

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

CABINET

Date: 8 September 2008
Report of: The People Block Lead Officer
Title Working with the Third Sector – A Partnership Framework for Cheshire East Council

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present a draft Framework to guide and govern the Council's future partnership relationship with the third sector in Cheshire East.

2.0 Decision Required

- 2.1 To endorse the principles and direction of the Framework (Appendix 1) and to retain the current level of investment (without inflation uplift) in organisations in the sector in 2009/10. In addition, to commission further work from officers during the Autumn/Spring to negotiate a new Compact Agreement, develop commissioning policy, asset transfer proposals and a Volunteering Strategy, in partnership with the Third Sector, for consideration by the Council.

3.0 Financial Implications for Transitional Costs

- 3.1 Service redesign and commissioning of services from the Third Sector may present a positive contribution to the management of transitional costs in the longer term.

4.0 Financial implications for 2009/10 and beyond

- 4.1 Retention of the current level of investment in organisations the sector in 2009/10 (without inflation uplift) will provide some interim security to local organisations while service and provider reviews are undertaken and priorities determined for the future.

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The Framework provides the context within which the Council will be able to fulfil a range of statutory duties, including the new duties to involve, promote participation and enhance mechanisms for scrutiny, proposed in the forthcoming Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill.

6.0 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Early notification of the Council's decision to maintain existing levels of investment in organisations the sector in the next financial year will reduce the risk of organisations instituting legal challenges on the basis of a failure to comply with existing Compact commitments to the sector.

7.0 Background

- 7.1 Councils in Cheshire East have had long standing relationships with the voluntary and community sector. During 2007 work was undertaken by the County Council to develop a Third Sector Strategy. Officers and senior managers from District Councils contributed to the process in line with the Compacts signed by all local authorities in Cheshire East.
- 7.2 The Framework seeks to build on this and outlines the contribution the sector can make to improve public services and achieve better outcomes for local people and communities.

8.0 Overview of Day One, Year One and Term One Issues

- 8.1 The draft Strategy has been revised and updated as a Framework for the new Council and is presented as a legacy capable of adoption in advance of Day One. It establishes the parameters for the development of a suite of policy and practice documents during Year One and their implementation during Term One.
- 8.2 The Framework is based on the needs of the Council and the Third Sector, in order that together we serve people better. These are summarised as

The Council needs:

- to fulfil its statutory duties and its role as community leader
- to manage a dialogue with service users and citizens about the design and delivery of high quality affordable services
- to grow the market and orchestrate the provision of these services
- to monitor and evaluate these services to ensure their effectiveness and efficiency

The Third Sector needs:

- access to information about services - current provision and potential change
- support to coordinate consultation and engagement
- strong and coordinated infrastructure organisations to support the front line
- sustainable funding for infrastructure and front line groups to enable them to deliver

9.0 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 9.1 National policy related to the sector, Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006) and Communities in Control (2008) emphasises the importance of the Third Sector in shaping and designing effective services, representation and advocacy, lobbying and influencing policy. There is a risk that the future Comprehensive Area Assessments will be affected unless a clear Framework governing the Councils future relationship with the sector is established.

For further information:-

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Background documents:

Department of Communities and Local Government
“Strong and Prosperous Communities” (2006)

Department of Communities and Local Government
“Communities in Control” (2008)

Documents are available for inspection at: County Hall, Chester