

COMPACT

between

**THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY
ORGANISATIONS OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT**

and

THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

1. BACKGROUND

The Government has launched a Compact defining the relationship between itself and the Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS). The Government's view is that voluntary groups bring distinctive value to society and engage the skills, interests, beliefs and values of individuals and groups. The Isle of Wight Council agrees with this view and has consequently drawn up this Local Compact relative to the Council and the Voluntary Sector on the Island.

The Isle of Wight Council is the single Unitary Authority for the Island, comprising 48 elected Members. It delivers a full range of local authority statutory and other services to the community and, by its nature, is a democratically elected body with political affiliations. The services delivered by the Council are disparate and the organisation encompasses seven Directorates, each with its own service groupings. While the Council enters into the spirit of the Compact and its contents and recognises the need to work towards forging a new and meaningful relationship with the Voluntary Sector, it hopes that it will be recognised that it is a statutory body regulated by legislation and political associations, and it must reserve unto itself any decisions concerning the Council arising from proposals under this document.

The Voluntary Sector is diverse, both in the nature of the organisations which it includes and in terms of their aims and objectives. Groups and organisations may be very local or part of a broad national network. They may involve only voluntary effort or may have paid staff and extensive annual budgets. Locally we have:

- self help or mutual support groups responding to particular conditions (eg medical, unemployment, poverty, disability).
- organisations which focus upon a particular interest (eg ecological, environmental, religious, social, cultural).
- groups which work in the community in different ways, either concentrating on particular issues or age groups or localities / neighbourhoods.
- the Rural Community Council (RCC) which is the Island's Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and the main link between the VCS and the Isle of Wight Council (IWC).
- a Voluntary Sector Forum which is a representative network, open to all groups and individuals from the VCS. A representative Voluntary Sector Cabinet is elected annually by the Forum and deals with matters of concern to the sector on their behalf.
- providers of services to those in need or socially excluded.

2. A LOCAL ISLE OF WIGHT COMPACT

A Compact is about developing better working relationships between the Council and the VCS on the Island. The work of these voluntary organisations help to provide support and services to individuals and groups. Their contribution to "every day" life helps to improve the quality of life for Island residents and is rendered fundamental to a democratic, socially inclusive society by enabling individuals to contribute to the community by engaging their skills, interests, beliefs and values. A Compact should be a starting point for developing and improving our partnerships based on shared values and mutual respect.

2.1 Principles

The primary aim of the Compact is to work towards developing better working relationships between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector for the benefit of the Island community, bearing in mind the growing role that the sector will be expected to take in service delivery.

The principles contained within a local Compact should facilitate planning and action between the Council and Voluntary and Community Sector towards mutually shared aims which underpin the quality of life for Island people. As well as addressing more easily identified issues such as clear, open and equitable funding mechanisms, the Compact should aim to establish an ethos of recognition, respect, trust and honesty between partners.

Basic principles will underpin the relationship:

- ' understanding each others' qualities, values, opportunities and constraints
- ' an independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the quality of Island life.
- ' to foster a partnership approach towards common aims and objectives.
- ' undertake meaningful consultation, improving relationships and policy development.
- ' there is a common need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and honesty
- ' open and equitable funding processes.
- ' equality.
- ' learning from each other and sharing of good practice
- ' monitoring and reviewing to enable development

2.2 The Isle of Wight Council undertakes to:

- ' recognise the independence of the Voluntary Sector
- ' have a clear, consistent and appropriate funding mechanism
- ' work towards building up policy consultation with the Voluntary Sector in appropriate cases
- ' promote good practice in the Council's dealings with the Voluntary Sector
- ' review the Compact annually with the Voluntary Sector

2.3 The Voluntary Sector undertakes to:

- ' encourage high standards of governance and conduct and to meet reporting and accountability obligations
- ' ensure maximum possible information sharing and consultation takes place with users, volunteers, members, supporters and other agencies
- ' discuss with the Council how they might best work towards joining the Council's website.
- ' adopt a variety of measures to promote good practice in service delivery
- ' review the compact annually with the Council

2.4 What the Voluntary Sector can offer the Isle of Wight Council:

The Voluntary & Community Sector offers a distinctive way of working and is able to assist development in the following areas:

- ' Inward Investment
- ' Community Development
- ' Employment Opportunities
- ' Training
- ' Provision of services to the community and those in need

Upon signing up to the Compact, the Isle of Wight Voluntary Sector would commit to:

- ' time to be part of the commissioning process
- ' being honest critics/advocates
- ' feed in views from the community (not own personal views) and from the Voluntary Sector
- ' focus on client needs
- ' offer choices to clients
- ' offer a range of services

- ' sharing relevant skills, knowledge and experience
- ' take account of regional and national best practice for organisations concerned
- ' develop our own quality indicators where funder indicators are not appropriate
- ' agree to the independent arbitration process defined in the Compact
- ' adherence to the Voluntary Sector 'Tree of Values' agreed at their first annual Forum (Appendix 1)
- ' the developmental process addressing agreed aims and objectives.

