacity across the service.

Many thanks to the Trustees who worked so hard to adapt to the changing demands and improve the financial situation and of course the CEO and staff who have worked so hard and delivered above and beyond as the impact of Covid 19 hit us.

## **Aims and Objectives**

Despite these important organisational changes, our focus remains unchanged, namely to champion volunteering and the voluntary sector; to strengthen voluntary organisations in the borough; to connect people and organisations. In short, to contribute to "Building A Better Bromley".

To meet these objectives, we manage and co-ordinate all components of this service which comprises of:

- Information, advice and guidance
- Funding and investment
- Volunteering
- Strategic partnership
- Strategic voice

In meeting these objectives our achievements are many and these are covered over the following pages.

# INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

**W**e provide the sector with relevant, appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance in order to build capacity and support its role within the community.

This consists of regular news and updates, the distribution of a weekly e-bulletin; the provision of a dedicated website for the sector to publicise sector activities to improve awareness of its role, function and benefit to the community. It includes training and support, particularly for smaller and newly formed groups, on a range of topics including governance and trustee support, creating new constitutions, writing funding applications and advertising their services.

Our direct support to organisations was substantial and considerably increased from the previous year. This support was accessed by 154 different organisations, a 26% increase.

**26%**

Increase in organisations  
CLB directly supported

**154**

organisations  
accessing CLB  
support



# FUNDING AND INVESTMENT



Sarah Johnstone , The Childhood Trust, presenting at CLB's Funding Fair, February 2020

Our funding work remains important to ensuring that the sector continues to thrive in Bromley. We undertake horizon scanning and signposting to ensure the sector receives timely information about funding opportunities; provide advice on bid-writing; as well as leading on and facilitating sector-wide bids to attract and secure resources into the Borough.

This year, we worked on a number of collaborative bids, ran a Charity Funding Fair in partnership with the National Lottery, The Jack Petchey Foundation and The Childhood Trust; hosted workshops on Crowdfunding, the Innovation Fund and The GLA's Young Londoners Fund.

We supported and advised charities on 47 unique bids resulting in £89,255 new investment into the borough, a conversion rate of 30%

**£89,255**

New investment in the  
borough

We continue to be the Local Trusted Organisation (LTO or accountable body) for the Mottingham Big Local Refocused project. This enables the community to access up to £100,000 per year from the Big Lottery Fund to support projects and interventions which meet community priorities.

We also acted as the LTO for the Dartford Big Local area and assisted the resident partnership with the ongoing development of their High Street Hub.



Map of Mottingham Big Local Refocused boundary area

# VOLUNTEERING



**O**ur service continues to encourage volunteering and supporting volunteering involving organisations. We do this by supporting the recruitment of volunteers by operating a volunteer bureau for the borough.

This provides:

- Practical advice and guidance on all aspects of volunteering.
- Raises awareness of the benefits of volunteering in the borough.
- A database of current volunteering opportunities and a volunteer online portal and phonenumber for people looking to volunteer.
- Work with the Council, other organisations and local businesses to identify volunteering opportunities across the borough and publicise on the volunteering database.

We are delighted that this work has wide partnership buy in and active steps are under way to implement the resulting volunteer action plan.

In meeting these objectives, we:

- Promoted over 170 different volunteering vacancies.
- Worked on behalf of over 110 different volunteering involving organisations delivering services to local residents.





**CLB Volunteers and the Law workshop, November '19**

We also provided support to volunteer involving organisations to develop robust volunteer programmes by providing:

- 19 one-to-one individual support sessions to discuss individual volunteer programmes.
- Launched a new and re-vamped Volunteer Managers' Network meeting.
- Provided 5 workshops focussing on different aspects of managing volunteers, including volunteers & the law and reviewing & updating volunteer roles

To provide an opportunity for local residents to find out more about volunteering, we attended 5 different events/talks.

Encouragingly, interest in volunteering remains high and over 600 people enquired about volunteering and were provided with advice, guidance and support to make appropriate applications during the year.

**600+**  
volunteering enquiries

**19**  
one-to-one support sessions delivered



**CLB Engaging Parliament workshop, February '20**

We hosted our 12th Annual Volunteer Awards. All those attending enjoyed an entertaining evening. 20 individuals were presented with certificates for their volunteering and 2 teams of volunteers were presented with certificates.

Our congratulations go to the award winners and to all those who were nominated. Community Links Bromley would also like to thank the volunteers from Kent Association for the Blind and Mindful Mums who provided us with an insight into their experiences of volunteering, and to Pam Anderson, Volunteer Manager with Kent Association for the Blind, who explained the expertise needed to effectively recruit and manage a team of volunteers.



**Attendees at Volunteer Awards Ceremony**



**Two award winners at Volunteer Awards Ceremony**





As members of NCVO, NAVCA, London Plus, COIN (Chief Officers' Information Network) and the Volunteer Centres Managers' Network, we are able to engage with other volunteer centres both nationally and across London. This has offered us opportunities to maintain up-to-date knowledge of volunteering trends across the country and to be able to influence national and London plans for volunteering in the future. We share the knowledge we have gained through our bi-weekly e-bulletin and Bromley's own network of Volunteer Managers.



# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND VOICE

**A**s a service, we strive to facilitate and develop the voluntary sector role in strategic partnerships throughout the borough, particularly within Health and Social Care services.

In part, this is achieved by ensuring that the sector is represented by the Voluntary Sector Strategic Network ('VSSN'), a network of organisations for engagement and influencing on key borough and multi-borough partnerships and at local forums and boards, including, but not limited to:

- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Safer Neighbourhood Board
- Safeguarding Adults Board
- Community Learning Advisory Consortium
- Borough Resilience Forum

- Borough Officers Strategic Partnership Forum

- Bromley Business Partnership

Through these partnerships, we will work to identify changing and emerging social and community needs and work with the sector, public and private agencies to address them.

