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Groups supporting communities in Portsmouth area meet top economist

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Photograph shows Clare Ansell, left, at Motiv8's recent 20th anniversary get-together



COMMUNITY support groups have been able to share their expertise with one of the world's most influential economists. Representatives from more than 20 organisations across Portsmouth and surrounding areas met with Andy Haldane, chief economist of the Bank of England. The meeting was part of the Bank's Town Hall outreach programme which has been meeting with community organisations since last year. Clare Ansell, chief executive of Motiv8 which supports young people in Portsmouth and Gosport, welcomed the meeting. She said: 'There was a genuine sense that we were listened to. 'It was great to hear from so many organisations whose work is largely hidden. 'The meeting was really useful and interesting.'

Representatives from Motiv8, Community First and Citizens Advice Havant were able to share their insights into tackling issues across the Portsmouth, Havant and the wider area.

Mr Haldane, who was named one of the world's 100 most influential people by Time magazine in 2014, is involved with the UK's monetary policy and helps to set interest rates. He founded Pro Bono Economics, a charity that seeks to improve the impact of charities' work. He said: 'We recognise that we have sometimes been better at talking than listening - we hope that the meeting will be help to put a more human face to the bank. 'We hope the debate and conversation on the day will feed into the discussions of the Banks' policymakers.'

Amongst the issues addressed was jobs and long term unemployment.

Ms Ansell said: 'During the event, the Bank highlighted the positive story of declining unemployment - but for the unemployed people we support, they feel far from the labour market. 'We were able to help the Bank understand the human side of the story.'

The meeting, held in Winchester, was organised with the help of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation, which awards grants to small community organisations. Grant Cornwell, its chief executive, said: 'The foundation awards grants to smaller, lesser known community groups who work on the frontline helping disadvantaged people in order to make a real change to their lives.'