Present:
Robin Agascar  Gay Glos
Gareth Edwards  CCP
Jez Spencer  Fair Shares
Elin Tattersall  GRCC
Wayne Stevens (Chair)  Victim Support

Apologies:
Melanie Angove  Beresford Trust
Ellaine Cameron  Relate Gloucestershire & Swindon
Karen Clark  Gloucestershire Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre
Jill Cooper  Beresford Trust
Angela Gilbert  GAVCA

In attendance
Matt Lennard, Gloucestershire VCS Alliance
Kath Rees, Lead Commissioner, Gloucestershire County Council
Susan West, Gloucestershire VCS Alliance

1. Welcome and introductions
Wayne Stevens welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Active Communities
Kath Rees had previously circulated consultation papers on Active Communities to Forum members and reported that the Cabinet paper was approved on 15 April, subject to scrutiny.

Active Communities is not a new idea and already exists in some neighbourhoods and areas of interest. The Council acknowledges that one size does not fit all as some communities need more guidance than others. Support will be available on the basis of need and outcome.

Feedback said that people believe the County Council has a role to play in supporting communities. The Council should promote opportunities for people to use buildings, allocate seed funding and act a catalyst to build community capacity.
There was concern that the County Council will expect too much from communities, especially in the current financial situation. Kath explained the intention is not to replicate council services for free. It’s about people coming together to resolve their own problems.

Further feedback had been about bureaucracy and red tape.

The Council has drawn up an action plan to explain what Active Communities means in practice. The plan seeks to build on what already exists. It covers a range of activities under five headings:

- Provide information, advice and guidance.
- Identify and promote best practice.
- Support development of service user-led organisations.
- Support provision of places for communities to come together.
- Harness and maximise the potential of Council activities.

There is real energy about the initiative amongst Council employees who have a range of skills and enthusiasm and are keen to volunteer their services.

Opening the discussion, JS gave an example from Plymouth where VCS organisations are proactively asking the council what priorities the VCS can deliver.

RA felt the main focus was on geographical areas, and communities of interest were dealt with lightly. Equality was not mentioned. Kath believes communities of interest will be a key driver for the initiative.

ET commented that transfers of buildings can have a negative impact on a community. GRCC would be interested in further discussion and sharing knowledge on community buildings.

WS asked about plans for Council staff to volunteer in the community. Kath replied that the Council was developing their own corporate volunteering policy. ML said that Isobel Edwards at Gloucester City Council had completed a staff audit to help identify people’s skills.

RA stated volunteering opportunities needed to be helpful to the organisation rather than the volunteer. GE agreed and said CCP had clear job descriptions for volunteers to deal with this.

ML described Involve Gloucestershire, an online platform to facilitate volunteering between business and the VCS which is to be launched in May. He recommended Kath contact Steve Harris and Cordell Ray at CCP. RA added that online doesn’t work for everyone and some people will prefer face to face discussions and need careful guidance throughout the volunteering.

**ACTION:** WS to follow up with KR at a future date.

3. **Time banking**

JS highlighted what FairShares does that may be less well-known. This includes teaching woodwork, metalwork and maths, working with animals, taking the lead in Stroud on dementia and running dementia friendly walks, working with the fire service and installing fire alarms.

FairShares does well on a one-to-one level but finds it harder to build links with organisations. On the plus side, they are hoping to increase their work in prisons and with Victim Support.

FairShares is holding a suicide prevention day on 28 April which is open to all.

ML offered to help FairShares promote their activities through the Alliance’s bulletins and Forums.
4. **Forum Terms of Reference**

WS circulated a draft terms of reference which was approved subject to some slight amendments. It was agreed the Chair would be appointed for two years.

**ACTION:** ML to add wording on two-way feedback and expected behaviours.

**ACTION:** WS/ML to include an action plan with review mechanisms

5. **Round the table update**

**Elin Tattersall, GRCC**
The next phase of the Building Better Opportunities Project is to identify which organisations are keen to lead and who wants to be involved in delivery. These will be discussed at an event on 22 May. Organisations must sign up now, they can’t opt in later. It’s still not clear if the Big Lottery Fund will accept one large bid or several smaller ones. Financial literacy may be separated out from the priorities.

Funding is available for Village Agents for another year. Kate Darch has completed a cost benefit analysis of their work.

GRCC is giving a lot of support to neighbourhood development plans and less on parish plans. In Cheltenham GRCC is providing communities with a toolkit for their local green spaces.