This year, with the support of the Independent VSSN Chair Lynn Selwood, we have begun to think about the role that the network can play in addressing challenges such as social isolation.



“Community Links Bromley has been an invaluable source of support for us since January 2019. As well as your support with the development of policies and procedures, you have helped us to raise almost £5,000 and have directly contributed to our submission of further applications for an additional £16,017. This will enable us to reach out to blind and sight impaired people who are not currently benefiting from our services. CLB has supported us to begin a process of adopting a more strategic approach to our development and fund raising and our vision is to work with local blind and sight impaired people, helping us to shape our services and to remain a resource that is relevant to their needs. 'As a new Board member since January 2019, Rosanna Ottewell has personally given me the confidence to take forward new ideas and initiatives for the News and to present them to other Board Members.’

- feedback from Bromley & District Talking News

Politically, the year was shaped by the ongoing debate regarding Brexit and the General Election. During the election, some charities used the opportunity to highlight the causes and beneficiaries that they care about.

This included talking to politicians and the media, or campaigning and raising public awareness about the changes they wanted to see or policies that they felt the next government should adopt.

To provide a platform for local charities, we hosted a husting event for the voluntary sector. Attended by candidates from all the political parties, the organisations used the opportunity to talk about hate crime, food banks, universal credit, the Living Wage and loneliness. Thanks to all the candidates for attending and the sector for speaking out about the challenges ahead.

The year concluded with the successful tendering for the contract to deliver the Provision of Infrastructure Support Services to Voluntary and Community Organisations and Social Enterprises in Bromley. We welcome this as an important vote of confidence from our Partner, the London Borough of Bromley. This will provide important stability to CLB and enable us to plan for the challenging times ahead for the sector.



YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND  
**Bromley Voluntary Sector  
Hustings**

DEBATE THE BIG ISSUES FACING OUR SECTOR WITH  
PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES FROM THE BROMLEY BOROUGH  
PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

WHEN: THURSDAY 5TH DECEMBER, 6.30 – 8.30PM  
WHERE: BROMLEY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, LOVELL  
ROOM, 20 WIDMORE RD, BR1 1RY

Confirmed speakers:  
Bob Neil (Conservative), Julie Ireland (Lib Dems), Jyoti Dialani  
(Renew Party), Marina Ahmad (Labour Party)

Sign up today by visiting  
[www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk/latest-news/bromley-voluntary-sector-elect/](http://www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk/latest-news/bromley-voluntary-sector-elect/)



COMMUNITY  
LINKS BROMLEY



**CLB Bromley Voluntary Sector Hustings event,  
December 2019**

# FINANCIAL REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES



The total income for 2019/20 was £416,991 against expenditure of £305,566. During the financial year, income increased by 14% at the same time expenditure fell from £382,415 to £305,566. Some of this was the result of one-off savings. The net result is the reserve position has also improved with an unrestricted reserve of £62,207, a 54% increase on the previous year. The levels of reserves held are regularly reviewed to ensure the charity is able to meet its obligations. A target of three months running costs has been set, which is approximately £95,000. We are pleased on progress to achieve this figure.

The team worked hard to keep costs within budgets and, at the same time, worked hard to secure external resources in support of delivering priority services to our sector.

This work resulted in substantial new investment in the Mottingham area, as well as investment from the GLA and the

Cornerstone Fund to develop and deliver new projects.

We continue to obtain our core funding from the London Borough of Bromley. However, we remain committed to diversifying our sources of funding and are pleased to report that over 66% of our funding in 2019/20 came from other sources.

As a service, we are only too aware of the financial pressures experienced by our funders and, as such, the trustees wish to thank our core funders for their continued support. The strategy of the organisation remains one which aims to have core funding from local authority and to enable on-going development through project funding from large funders like the big lottery, and charitable trusts.

As a board, the trustees are committed to:

- Keeping the reserves policy under review to ensure it meets a charity's changing needs and circumstances
- Ensuring that the level of reserves is monitored throughout the year.

Our aim is to ensure that we can give confidence to stakeholders that the charity's finances are being wellmanaged and can also provide an indicator of future funding needs.

## Our Staff

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Alex Doust, Office Manager

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Kathryn Mitchell, Web and Digital Assistant (formerly Communications Officer)

## Our thanks

At CLB we recognise the important role our partners play in assisting us to improve and develop our services. As a result, we have continued to work with other providers and community and voluntary groups. This year we would like to thank a number of partners. The following list is not exhaustive but our thanks go to:

- Gerry Clark and Ola Akinlade at The London Borough of Bromley
- Toni Walsh, the Directors and staff at Bromley Third Sector Enterprise
- The residents and partners from the Mottingham Big Local Refocused Partnership for their ongoing confidence in us as the Local Trusted Organisation
- Colleagues from London Plus, the CVS Directors network and the Volunteer Centre network, with especial thanks to Bexley CVS for their work on the Bromley and Bexley Young Londoners Network
- former staff: Colin Maclean, Chief Executive; Sue Potter, Communications Officer; Yvonne Linton, MBLR Engagement & Development Manager; Rosanna Ottewell, Capacity Development Officer

We are indebted to the support of our volunteers so a big thanks to all the volunteers that supported us during the 19/20 financial year:

Val Sheehan, Colin Conway, Sue Brown, Peter Greene, Shirin Macpherson and Angela Morgan

