

## APPENDIX 1

**SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GRANTS TO COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS****REMIT**

1 The Scrutiny Review Panel for grants to community and voluntary organisations was set up in October 2003 with the following terms of reference:-

To review the County Council's policies on grants to community and voluntary organisations, in particular the operation of the single grant administration model and monitoring arrangements approved by Policy Committee in June 1999, and to identify areas for improvement.

2 The membership of the Panel comprised Councillors David Newton (Chairman), David Andrews, David Brickhill, Chris Claxton, Bert Grange, Peter Nurse and Sue Proctor. Officer support was provided by Berni Moore, Acting Principal Youth Officer who was appointed as the Programme Officer for the Review, Robin Roberts, Members Services Policy Manager and Dave Hagan, Management Trainee.

3 The Panel met 8 times between 30 October 2003 and 25 March 2004, as detailed below

30 October 2003 – initial scoping meeting  
 17 December – progress report  
 27 January 2004 – meeting with community / voluntary organisations  
 10 February – meeting with Officers  
 12 February – meeting with Members and community / voluntary organisations  
 26 February – meeting with Executive Members  
 11 March – review session  
 25 March – review of final report

4 Following the initial scoping exercise of the Panel it was decided to look into all the funding from the County Council to the community and voluntary sector, regardless of whether it is classified as a grant, contract, service level agreement or other funding arrangement. This was due to varying practice across the Services, lack of a consistent interpretation of what is grant and what contract funding, and the perceived intent behind the establishment of the single grant Policy in 1999.

**FORM OF INVESTIGATION**

5 The Panel's work began with desk top research to ascertain the current situation. The Panel gathered information from each Department concerning all the funding for the voluntary and community sector which they either

provide (from core budgets) or administer (for external agencies). Information requested included funding criteria, level of funding, number of organisations in receipt of funds, purpose of that funding, monitoring practice, duration of agreement and which geographical areas of the county are served.

6 The collection of this data took three months. The information has been inputted into the most comprehensive database of County Council funding yet compiled.

7 On the basis of information gathered during the desk top research stage, witnesses were selected and invited to appear before the Panel during the course of 4 meetings in January / February 2004. Witnesses included representatives of community and voluntary organisations, Officers, Members and Executive Members (see Appendix 5 for a full list of people interviewed by the Panel).

8 The Panel is grateful to all witnesses who attended its meetings, and whose valuable opinions and ideas are reflected in this report. The Panel wishes particularly to extend its thanks to those representatives of community and voluntary organisations who gave up their time to make important and constructive contributions to this review of the County Council's funding processes.

9 This report explains how the issue of funding for community and voluntary organisations came before a Scrutiny Review Panel, and presents the Panel's initial findings along with the results of its research on certain key topics, namely, definitional problems, publicity of funding, application forms and information, Member involvement, monitoring, Compacts, partnership involvement, and internal financial and ICT systems.

## **THE STORY SO FAR (1999 – 2003)**

10 In 1999 Policy Committee created a new corporate grants process for the County Council (this paper is attached as Appendix 6). The aims of this policy were

- 1 To be able to identify the level of spend from the County Council to the community and voluntary sector
- 2 To be able to ascertain that there was not any double funding of groups by different Services or Departments
- 3 To ensure that there was an agreed purpose for all the funding (criteria)
- 4 To ensure that a common process (corporate) was applied by all services
- 5 To ensure that all grants were publicised to offer all organisations equal access to the application process
- 6 To ensure that all grants were monitored to ensure that the Council received value for money.

11 In order to achieve aims one and two, Members approved the creation of a corporate grants database, which was to be maintained by the Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning Service. The application of the new

corporate funding to the community and voluntary sector process, accompanied by common application forms, agreements, monitoring and reporting arrangements, was intended to ensure that aims three to six were achieved.

