

Final Draft Plan

Improving Hampshire County Council’s relationship with the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS)

We already have a strong relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector but recent reviews have shown that we need to make some changes to continue to improve. This is even more important as the Council faces the increasing challenge of matching scarce resources to the different community aspirations of our residents and communities. Local authorities are facing major changes to the way services are provided especially the transformation of social care and the ‘Universal Offer’ which is about making sure that everyone gets something. There are 3 key elements:

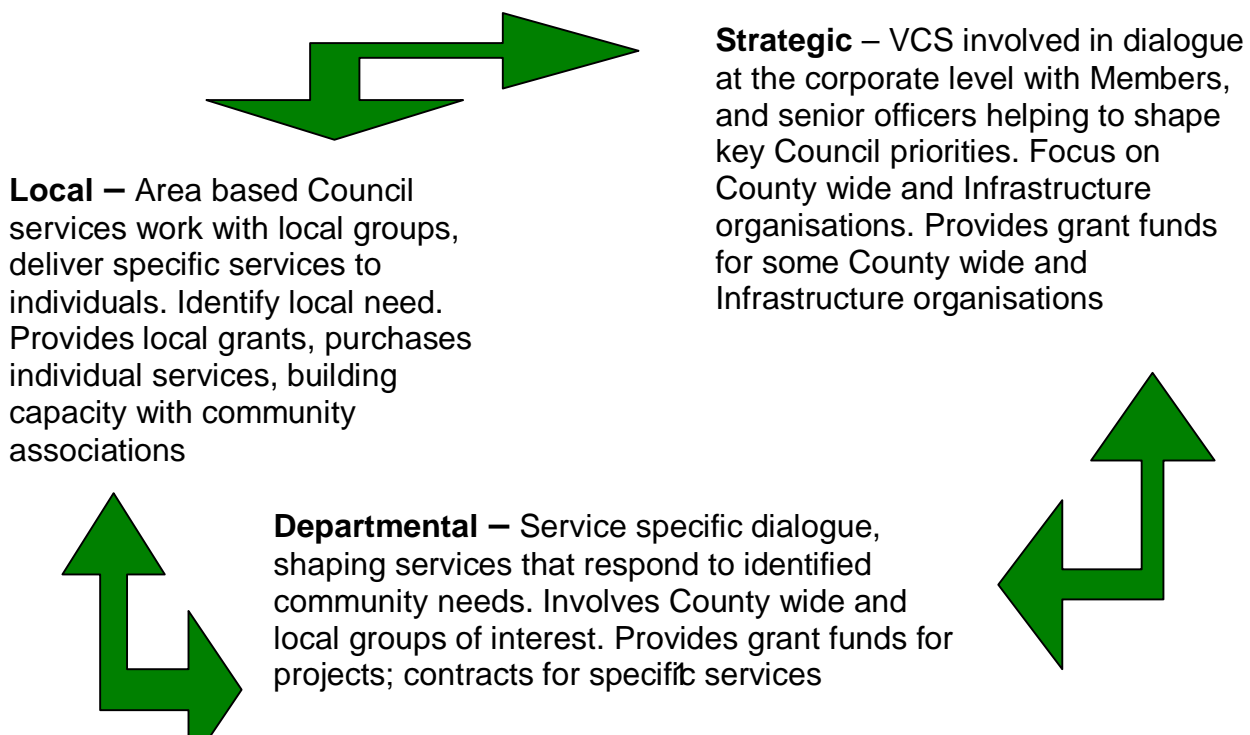
- Access to quality information and advice
- Access to everyday life
- That little bit of help to keep people safe, well and fulfilled

It is important to be realistic about the challenge in improving the relationship with the VCS; this will take time and commitment from both sectors to move away from established ways of working in order to think and act creatively so that together we can make a difference to the wellbeing of people in Hampshire.

What does the relationship look like?

The County Council delivers a wide range of services to Hampshire residents directly and in partnership with other organisations. In order to do this effectively we need to understand and respond to the needs of different communities, both rural and urban, across the County. Voluntary, Community and Faith groups play an important role; they connect with local people and contribute to the wellbeing of communities by providing some support and care services as well as promoting volunteering opportunities. The VCS is made up of many different organisations and individuals who are well placed to respond to community aspirations by doing things differently, identifying capacity within the community and attracting funds that the Council is unable to access. These organisations are important partners for the Council as we develop our approach to community engagement and involvement in service design and delivery.