2.5 How the Council can help, if available resources can be identified:

- ' Making staff available for joint Partnership Working as appropriate*
- ' Sharing use of expertise and assets such as equipment and accommodation*
- ' Provision of equipment/office machinery for Partnership purposes*
- ' Opportunity to purchase training provided by the Learning Centre
- ' Creation of a Skills Directory including provision of advice and information, upon identification of relevant budget
- ' Provide grant aid, service level agreements and contracts according to budget availability
- ' Provide a list of organisations in receipt of grant aid
- ' Ensuring that all departments that have involvement with the Voluntary Sector, deal, and are seen to deal, even-handedly with all sector groups.
- ' Agree to proper consideration of Partnership Proposals at the CommunityLink Committee, whether put forward by the VCS or the Council
- ' Maintain balanced influence between Partnership members
- ' Agree to the independent mediation process defined in the Compact
- ' Recognise the Voluntary Sector as a partner here to stay, able to work professionally, close to communities (not only geographically), able to help the council deliver on statutory requirements and its own policies, and that the voluntary sector arises from a position of local experience and networks good practice nationally, as well as locally.

* Where these can be made available and real costs are identified, these will be treated as grant aid.

2.6 Some desired outcomes of the Compact:

- a. To create a better relationship by:
 - Understanding each others' qualities, values and constraints
 - Behaving in an open and honest way in our dealings with each other
- b. Gradually build up and improve communication between the Council and the VCS by means of meaningful consultation and the timely two way flow of information. Include the VCS in Council consultation activities where relevant, and in particular within the Community Planning initiative.
- c. Gain maximum value from grants and contracts
- d. Make progress in the Modernising Agenda
- e. Maintain an equitable funding process including:
 - a level playing field
 - no unnecessary bureaucracy
 - realistic timetables
- f. Linked impact assessment so that, for instance, the burden of costs does not fall most heavily on the most vulnerable. The RCC to act as a pathway in these considerations. In the event of budgetary cuts becoming necessary, the VCS is to be consulted over budget setting in

company with other bodies, in the same manner as the private sector.

- g. To take into account the needs and requirements of carers and service users.
- h. Disputes or disagreements to be dealt with through the CommunityLink Committee's arbitration and grievance procedures.

3. COMPACT BENEFITS

The co-operative and collaborative climate created by the Compact will encourage and strengthen the following activities enabling their more effective and efficient delivery by co-ordinating and improving support and liaison between the authority and the voluntary sector. This requires active communication between the parties to secure the greatest benefits from new opportunities and existing services.

3.1 Inward investment

In the UK, voluntary work is estimated to have a total value of £12 billion [National Council of Voluntary Organisations]. An illustration of the economic impact of the voluntary and community sector on the Island is provided below by quoting the members of the Voluntary Sector Cabinet in 1999. This shows the additional funding (Inward Investment) attracted by Cabinet member organisations at that time.

Cabinet Members	Annual Turnover	Inward Investment (1 year)	No. Paid Staff (fte)	No. of Volunteers
Women's Refuge	£110,000	£75,000	4	15
South Wight Housing Association	£6,500,000	£822,000	52	6
Rural Community Council	£466,000	£379,000	14	171
Age Concern I.W.	£70,000	£35,825	3	15
Youth Trust	£90,000		2	

Unlocking partnership funding

Partnership working between the statutory, voluntary and sometimes private sectors is encouraged by criteria set down by some funders. Many of the larger pots of money can only be accessed where it can be shown that a cross section of organisations are fully involved and where the participation of the Voluntary Sector can be cited. For example, Single Regeneration Budget money drawn down to the Island so far amounts to £14.73m. SRB funding is only achieved through partnership with the voluntary and community sectors. Other examples of partnership funding include the successful bid for the Healthy Living Centre, securing £1m from the National Lottery's New Opportunities Fund and Sure Start in Ryde worth £2.2m carries an expectation of full community and voluntary sector involvement.

Increased take-up of entitlements to central government benefits

Some of the voluntary sector's activities result in members of the community being able to claim entitlements to various central government benefits about which they may not have known or which they had felt unable to understand. This is particularly valuable in the case of the elderly or of other vulnerable members of society.

The I.W. Citizens' Advice Bureau's Welfare Rights service has so far released almost £900,000 to members of the Island community by way of securing a variety of entitlements which might otherwise have gone unclaimed.