12 However, in reality, the process was not applied corporately, nor was the database maintained.

13 Initially two new posts were created in Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning, Grants Officer and Grants Assistant, and some progress was made during the year 2000 towards the establishment of the database. This work was hindered from the outset, however, by continued confusion within services as to what constituted a grant, a contract or a Service Level Agreement (SLA). These ongoing definitional problems led to uncertainty amongst Services as to what information they should provide for the database.

14 These initial problems were compounded by staffing difficulties, in December 2000 both the Grants Officer and the Grants Assistant left. The process of establishing the database ceased. Although the Grants Officer post was filled in March 2001 the Assistant post remained vacant until January 2004, due to budgetary pressures within Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning. After March 2001 the Service decided to concentrate its efforts on ensuring that its own grants were correctly administered. Furthermore, the Service decided to await the result of an internal audit of the grants system, in December 2001, before taking any further action with regard to the database.

15 The audit report identified a failure to implement the recommendations of the 1999 Paper, and highlighted various control weaknesses. A draft response to the audit was undertaken, but it was considered that further research and recommendations were required before any final decision could be taken about how to deal with the issues; hence the Members' Scrutiny Review Panel was established.

## **INITIAL FINDINGS**

16 The Panel has been able, despite considerable difficulties, to gather information from each Department to compile the most comprehensive database of information on funding for the community and voluntary sector ever created by the County Council. However, there is no mechanism to capture continually all this information within the Council in order to report an up to date position. The information collated for the Review is just a snapshot for 2003/04. It is essential that mechanisms are put in place within each funding Department to feed this information into the central database, maintained by the Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning Service. It is also necessary for a named individual in each relevant Department to assume responsibility for gathering and passing on the data about all of their funding for the community and voluntary sector.

17 The available resource for allocation in 2003-04 was £7m, with £4.6m from core budgets and £2.4m administered by the County Council on behalf of outside agencies (Appendix 2 shows the budgets for all the funding streams

that each Service either sets aside within its own budgets, or administers on behalf of another agency.) The actual amount of money allocated by the County Council in 2003-04 was £5.7m, with £4.3m from core budgets (Appendix 3 lists each recipient organisation and shows how much they receive). The Panel have increasingly become aware that this funding adds value and attracts additional funding into the community and voluntary sector from other sources as leverage, and can be a very cost effective method for delivering some specific services. The National Council for Voluntary Services' "Hidden Power Report – Highlighting the Hidden Power of the Cheshire Voluntary Sector" (2001) concludes that for every £1 of grant income received the voluntary sector spends £4.20 – meaning that the County Council's £5.7m allocation would actually equate to a value of £24m.

18 The level of detail provided during the Panel's research has not allowed a definitive conclusion to be drawn on levels of spend per district. Although the Panel has ascertained which organisations serve which district, they have only been able to apply the rather crude calculation of dividing each funding award that an organisation receives from the County Council by the number of districts it serves with that funding, to reach a total spend on each district. This is unsatisfactory because whilst an organisation may serve more than one district, it does not necessarily divide the funding it receives equally between these districts. Further, more detailed, research is required, delving into exactly where organisations are spending their funding, before a conclusion can be reached about levels of County Council funding to community and voluntary organisations in each district. Only when these accurate statistics have been gathered can the level of spend be evaluated relative to population and need in each district. With this caveat in mind, Appendix 4 shows indicative figures for the County Council's total funding in each district.

19 The compilation of the funding database has revealed instances of the same organisation receiving multiple funding awards from the County Council, sometimes several from within the same Service. Although it appeared theoretically possible that an organisation could be receiving double funding from the County Council for the delivery of one service, an analysis of the database shows that this is not happening in reality. However, it appears that, inter-Departmentally, Officers do not normally liaise or consult with each other with regard to funding issues. Greater co-ordination between Services and Officers would lead to added value, shared and common monitoring and a consequent reduction in administration. Increased co-ordination would also add clarity for the recipient organisation.