Their work with children centres is now complete. Their intern has finished and secured a permanent post in another organisation.

**Susan West, Gloucestershire Alliance**
Updates received from organisations who were unable to attend.

- Relate has spaces on its Beyond Domestic Abuse (over 25s) and Young Survivors (11 - 25) projects for those who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse. Funding for the over 25s will end in early summer but they expect Young Survivors to be funded for a further year. The projects are for those who no longer live with the perpetrator of the abuse and are ready to rebuild their lives with a view to healthy relationships in the future. There is more information at [http://www.relateglos.co.uk](http://www.relateglos.co.uk).

- Positive Justice Gloucestershire is holding a Forum looking at Faith in Prisons on Saturday 25 April from 11.30am–2.30pm at the Catholic Church Hall in Coleford. Speakers include the Prison Phoenix Trust, Prison Chaplains of several faiths and none. Details at [www.pjglos.org](http://www.pjglos.org).

- Gloucestershire Suicide Prevention Partnership Forum has recently drafted a new Suicide Prevention Strategy for the county for 2015-2020 and is seeking feedback by 27 April. More on the Alliance website at [http://www.glosvcsalliance.org.uk/consultations/](http://www.glosvcsalliance.org.uk/consultations/)

**Matt Lennard, Gloucestershire Alliance**
There are 12 nominations to join the Alliance’s new Operational Board who will form the voting membership at the Alliance AGM on 30 April.

The Alliance is hoping to create new forums covering Sport and Physical Activity, working with Active Gloucestershire; in Arts, working with Create Gloucestershire; and a user-led organisation working with Gloucestershire Voices.

It is hoped to run another Connecting Gloucestershire event for business and the VCS this year.
ML now sits on the Adult Safeguarding Board.

**Gareth Edwards, CCP**

CCP’s main work recently has been creating business plans.

**Robin Agascar, GayGlos**

The main focus is on schools and youth clubs and they are working with GARAS on asylum seekers. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has provided much needed funds for youth work, it is proving hard to obtain funding for other areas.

6. **Victims and Witnesses**

WS said that Citizens Advice had won the contract to provide witness services in the criminal courts. He had previously circulated the CAB briefing document. The witness service was operating as business as usual with staff from Victim Support transferred under TUPE regulations. CAB is developing new services for home visiting and young people. Local CAB managers can provide more information and CAB staff will refer people to Victim Support where appropriate.

Victim Support has a three-year contract to continue providing the victim support service in the county. This will build on the service previously offered. The updated service went live on 1 April with a new freephone number, 0808 2810 112, and extended opening hours, 9am-7.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am -5pm on Saturdays. Victim Support receives referrals from the police, other organisations and directly from victims themselves. Victim Support provide practical help, information and advice. They do not proactively contact cases about theft of a pedal cycle, criminal damage or theft from a vehicle unless there are other factors such as vulnerability or repeated incidents. The service free, confidential and impartial and is largely delivered by volunteers. A case worker is available for those with special needs or at high risk.

7. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Amanda Segelov had provided various documents on the GCJB and the Out of Court Scrutiny Panel. These had been circulated to Forum members and added to the Alliance website at http://www.glosvcsalliance.org.uk/office-of-the-police-and-crime-commissioner/.

**ACTION:** ML will speak to Amanda about what the VCS can offer to the Out of Court Scrutiny panel and how best the VCS can influence and lobby.

WS circulated the GCJB action plan for the next three years. He noted the Gloucestershire Alliance would be consulted on elements of theme 1, working to reduce offending and re-offending. He felt the Alliance can also contribute in other areas, particularly theme 2, ensuring the needs and voices of victims and witnesses are heard in the criminal justice process.

JS pointed out there was no mention of how the VCS can support ex-offenders in the community.

**ACTION:** JS to send WS a question on reintegration to ask.

**ACTION:** SW will circulate the GCJB action plan with the minutes.

**ACTION:** WS to find out if there is an updated action plan showing progress made. He will ask for timescales for the consultation parts of the plan at the next GCJB meeting.

8. **Next meeting**

Suggested topics were an update from Gloucestershire County Council, an update on the GCJB action plan and inviting Phil Sullivan who leads the OPCC workstream, older but not overlooked. Please send any other ideas to Wayne Stevens or Susan West.
The date of the next meeting to be advised. The meeting closed at 3.50pm.