There are different relationships across the Council:



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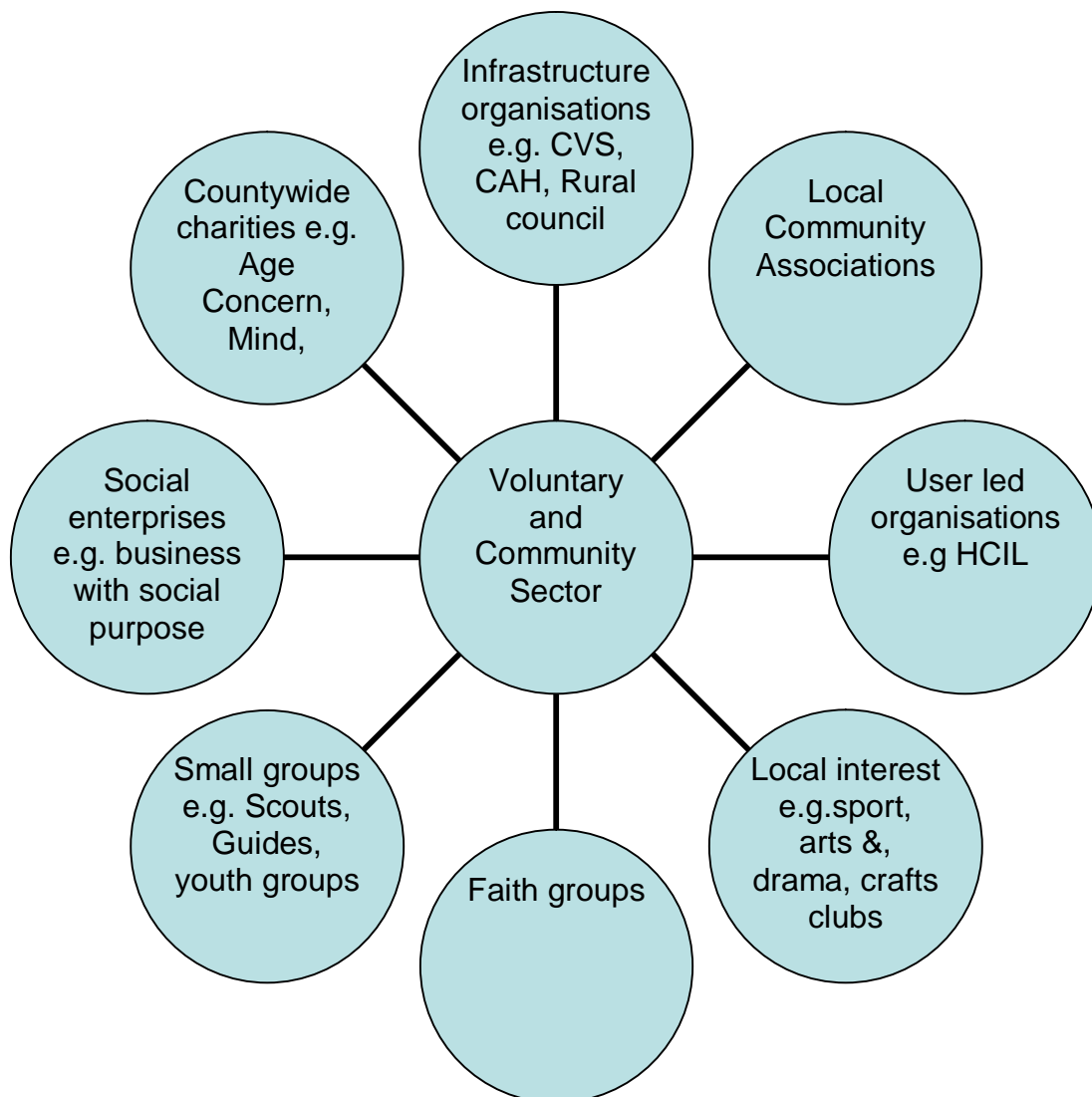
The way that the County Council works with the sector needs to reflect this recognizing the dynamic and changing relationship.