20 The Panel's research has shown that the practice of awarding funding for 'historical' reasons is still commonplace. The particular problem associated with such funding is that it may have continued despite changes to the County Council's priorities or, indeed, changes to the nature of the recipient organisation and the services it delivers.

21 One grant fund (£63,000) set up under Local Management of Schools (LMS), to 'compensate' schools for continued free use of their premises by community and voluntary organisations, in particular scouts and guides, is an indication of such historical funding practice. The Panel is of the view that this

should not be a grant fund and that the resource, though limited, should be used in an alternative way.

22 The Panel's research also suggests that there is a general trend within the County Council towards the use of funding to commission specific services, rather than distributing grants to support organisations' general activities and core costs. The Panel inclines to the view that the County Council should strike an appropriate balance between commissioning and grants awards. Community and voluntary organisations often find it difficult to access core funding from elsewhere, as many benefactors only wish to pay for project work. Furthermore, inviting general applications for funding can encourage organisations to propose innovative solutions, which might not necessarily have been considered if the County Council was exclusively commissioning services.

23 In general the implementation of common standards for funding to the community and voluntary sector has not been a priority area for the County Council, either corporately or within individual Departments, despite the policy approved by Members in 1999. This would seem to be part of the reason why the recommendations for improvement made in the 2001 Internal Audit report have not been implemented.

24 Organisations are often dependent on County Council funding, and they, in turn, play a crucial role in the delivery of its services. The Panel's interviews with both County Council Officers and representatives of community and voluntary organisations revealed a considerable degree of mutual appreciation for the value of each others' work and contribution. Officers praised the richness and diversity of the Cheshire community and voluntary sector.

25 Although the value of the relationship between the County Council and the community and voluntary organisations that it funds is widely recognised privately, it seems that more could be done to publicly articulate and celebrate this partnership. The County Council could give better recognition of the community and voluntary sector's contribution, with positive publicity which may, in itself, help certain organisations to access further funds. In turn, community and voluntary organisations, which often do no more than refer to County Council funding in passing in their annual reports and accounts, should be encouraged to promote the Authority with more prominent acknowledgement of the importance of its funding and partnership arrangements. It needs to be acknowledged that in limited cases such publicity may conflict with the need for that organisation to be seen by the public as independent from the Authority. For some organisations this would be a major issue.

## **DEFINITIONAL PROBLEMS**

26 Throughout the review witnesses have been asked to provide their definitions of key terms, and each has varied. County Council funding to the community and voluntary sector is variously defined as grants, contracts and service level agreements (SLAs). Although these terms are widely used, there is no clear, commonly shared definition of them understood across the

Authority. Audit confirmed that this is a longstanding problem, and that it was a key cause of the difficulties Officers had experienced when trying to gather information for the funding to the community and voluntary sector database from each Department. Without establishing clear definitions the database will continue to be inconsistent and inaccurate in the future. Appendix 4 shows what percentage of funding awards from each Service fall into each category (grant, contract or SLA), this information cannot be considered entirely accurate, as it is based upon Services own differing definitions of each of these terms.

27 The 1999 Paper was preceded by a paper that went to Community Development Panel in 1998, and which proposed four different categories of funding support for the community and voluntary sector and defined each of them

- (1) **Contracts and contractual arrangements:** payments to community and voluntary organisations for specified direct services (the nature of the relationship is the same as that with a private sector provider)
- (2) **Service agreements:** payments to community and voluntary organisations for a specified level of service or support which furthers the County Council's objectives
- (3) **Grant aid:** payments to community and voluntary organisations whose activities further the County Council's aims and objectives
- (4) **One-off projects and "seedcorn":** usually one-off grants to community and voluntary organisations which apply against a set of agreed criteria

28 The Panel decided that these were clear, adequate and provide the definition that is required for this purpose.

29 Contracts and grant aid are subject to different levels of reporting to, and decision making by, Members. This difference is endorsed within the Code of Practice for Financial Management. If this reporting and recording were to remain different, it would be difficult for the Council to ascertain clearly the level of financial support it provides to the community and voluntary sector, and subsequently difficult to calculate the level of added value or best value, and to guarantee that no organisations slip through the net and that all potential double funding is picked up. Therefore it is necessary that all funding to the community and voluntary sector be reported and entered onto the database.

