

CABINET

15 November 2006

COMPACT WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR - UPDATE

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES

Contact Officer: Steve Lincoln Tel No: 01962 848110

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB1286, 21 Jun 2006, 'Scrutiny Review – Community Engagement'

CAB860, 20 April 2004, 'Compact with the Voluntary and Community Sector'

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Limited progress has been made in implementing the Compact in the Winchester District. This report informs members of progress made to date and seeks approval for the work planned for the coming months.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That an elected member 'Compact Champion' be identified.
- 2 That the Compact Action Plan included as Appendix 1 to this report be approved.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 20 April 2004 Cabinet approved the draft 'One Compact for Hampshire', effectively signing up the Council to the principles of working in a 'compact' way. The 'One Compact for Hampshire' has the support of the majority of district councils and strategic partnerships across the county and also other statutory partners such as the PCT, Police and Fire Service.
- 1.2 Countywide Codes of Practice have also been developed, which provide more detail on the requirements of statutory and voluntary sector partners in relation to three specific areas. These are funding, consultation and volunteering, with a fourth code about procurement now in development.
- 1.3 Since 2004 most districts seem to have been focussing on promoting the Compact and the Codes of Practice, rather than practical implementation of the Compact and demonstrating the real benefits that can be generated. A number of areas have been identified in which progress can be made in Winchester:
 - (i) Training
 - (ii) Consultation
 - (iii) Funding
 - (iv) Raising awareness of the Compact across the organisation
 - (v) Volunteering

2 Training

- 2.1 Training is one area in which it is clear that benefits could be found in a more 'compact' way of working. The 'One Compact for Hampshire' states that partners should, "... identify and develop ways of sharing and spreading learning across the Council and other public bodies, and the Voluntary and Community Sector, in order to ensure continuous improvement in the way the two sectors work together. Activities might include joint training in areas such as information technology, Best Value and quality issues."
- 2.2 Discussions have taken place between the Council's Training and Development Adviser and colleagues from WACA and Mid Hants PCT that have identified some ways in which we can make progress in this area.

- a) Agreement has been reached that spaces on training courses that are not taken up by the employees of the organisation can be made available at cost to employees from the other sector. This has happened on an occasional basis already, but a more robust process to facilitate this is currently under discussion.
- b) Links can be made via the websites to promote the availability of such training and encourage managers to consider this when discussing personal development with employees.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 The Compact sets an expectation for a minimum period of 12 weeks for any consultation exercise involving the voluntary sector. It is important that this is followed, as the management committee of most voluntary organisations meets at most once a month so need a significant period to consider and respond to consultation documents. However, it must be noted that the requirement for 12 weeks can be waived **IF** it can be demonstrated that a shorter period is unavoidable.
- 3.2 Steps have been taken to build this into the culture of the Council. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) makes explicit reference to the Compact (section 6.5), the requirement for a minimum 12 week consultation period and the mechanisms that it provides for challenge if this standard is not adhered to.
- 3.3 A new Communication Strategy will be developed in 2007 which sets out how external communication will be managed. As before the voluntary sector will be invited with other stakeholders to input into its development.
- 3.4 Further recommendations for improvements in this area have recently been made following a Scrutiny Review of Community Engagement (CAB1286 refers). The Compact is likely to have implications for the recommendations resulting from this review, particularly the preparation of a rolling public engagement plan.
- 3.5 It must also be acknowledged that there are occasions when consultation is required (albeit on a smaller scale) about changes to services or policies that directly affect the voluntary sector. In this instance it is essential that the voluntary sector is consulted before any decision is taken, which would ensure that a fully informed debate is able to take place and should ultimately result in a smoother transition period.

4 Funding

- 4.1 A development to date has been the involvement of a voluntary sector representative in the Council's Revenue Grant assessment process as an interested observer. However, this representative came from WACA and due to the vested interest of WACA as a grant recipient, this involvement is not felt to be appropriate in the long-term. The involvement of a voluntary sector representative does demonstrate the transparency of the process and enables the organisation in question to advocate the fairness and equity that exists in the decision-making process. It is therefore proposed to seek a completely independent representative to participate in the process for 2007/08. This could be a local organisation that does not receive a grant from the Council, or it could be an appropriate organisation from a neighbouring authority.

- 4.2 The potential does exist for an increase in the involvement of voluntary sector representatives in the grant making process. This could include some form of voluntary sector involvement in the decision-making process for the Community Chest as a consultee or advisor. While the decision would still be taken within the Council, the involvement of a voluntary sector representative in the process would be seen as a positive step forward in increasing the transparency of the process.
- 4.3 A second area in which the Council could improve its working with the voluntary sector is procurement. Central Government is promoting an increase in the use of the voluntary sector as a provider of public services and as a result the One Compact for Hampshire Group is developing a Code of Practice for Procurement. The Council is also in the process of reviewing its Procurement Strategy, which will have an associated Code of Practice that sets out how procurement will be carried out in future across all areas of the councils services, not just those involving the voluntary sector. The development of the Council's Code of Practice will however happen in consultation with voluntary sector representatives.