3.2 Service delivery

To help to design services around community needs.

Voluntary user groups, community groups and service providers can help to tailor service provision more closely to client and community needs. Involving such voluntary groups in the design and commissioning process can help to achieve Best Value. Where gaps or shortfalls are discovered in the service, the voluntary sector can help to find alternative means of filling them or funding them.

To give added value / multiplier effect of volunteers' work.

The effectiveness of paid voluntary sector workers is multiplied by their being able to engage the time, skills and energies of volunteers, as illustrated by the table on the previous page.

3.3 Community development

Community Development is a way in which Local Authorities can work together with the community in developing and fostering working partnerships.

This can be achieved in a variety of ways and can depend on the geographical and demographic make up of the community. The voluntary sector has an important role to play in that they can complement and enhance the services that the council provides. A mutual understanding of each others requirements is likely to bring about improved achievements and outcomes, which may not have been accomplished if working in isolation.

Identifying the local community's needs is a vital starting point on the road to coping with problems such as social exclusion, for example. Cross-cutting issues such as this affect many groups of vulnerable people including the young, unemployed, the elderly and the disabled. In some cases whole communities can think themselves excluded if they feel that their neighbourhood has been forgotten or neglected.

It is important to understand the importance of re-building confidence within local communities and enabling local people to have their say. It is through local Forums, Town and Parish Councils, other community groups and in particular the voluntary sector that the voice of the local community can be heard and responded to.

Meeting local government modernising requirements

In July 1998, the government published its white paper entitled "Modern Local Government - In Touch With The People". It set out a long term strategy for the reform and modernisation of local government and some brief excerpts are reproduced here to identify those areas within which the council and the voluntary sector can work to achieve benefit together for the Island Community.

It states that modern councils should be in touch with the people, provide high quality services and give vision and leadership for local communities. Modern local government plays a vital role in improving the quality of peoples' lives and change is needed so that councils everywhere can fulfil this potential. The old culture of paternalism and inwardness needs to be swept away and the framework in which councils operate as representatives of the communities they serve needs to be renewed.

Chapter 8 of the paper is about promoting the well-being of communities. It highlights issues such as sustainable development, social exclusion, crime, education and training, and states that councils are

ideally placed to work with government, their communities and the wide range of public, private and voluntary sector bodies who operate at local level and who need to come together to successfully address these challenges.

It is clear, therefore, that close and effective working between the council and the voluntary sector is a key requisite and that this Compact should provide the framework within which it will be accomplished.

Advocacy

The VCS is able to act as advocates for the disadvantaged, vulnerable or disempowered.

Many voluntary sector organisations play the vital role of advocate for the disadvantaged and excluded. Advocacy can be provided to unpopular or difficult individuals who do not necessarily fit statutory criteria. The voluntary sector can often provide an impartial view; if appropriate, acting for the individual and their needs rather than because of a statutory obligation. They can also provide a fresh view of a situation. This may sometimes mean opposition to the council's position on an issue and the role of honest critic is important to the democratic process.

Advocates can also interpret legal processes, including council procedures, which can be confusing and offputting to individuals and otherwise result in their disempowerment.

New guidelines are expected in respect of those bodies involved in advocacy, and it is expected that all voluntary sector organisations on the Island engaged in this activity will adopt and abide by these guidelines when they emerge.

Minority Groups

Both the council and the voluntary sector have roles to play in encouraging and supporting the full participation of minority groups. Minorities are often overlooked on the Island as there are few visible 'minority communities' here. This assumption can lead to even further exclusion and many black and ethnic minority voluntary groups feel themselves to be outside the traditional structures of the voluntary and statutory sectors. We need to ensure that their opinions are included in any consultation and decision making process.

3.4 Employment

The voluntary sector is a major employer on the Island, making a significant contribution to New Deal and Island job creation. It increases employability within the community through training and giving people references and support in getting into, and remaining in, employment.

Increasing Employability: Learning new skills (i.e. word processing, book keeping)
 Gaining confidence in dealing with people
 Learning to be in a work environment
 Work based experience for formal qualifications (i.e. NVQ)
 Enlarging job search network opportunities

4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES & EQUALITY

Equality and Equal Opportunities are key values of both the Council and the VCS. It is felt necessary, therefore, to set out clear and strict conditions under which all those associated with this compact will act.

Neither party to the Compact shall treat one group of people less favourably than others because of their colour, race, gender, disability, age, sexuality, nationality or minority group origin, in relation to decisions to recruit, train or promote staff or volunteers, or providing services to others.