## **PUBLICITY OF FUNDING**

30 One of the principles behind the 1999 Policy Committee Paper approved by Members was that funding to the community and voluntary sector should be well publicised.

31 The Scrutiny Review Panel's research has shown that funding for the community and voluntary sector is not consistently well publicised across the Authority. Representatives of community and voluntary organisations who are

in receipt of County Council funding argued that they are often only aware of funding opportunities because they are already “in the loop.” While some funding streams are extensively publicised and open, others are relatively unknown except to those organisations already receiving them. Even some of the organisations who have longstanding relations with the County Council are not aware of the full range of funding streams to which they can apply. A possible solution to this problem is to produce a summary document showing all funding streams, in addition this information could be included in the Yellow Book.

32 From an Officer perspective, the variety in publicity of funding streams partly reflected a limited capacity to deal with the number of applications that could result if the availability of County Council funding was further publicised. One Department stated that they did not wish to give the false impression that they had substantial financial support available for open distribution, when in fact the vast majority of their funding had to be aimed at organisations and projects that would contribute to the fulfilment of their statutory responsibilities and the achievement of Government targets.

33 In some instances organisations are commissioned to provide services, without being subject to a competitive tendering process. From an Officer perspective this approach is justified if the service in question is so specialised that only one organisation has the capacity to deliver it locally.

## **APPLICATION FORMS AND INFORMATION**

34 One of the principles of the 1999 Paper was that there should be a standardised application form and process for grants.

35 The Panel’s research shows that some Services are not using application forms, and instead entering into discussions and partnership arrangements with community and voluntary organisations, who subsequently invoice them for their funding. In those instances where application forms are used as part of the process, it appears that the corporate form is being used, sometimes with minor alterations to capture the information that particular Services require.

36 Community and voluntary organisations generally found the County Council’s application forms relevant and easy to complete. Some suggestions were made regarding possible alterations and improvements, to allow organisations more space to include information which they feel is important and to explain what they could achieve with more funding. In addition to this, organisations felt the inclusion of more detailed guidance notes would be advantageous, especially as different sectors do not necessarily share the same terminology.

37 The 1999 Policy Paper proposed that in addition to the application form a set of criteria would be sent to applicants. This would outline the basis for, and promote transparency in, decision making. The criteria should be publicised so that external organisations would be able to judge to which fund they should apply. The 1999 Paper also set out the related principle that decision making on grants should be defined and transparent.

38 The Panel's research again suggests that these requirements have not been implemented corporately. Many organisations are not aware of the criteria which determine the success or failure of their applications. Furthermore, some organisations suspect that a failure to publicise criteria meant that, in the event of there being too many applications, they could be unfairly altered to exclude some applicants.

39 Setting out clearer criteria as a matter of course would also benefit the Authority. If such criteria were to set out plainly what would and would not be funded by particular streams, and the length of time such funding would last, then community and voluntary organisations would have a clearer understanding of both what is available and the nature of their relationship with the County Council as a funding body. Organisations would be made to recognise that the County Council is not obliged to fund their activities for an unspecified duration. Such clarity may also serve to discourage some of the unsuitable applications which might be expected if the principle of greater publicising of the availability of funding is acted upon. Finally, informing organisations that the criteria for funding are time limited, and subject to change, would allow organisations to recognise that their proposed application may become suitable at a later date.

## **MEMBER INVOLVEMENT**

40 One of the principles of the 1999 Paper was that regular reports on funding to the community and voluntary sector and monitoring data should be presented to the relevant County Council Committees.