5 Awareness of the Compact across the organisation

- 5.1 For the Council to adhere to the principles of the Compact, and for maximum benefit to be achieved from the work detailed previously, it is vital that officers and members are made aware of the Compact and how it affects them. It is intended to raise awareness in a number of ways:
- a) Articles in City Voice and other areas of the intranet.
 - b) A Compact page on the intranet and website, to increase understanding and also celebrate progress made. This will also help promote understanding among the community.
 - c) Briefings to staff team meetings for sections who have significant levels of interaction with the voluntary sector.
 - d) The Chief Executive of WACA now participates in induction training for new employees and delivers a brief introduction to the work of the voluntary sector, how it supports the Council's objectives and examples of interaction with various departments. This happened for the first time at the induction day held on 19th September 2006.
- 5.2 The actions detailed in 5.1 will be delivered by officers, but there is also a role for elected members in raising awareness of the Compact. In particular, it is recognised that a 'Compact Champion' is crucial in maintaining the profile of the Compact within the organisation and advocating the value of adhering to the principles contained within it. This would include raising issues with other portfolio holders and challenging the Council in how it works with the voluntary & community sector. This role could be taken on by any elected member, although an understanding of, and empathy with, the voluntary sector would be an obvious requirement.

6 Volunteering

- 6.1 An Employer Supported Volunteering Project was piloted in Winchester in 2005. This project aimed to enable employees to participate in voluntary work at a time to suit them (e.g. after work or at weekends) and, with the full support of their employer, during working hours. The Winchester Volunteer Centre's statistics showed a 16%

increase in the number of newly registered volunteers from 2004/05 to 2005/06. The proportion of volunteers in paid employment increased from 36% to 50%.

- 6.2 There are significant potential benefits to employers by promoting volunteering among its employees. A survey of 200 UK businesses by national volunteering charity TimeBank in 2000 found that 94% thought that volunteering adds to the skills of their workforce, and 58% that voluntary work can be more valuable than experience gained in paid employment. Volunteering can help develop team work, interdepartmental networking and employee commitment. Greater interdepartmental contact can aid joined-up working. In addition, the experience of volunteering can be a powerful means of developing skills and confidence. Employees can't be trained on everything, and volunteering can help them develop skills they would not be able to learn in their 'day jobs'. Employers have found that volunteering schemes increase job satisfaction, improve retention and reduce absence due to sickness.
- 6.3 It is too early to say whether the Council as an employer could benefit from participation in an Employer Supported Volunteering Project. Many employers do little or nothing to enhance to social capital of the community, whereas this clearly cannot be said of the Council. However, further investigation of the subject by the Director of Human Resources would enable the likely costs and benefits to be evaluated.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

7 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 7.1 The implementation of a Compact at local level is of direct relevance to the Council's social inclusion agenda and has also been highlighted as a key activity in the Community Development Division Business Plan for 2006/07.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Mainly staff time. Any other resource implications will be identified as the process continues.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

One Compact for Hampshire

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Winchester Compact Action Plan

Winchester Compact Action Plan

Compact priority	What will we do?	When will we do it?	How will we measure our success?	Resources required	Who's accountable?
Training	Establish links between WCC, WACA and PCT websites to promote training opportunities available	October 2006	No. of hits	Staff time – WCC, WACA	WCC Training & Development Advisor
	Allow voluntary / community organisations to access WCC and PCT training at cost (subject to availability) and vice versa	November 2006	No. of participants	Staff time – WCC, WACA	WCC Training & Development Advisor
Consultation	Review Communication / Consultation Strategies to ensure reference to voluntary & community sector	2007	Participation of voluntary sector in preparation of new Strategies	Staff time - WCC	WCC Corporate Communications Manager / Research Officer
Funding	Seek involvement of an independent voluntary sector body in the revenue Grant process	December 2006	Attendance at assessment meeting(s)	Staff time	WCC Community Development Manager
	Investigate the potential for increasing involvement	March 2007	Increased participation in	Staff time – WCC and	WCC Community Development Manager

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	of the voluntary & community sector in the grant processes		grant giving processes	WACA	
	Identification and promotion of all WCC funding streams that may offer funding to voluntary sector organisations	March 2007	Increase in applications	Staff time – WCC	WCC Partnership & External Funding Officer
Awareness Raising	WACA involved in Induction Training of WCC staff	September 2006	Increased awareness of the Compact	Staff time – WACA	WACA Chief Officer
	Develop a Compact page on Intranet & website	December 2006	No. of hits	Staff time - WCC	WCC Community Officer
	Briefings at WCC Staff Team meetings across various sections	March 2007	Increased awareness of the Compact	Staff time - WCC	WCC Community Officer
	Articles in City Voice	November 2006	Increased awareness of the Compact	Staff time - WCC	WCC Community Officer
Volunteering	Employer Supported Volunteer Scheme	2007	Increased level of volunteering	Staff time - WCC	WACA Volunteer Centre Manager