The sector is diverse:

The Voluntary & Community Sector is not homogenous. It is hugely diverse ranging from unincorporated small local community groups to multimillion pound organisations. The way they deliver services is diverse too through a mix of paid staff and volunteers.

Traditionally they all have the following common characteristics:

- they are not set up by statute nor are they directly responsible for statutory services
- they do not distribute profits/ surpluses for private gain
- their governance is undertaken by volunteers (trustees)
- they are driven by values and beliefs



Given this diversity the Council needs to understand the scope of the sector and take a flexible and proportionate approach when working with different groups and organisations. For example there should be different performance and monitoring requirements for support to a local arts project than for a grant of £10,000 or a contract worth £200,000.

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Why do we need to work with the sector?

The County Council wants to have a mature relationship based on mutual trust and respect. To achieve this we need to work more closely in and with local communities to improve services and tackle deprivation so that we can:

- Take decisions which are clear about how and when communities are informed through consultation.
- Design and deliver services which reflect community priorities and needs – either through constructing structured consultation or acting on existing community information.
- Respond to deprivation with sustained, joined up action between services and with partners – with tangible outcomes.
- Build on the role of HCC Elected Members in joining up the Council's and partner resources locally to deliver all of this in the most efficient and effective way.
- Create community capacity to respond to new ways of working e.g the "Universal Offer"

This will have the following outcomes (some of these objectives are in the LAA):

- People feel they have an influence and a stake in Hampshire and their community
- Strong and self supporting communities with a sense of belonging and participation
- Service users and residents have a say in service design and delivery

And represent the following principles:

- Tackling inequality and deprivation requires sustained, joined up action between Hampshire County Council, partners and the communities themselves.
- Better value for money will be achieved by joining up the services and resources of Hampshire County Council, partners and the communities themselves.
- Engaging people and communities and helping to strengthen communities and their resilience
- All partners to be responsible for safeguarding vulnerable people

The County Council's relationship with the VCS will be key to delivering this. The Council and the VCS infrastructure bodies ¹will need to help develop capacity in communities especially those that are deprived or usually excluded. Local authorities have a crucial social inclusion role and therefore we will expect the VCS to be more inclusive. We want to harness the talent in all sectors to bring about more innovative ways of working together moving towards more collaborative working by encouraging alliances which will support smaller organisations to thrive

¹ Councils for Voluntary Services are Infrastructure bodies , their role is to support smaller voluntary organisations through training, guidance, funding advice, support with legal compliance

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Improvement will take time!

The challenge is to take action that will:

- **Improve the nature of the partnership with the Voluntary & Community Sector**
- **Work with the VCS to develop their capacity to deliver services in support of the County Council**
- **Ensure that the Council can be a better client**
- **Find ways for the Council to be a better Commissioner providing value for money for Hampshire taxpayers**
- **Make sure that the Council can manage performance in a pragmatic and proportionate way.**

These are challenges for us all, both sectors need to be patient and understand that change takes time and effort.

This is what success will look like	This is how we will measure success corporately and departmentally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual trust and respect for each others roles & values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Area Agreement indicators -Environment for thriving VCS This will be overseen by the Hampshire Senate and monitored by Hampshire Action Teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are involved in the governance arrangements of support for VCS orgs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a VCS/HCC relationship group involving members, officers & VCS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members feel that grants provide Value For Money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money indicators in grants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Members and HCC Officers recognise the value of the VCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Area Agreement indicators -Environment for thriving VCS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship is open, honest and able to respond to a changing environment in innovative ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Area Agreement indicators -Environment for thriving VCS -Number of people volunteering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCS (3rd sector) organisations feel they are involved in design & delivery of public services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in public view that services meet their needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCS has the capacity to deliver services and secure a growing proportion of service delivery contact because they represent best value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends in volume of VCS contracts
<p>VCS (3rd sector) has effective mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Area Agreement indicators

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to ensure cross sector representation in the way the County Council plans services	-Environment for thriving VCS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public recognises Council's impact on communities through VCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCS social impact measurement Range of case studies showing: Input - output - outcome - impact