41 Member involvement in the funding for the community and voluntary sector process is irregular throughout the Authority. Members could, and should, play a greater role in various aspects of the process, both from Executive decisions to local Member contact with organisations in their own community.

42 Executive involvement in the process is set out in Financial Regulation 12.1, which states, 'The Executive will on an annual basis, agree a policy setting down the approach to be taken to the allocation of grants, donations and other contributions to outside bodies. This should specify the scale, nature and terms of such support, criteria for prioritisation and the process for allocation'.

43 Executive Members have confirmed that this process does not currently take place. However a regular paper does, in most cases, go to Members in the March cycle of meetings outlining certain funding streams, stating criteria, which organisations were supported during the past year, and, in some cases, proposals for the coming year. The advantages of the Executive, or Executive member for each Department, setting an overall policy, with clear criteria for prioritisation, would be twofold. Firstly it would help to reduce the level of inconsistency amongst Departments and Services. Secondly it would clear up uncertainty in the community and voluntary sector regarding the County Council's funding criteria and related aims.



44 Executive Members were generally not aware that there is a corporate community and voluntary sector funding process. Prior to the Scrutiny Review process they did not know how much money their Department was allocating. Although they were consulted with regard to decision making on the allocation of some of this funding, they were unaware of other funding streams from their Department.

45 Some Members are not aware of which organisations within their division are funded by the County Council, although Members generally agreed that such knowledge is important. Some organisations enjoy regular contact with local Members, whilst others have limited or no contact with Members.

46 The Panel believes that there is great scope for an extended Member role in various aspects of the funding process. Members should be provided with more basic information about community and voluntary organisations operating in their area. This information can be taken from the new funding database, and could be supplemented by additional details supplied by the Lead Officers for individual funding awards.

47 Increased Member involvement in the process is desirable for various reasons. In terms of the Executive's role it is essential in order to fulfil the financial regulations of the County Council, and to provide a coherent corporate policy each year. In terms of the local Member role increased involvement could help to redress some of the problems within the current system, including the lack of feedback to organisations and the need for more rigorous monitoring. It would also help to foster stronger links between the County Council and its community and voluntary sector partners.

48 Processes for increasing local Member involvement will need to be carefully considered and managed. This is necessary to ensure that there is an appropriate division between the role of the Member and the Officer, and that there are suitable channels for the outcomes of Member visits to be fed into the monitoring process. It has also been suggested that County Forums could play a role here, as the bodies to which further information about local recipient community and voluntary organisations is provided. Further developments of the County Forums' role would need to be carefully considered, along with that of the Local Strategic Partnerships, in order to clarify where Members are involved.

## **MONITORING**

49 One of the principles of the 1999 paper was that funding to the community and voluntary sector should be monitored quarterly and payments made only on receipt of monitoring information.

50 The Panel's research has discovered a wide variety of monitoring arrangements across the Authority.

51 Monitoring arrangements include formal meetings, reports from community and voluntary organisations (self monitoring), visits from Officers, or any combination of the above approaches. The frequency of such

monitoring contact also varies, ranging from monthly to annual. In the case of some small grants, monitoring information is not gathered until the funding comes to an end. Levels of monitoring differ not only across Departments and Services, but also across the different localities within the same Service. Organisations are generally only required to provide quantitative data in their self monitoring reports, which they feel does not reflect on the quality of the services they provide.

52 To some extent varieties in the rigour with which funding awards are monitored are justifiable. Factors which can justify variance include the amount of funding being awarded, obviously it does not make sense to request the same monitoring information for a grant to fund a small one off event, as one would require for a major service delivery contract.

53 Most large community and voluntary organisations would be happy to accept more stringent monitoring and provide further information, as they are already required to do so in their reports to other agencies. The potential problems of requesting further information are that this could undermine the capacity of small organisations, or that the County Council could spend a disproportionate amount of money and time on monitoring, relative to the size of the funding awards being examined.

