



The Community Networking Forum for South Northamptonshire

**NOTES OF MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 7th DECEMBER 2017
AT 1.00 PM IN THE MEETING ROOM, SNVB**

Present: Martin Gillett – Oxfordshire Play Association
Theo Hayward – Brackley Youth Strategy
Rachel Cave - NAB

SNVB Staff: Nick King (Chair)
Lorraine Salmons
Gillian Baird (Minutes)

Apologies: Jeanette Hyde – snvb
Karen Bricknell – snvb School of Life

1. Arrival and Informal Networking

Nick welcomed everyone to LinkUp.

2. Speaker: Martin Gillett – Oxfordshire Play Association

Martin introduced himself to the group and explained that he is the Manager at the Oxfordshire Play Association, which now also covers the South Northamptonshire area as a result of the merger between South Northamptonshire Council and Cherwell District Council.

Martin explained that the Oxfordshire Play Association was formed as a Registered Charity in 1974 and the Organisation's mission is to "champion and to support the rights of all children and young people to have access to high quality inclusive play opportunities."

Martin commented that play can help to keep people fit in a similar way to sport, but the main difference is that sport is a structured activity whereas play is unstructured and child-led.

Martin discussed the fact that play can hone team-building and social skills and offers young people the opportunity to get outside, at a time when many young people no longer play outside due to perceived dangers. He commented that, in reality, "stranger danger" is no more of a risk to young people now than it was 50 years ago, according to the statistics.

Martin confirmed that all the projects on offer are free of charge and therefore inclusive for everyone. In response to a question, it was noted that each Playday costs approximately £4000 - £5000 to run and Cherwell District Council currently provide some of the funding for the Organisation.

Martin commented that the Organisation has been successful in securing Libor funding to deliver a project called Saturdads (Saturday play sessions for dads or any male carers) for children of members of the Armed Forces.

Martin explained that because play is not statutory on the curriculum, funding is difficult to obtain. Martin is hopeful that South Northants Council (SNC) will provide funding to help to roll out the play events into the Towcester and Brackley areas.

It was noted that most of the events are held outside and so attendance is therefore affected by the weather. Martin commented that the events work best if they are tailored to be relevant to the local community and the Playday held in Brackley last year was very successful. It included events such as fireplay, living hanging baskets, a dental service and learning resuscitation from trained first aiders.

Martin commented that the Organisation only has two full time members of staff and they are keen to work together with partners to deliver their services into the South Northamptonshire area as well as Oxfordshire.

The presentation given at the meeting by Martin, detailing the work of the OPA and the various Playday activities undertaken, is attached to these minutes. Also attached are two reports on the OPA's Playful Woodlands Project and the 2017 Brackley Play and Activity Day.

Further details about the Organisation and the events on offer are available via the website www.oxonplay.org.uk or by contacting Martin on 01865 779474 or by email martingillett@oxonplay.org.uk.

3. Information Exchange

3.1 Theo Hayward introduced herself to the group and confirmed that she has recently become involved with the running of the Brackley Youth Strategy Group.

Theo commented that the Group is hoping to work towards the appointment of a Youth Officer to cover the Brackley and Towcester areas, to help to push for better facilities for young people in the area, such as the building of a skate park and the re-opening of the Brackley Hub.

In response to a question, Theo confirmed that the Hub building is currently unused and the Group are keen to re-open the facility.

Theo can be contacted by email on theo963@btinternet.com.

3.2 Rachel Cave of Northamptonshire Association for the Blind (NAB) explained that she is the Volunteer Co-ordinator covering the South Northamptonshire area and Northampton town. NAB is based in Northampton but covers the whole county. Clients of NAB can be self-referred, or referred by their GPs or the Hospital Eye Department.

She stated that NAB provides a variety of services and aids for clients, as well as offering emotional support where necessary.

NAB has a community team to visit clients in their own homes, with the aim of reducing isolation and loneliness. They also run social groups to take clients to social events.

Rachel drew attention to the need to re-instate the position of ECLO (Eye Clinic Liaison Officer) at Northampton General Hospital (NGH). Rachel stated that this post was responsible for signposting patients at NGH towards the help available at NAB, but the post had been vacant for approximately 6 years. NAB are keen for this post to be re-instated as soon as possible, but there is currently no news on whether this will happen.

Rachel also commented that the new Data Protection Laws which were coming into force were causing NAB a lot of extra work, taking up a lot of crucial man-hours. It was noted that this would also affect many other Charitable organisations in a similar way.

Further information about the work of NAB is available from Rachel via email Rachel@nab.org.uk or by visiting the website www.nab.org.uk

3.3

Nick King of snvb briefly outlined the work of the Village Networks project, including the Rural Information Centre (RIC) and the Community Minibus.

The RIC offers a chance to drop in and pick up advice on benefits, debt, job-seeking, reducing household bills, volunteering opportunities and much more. The project commissions experts from organisations such as Community Law, SNC and CAB, to give advice on a wide range of issues.

He informed the group that Village Networks also offers computer training, particularly to the elderly. Nick has now engaged a group of volunteers who visit the client in their own homes to give one to one training.

The project also has a minibus which is available for hire by local community groups and can also be used to take isolated people and those without transport to access services.

Nick encouraged organisations to book a place on the RIC (Rural Information Centre) which tours villages in the South Northants, Daventry and Cherwell areas. The RIC vehicle and trained driver is available for organisations to hire to help get their message across to people in the rural areas of the county.

Nick confirmed that snvb is still awaiting news of their application to the BIG Lottery to secure funding to continue the Project from the end of January 2018.

Further information is available from Nick nick@snvb.org.uk or on the website www.snvb.org.uk or by telephoning 01327 358264.

It was also noted that snvb is the Local Infrastructure Organisation for South Northamptonshire and is funded by South Northants Council (SNC) to deliver these services. Jeanette Hyde of snvb is an accredited funding advisor and so is qualified to help groups with funding applications.

snvb also produce fortnightly e-bulletins and bi-monthly newsletters containing the latest local news for the voluntary and community sector. Anyone wishing to promote their organisation or events in this way can contact Richard at snvb via email richard@snvb.org.uk or by calling 01327 358264.

Further details of all snvb's projects and activities, including Brackley Area Volunteer Car Service, Village Networks, School of Life, Garden Buddies, Charity Crafts and the volunteer brokerage service, can be found on the website www.snvb.org.uk or by calling the Towcester Volunteer Centre on 01327 358264.

- 3.4** Lorraine Salmons explained that she is the Volunteer Co-ordinator at snvb and anyone looking to recruit volunteers for their organisation can contact Lorraine on 01327 358264 or email her lorraine@snvb.org.uk.

Lorraine drew attention to the new snvb website, which has an inbuilt volunteer database where organisations can now register and administer their own opportunities if they wish to do so. Volunteers can also access the website to enquire about the opportunities available.

Further information about the new website facilities is available from Lorraine or Richard at The Volunteer Centre on 01327 358264.

4. Date of Next LinkUp Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 8th March 2018 at 1.00pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.15pm.