This is what we will do

- Review the Council's approach to the Compact
- Create a strategic partnership group with Members to oversee the work
- Annual HCC + VCS seminar
- Increase volunteering by coordinating our approach and encouraging staff to volunteer
- Improve consistency of grants process
- Find ways to support VCS through tendering process where appropriate to facilitate service provision
- Pump prime VCS where appropriate to facilitate innovation in service provision
- Improve performance management – report to CPEG
- Promote awareness of this plan to staff, Members & VCS highlighting respective roles
- Provide different ways to support new organisations to develop that may challenge the status quo especially underrepresented/overlooked groups

This is how we will monitor progress

Corporate Improvement target aim 3 - Improving Capacity to Deliver through increased engagement & developed capacity in the voluntary & community sector. Progress monitored through the Corporate Performance & Efficiency Group (CPEG).

Performance relating to the Local Area Agreement priority outcome “to ensure there is an environment for a thriving third sector” will be over seen by the Hampshire Senate. The County Council's performance against this target will be measured through this strategic plan and monitored locally by Hampshire Action Teams.

The strategic partnership group involving Members, VCS reps & Officers will oversee this plan and report annually to CPEG. Each department will monitor service specific liaison with relevant third sector organisations and report to this group.

Consultation on Hampshire County Council's plan to 'Improve the Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS)

Response form – please return to jane.goodwin@hants.gov.uk by the 19th March 2010

1. How well do the issues raised in this plan reflect your views?

2. We need to focus on a few achievable actions and have identified that greater consistency in the way we manage grants & contracts are the most important areas for attention – do you agree with this or are there is another area which is a higher priority?

3. The opportunity for strategic dialog between key VCS representatives and the key decision makers in the County Council is very important. We believe that this needs to be based on our mutual role to understand and respond to the key challenges which Hampshire and it's communities face in the future. Our current thoughts are that this would happen twice a year to inform our budget decisions and then to review impact. Do you have any other suggestions for how this strategic dialog can be most effective?

4. The plan shows that HCC interacts with the VCS at different levels.

We think that working with the Hampshire Voluntary Sector Consortium (HVSC) is the most obvious way to engage with the strategic dialog i.e helping shape the Council priorities, because it is already established. Do you agree or are there other routes?

5. Do you agree with the proposals for measuring success?

6. Any Other Comments



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Direct Line **01962 847300**

Your reference

Date **9 December 2009**

E-mail **andrew.j.smith@hants.gov.uk**

Dear Colleagues

Consultation on Hampshire County Council's plan to 'Improve the Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS)

Following a review of our relationship and a survey undertaken in support of the Local Area Agreement which looked at what factors influence a thriving third sector, we committed ourselves to improving the way we work with the voluntary and community sector across all departments. Our priority is the provision of efficient services which offer value for money to Hampshire residents and we recognise that better partnership working with the voluntary and community sector will help us to achieve that priority.

The future of public service provision is increasingly under detailed scrutiny and we are moving into a very challenging financial period. This is only right as we use taxpayers money to provide services and are accountable for ensuring that we provide best value for money. It is clear from the work that we have been doing in the past year with you that both sectors need to change the way we do business. To get a better understanding of what needs to change we have been working with members of the Hampshire Voluntary Sector Consortium and as a result we have identified some of those change areas. This has been described in a draft improvement plan which sets out what we think is needed to achieve a better partnership with you.

It is important that this is developed in partnership and that the views of the wider VCS are heard, to see if our thoughts match yours and to address any areas of difference. Therefore, I am very pleased to send you a copy of our improvement plan and ask for your comments on a number of areas.

This consultation starts on Friday 11th December for fourteen weeks. To respond please complete the attached response form and return by post or email to either jane.goodwin@hants.gov.uk or paddy.hillary@hants.gov.uk by 19th March 2010. It is then planned that the final plan will be agreed by Cabinet on 26th April 2010.

Chief Executive
Andrew Smith OBE MA DPA MBA

Personally, I would like to add my thanks to you for your contribution throughout the year and also my support for a thriving partnership with the voluntary sector in the future.

With very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Andrew Smith".

Andrew Smith
Chief Executive