54 Organisations would also welcome more visits from both Officers and Members as part of the monitoring process. The County Council need to develop guidelines to ensure that information from such visits to community and voluntary organisations is fed into the monitoring process. Organisations would also welcome more comments on the monitoring information that they provide. Some organisations receive no comments whatsoever. Even those who do tend to receive them orally, rather than in writing.

55 In the case of some of the historical grants, for example LMS funding to schools to remain open to provide community services, self-monitoring, unsubstantiated by any further checks, is all that is necessary for the funding to be released.

56 In some cases targets are built into the funding agreement. Sometimes targets come from the Authority, in other cases they come from the recipient organisation. It is the view of this Panel that targets, or intended outcomes that can be achieved with the funding, must be clearly agreed between both parties at the outset, monitored and reported on. It is also necessary that baseline figures are included with targets to enable organisations' progress and achievements to be measured.

57 Failure to meet targets, or to provide sufficient evidence of achievements in the monitoring process, can be dealt with in a variety of ways. Most commonly, funding is withheld until monitoring data is provided. In the event of failure to achieve the objectives of the funding, Officers' stated approach would be to attempt to assist the organisation to fulfil its role. In the event of ongoing, persistent poor performance funding would be withdrawn. However, examples of this actually occurring are extremely rare.

## **COMPACTS**

58 The Panel's research has revealed a general lack of knowledge of Compact development, and its implications, across the Authority.

59 In 1998 the national "Compact on Relations between the Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector" was published. It provides a framework to enable better relations to be developed and improved partnership working based on shared values and mutual respect. The national Compact was underpinned by the philosophy that voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic and inclusive society, and that the voluntary and community sector brings distinctive value to society.

60 Guidelines for developing Compacts locally between public authorities and the community and voluntary sector were published in 2000. The Government expects all local statutory sector organisations to be making progress towards involvement in Compacts by 2004. The development of local Compacts is a key target within the Cheshire Community Strategy. The County Council has already signed up to a local Compact in Vale Royal, and has agreed to support Compact development in the 5 other districts.

61 The development of local Compacts should impact upon many aspects of the funding for the community and voluntary sector process as described in this paper. As well as requiring consistency in funding arrangements across the local public sector, Compacts may also require fairer access to funding, clear criteria, increased clarity about monitoring and evaluation, early notification of decisions to organisations, and increased sustainability and long term planning.

62 Despite the significance of Compact development, the Panel's research shows that both Officers and Members of the County Council are generally unaware of the concept and its implications. Even those who recognised the term felt that they still needed further information.

63 Some of the community and voluntary sector organisations interviewed were equally unacquainted with the concept. Those organisations who did understand it expressed mixed opinions, ranging from enthusiasm to concern about attempts to apply a "one size fits all" solution to a highly diverse sector.

64 There is a general desire amongst recipient organisations, and many Officers, for greater use of 3 year funding agreements. Some of the benefits of these are that medium term planning is improved as it is underpinned by the required funding. One year funding does present difficulties where staff contracts are involved.

65 Compact compliance will affect all aspects of the relationship, including funding, between the County Council and the community and voluntary sector. The implementation of the action plan recommended by the Panel would move the County Council towards Compact compliance, but a more considered review of the full implications of Compacts needs to go hand in hand with their ongoing development at local level.

## **PARTNERSHIP INVOLVEMENT**

66 The development of closer links between the different public sector agencies that fund the community and voluntary sector is an essential part of Compacts. This is also an issue that was highlighted by some community and voluntary organisations, who wanted to see greater co-ordination of processes, to simplify matters, and of decision making, to remove uncertainty over whether each part of their funding would continue.

67 Agencies with which such links should be developed include the District Councils, the Primary Care Trusts, the National Lottery and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The LSPs are particularly significant as a forum for creating links and sharing information with other funders and interested parties. The County Council should also give due regard to the LSPs' priorities when making decisions about its own allocation priorities.

## **INTERNAL FINANCIAL AND ICT SYSTEMS**

68 The financial systems within the Council, with the introduction of Integrated Business Systems (IBS), will record and report all financial activity that has occurred. Within IBS this will only show its full benefit if clearer guidelines and the subsequent use of the coding structure are applied and adhered to.

69 Current systems do not appear to have the capability to assist in areas that are essential in meeting the requirements about double funding, except showing where one organisation may receive multiple payments from the Authority. Such multiple payments are not evidence of double funding, but upon further investigation utilising this information such occurrences could be identified after the funding has occurred.

70 An investigation to identify an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) package or solution in order to capture comprehensive data to assist a Council approach needs to be a priority. Such a package would need to offer an interrogation aspect, in order to address issues of multiple or double funding prior to it occurring, and assist in the administrative process of application, monitoring and payment, therefore it will need to interface with IBS systems.

71 The clarity offered within the Financial Guidelines is, at times, ambiguous and not always helpful. The Guidelines do not adequately separate inward grants to the County Council and outward grants from the County Council. In addition some further synergies between contracts, service level agreements or grants for the procurement of services require further investigation, in particular with regard to reporting to Members and their involvement.

## **CONCLUSION**

72 Some considerable progress has been made to respond to the 1999 Decision Paper, but not enough. The identification within this referring to just grants is insufficient, as it does not wholly meet the intentions behind it. It

must include all funding to the community and voluntary sector regardless of the contractual arrangement.

73 Earlier attempts to create a database of all County Council funding to the community and voluntary sector failed. As a result of the Scrutiny process a comprehensive database has been established for the first time. It is essential that this database is maintained in the future. In order to do this systems and communication between Services and Departments need to be improved. It is essential that named individuals in each Department assume responsibility for gathering and passing on information for the database.

74 A Council approach is required, but this does not necessitate a centralisation of the processes or staff, as the direct personal contact and understanding between lead Officers, administrators and recipient organisations is essential to maintain the good relationships between the Authority and the community and voluntary sector.

75 The involvement of Members does need some further clarity to reflect the changes in political management and the changing roles of elected Members in relation to County Forums, and the development of Local Strategic Partnerships.

76 The concept of, and the subsequent action by the Authority on, Compact Development requires an improved level of understanding. The leadership within the organisation and with other public bodies on this matter appears to be spasmodic and at best not co-ordinated.

77 The contribution made by the community and voluntary sector in improving the quality of life for Cheshire residents is often insufficiently recognised.

78 It has proved difficult for the Panel to be precise about the resource implications of its recommendations and action plan. The Panel recognise that the actions recommended will result in extra costs in some cases but this is difficult to quantify at this stage as further work needs to be undertaken. However, it is clear that whilst few extra resources may be required for each individual action, cumulatively these actions would probably imply a considerable resource allocation.

## **A GENERAL NOTE ON THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PROCESS**

79 The Panel have found this Scrutiny Review Process challenging but immensely rewarding. This work has the potential to bring substantial benefits to the Authority as a whole and to its partners. This Scrutiny Review has required intensive work both by the Members and the Officers providing support, in order to complete within the timescale. The quality of the reporting which has been attained is due to the willingness of Officers and Members to give time, commitment and energy to the completion of the process, which in some cases can impinge heavily on their normal work. The Panel wishes to state that, in the interests of ensuring that future Reviews are always carried out as thoroughly as possible, the amount of Officer and Member time required for such scrutiny be noted, and that further resources, where appropriate, be dedicated to supporting the process.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) The Action Plan produced by the Scrutiny Review Panel be endorsed and implemented, acknowledging that any staff and budgetary requirements need to be assessed as part of subsequent years' MTS processes;
- (2) People and Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee be the body responsible for monitoring County Council funding for the community and voluntary sector, and for the implementation of this report's action plan on an annual basis; and
- (3) Performance and Overview Committee considers what advice it wishes to offer to the Executive concerning the allocation of additional resources to support the Scrutiny Review process.