The following legislation and Codes of Practice must be adhered to:

? Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice for Employment

- ? Race Relations Act, 1976
- ? The Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice on employment, discrimination and equal pay
- ? The Sex Discrimination Act, 1975
- ? The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 and associated good practice guides for employment and the provision of goods and services
- ? Health & Safety Act, 1974
- ? Any subsequent amendments or relevant new legislation

The Council and the VCS must be sensitive to the needs and wishes of individual people in the Isle of Wight when providing services, and take into account a person's age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, culture, race, language or religion, and ensure as far as possible that fair access to services and consultation is given to all people equally.

If any court or tribunal, or the Commission for Racial Equality should make any finding of unlawful discrimination against the Council or any Voluntary Sector organisation represented by the signatories to this agreement, every endeavour shall be made to work towards the rectification of the deficiency.

5. **MEDIATION**

If any dispute or difference should arise between the Council and the Voluntary Sector in connection with or arising from the Compact, it shall be referred to the Link Officers who shall endeavour to resolve the conflict. This shall include the unreasonable reduction or cessation of funding.

If either party is dissatisfied with the Link Officers' resolution or if no resolution is reached, the matter may be referred to the CommunityLink Committee who may deal with the matter as they see fit and recommend ways of improving relationships.

It is, however, recognised that where services are purchased by the council from the voluntary sector through a contractual or service level agreement process, the contract or agreement will often have its own defined procedure to be followed in the event of default or dispute. The mediation process outlined in the above paragraph will not therefore apply to any disagreements which are governed by such contractual procedures.

5. **REVIEW**

The Compact will be an evolving document and be reviewed by the Council and the Voluntary Sector on an annual basis and be the subject of a report to the CommunityLink Committee accordingly. The review should be instituted and managed by the Compact Link Officers and should:

- j Examine how the relationship is now perceived.
- j Log significant achievements resulting from the Compact.
- j Identify major issues which have impacted on the Voluntary Sector and the Council during the year.
- j Agree learning points from difficulties and missed opportunities.
- j Identify issues likely to impact on both sides during the coming year.
- j Review and revise the Action Plan.

7. ACTION PLAN

7.1 Projects

Subject	Scope	Who	Commencement
Council Grant Funding	Review the Council's grant funding process, ensuring an even-handed and open approach		
CommunityLink mediation framework	Create a mediation framework for resolution of disagreements.		
Consultation	Meaningful, inclusive consultation between both parties, with realistic timetables, on a Community Strategy for the Island.		
Contract assistance / training / support / bidding advice.	Encouragement for IWC Departments to harmonise voluntary sector funding and contracting arrangements and to adopt agreed criteria. Review timetables to take account of particular difficulties faced by smaller or new organisations. Train officers responsible for funding/grants/contracts with voluntary sector. Voluntary organisations signing contracts with IWC to also sign up to Compact. The contracting process should promote equal access and opportunities to all providers.		
Communication	To make information available between and within the voluntary sector and the I.W. Council via a variety of means and frequencies contained in an approved and agreed protocol.		
Familiarisation	Create an induction / training / information pack and provide training for new and existing I.W. Councillors. Provide training jointly with the Voluntary Sector. Consider role exchange. Include Voluntary Sector information and training in Members induction process. Voluntary Sector to hold seminars for members and officers about Island Voluntary Sector.		
Review of the Compact	Annually review and develop the Compact		Annual

7. LINK OFFICERS

8.1 Responsibilities of Link Officers

- To take forward the Action Plan
- To manage the annual review process, ensuring that opinions and comments from both the Voluntary and Community sector and the Council are considered, evaluated and reported to the CommunityLink Committee.
- To act as a contact for Voluntary and Community organisations and the Council respectively, to express views and ideas about how the compact could be developed.
- To work in a consultative, deliberative and objective way.

Since the Education & Community Development Directorate and the Social Services & Housing Directorate have particularly close ties with the voluntary sector, it is felt that there should be a dedicated link officer for each of those departments. Social Services in particular work closely with their voluntary sector contractors and other interested parties, but it is inevitable that this very close focus is confined to a small proportion of the whole sector. Although keen, therefore, to develop the widest possible relationship with the voluntary sector, it must be accepted that the partnership between Social Services and their chosen contractors will be more deep seated than that with the sector at large.

Issues that may be raised between the Council and the voluntary and community sector will vary widely from the very specific to broader and more generic matters. Part of the Link Officers' tasks will be to connect the relevant people from both sides to handle the more detailed matters and to field more strategic issues to a wider and higher level audience. The emphasis in all cases must be towards finding solutions.

8.2 Link Officers for this Agreement

Until notified otherwise, the Link Officers for this agreement will be:

Link Officer For The Voluntary & Community Sector:

Pauline Simon
I.W. Rural Community Council

Link Officers For The Council:

Corporate: Peter Greenwood
Corporate Policy Manager
Chief Executive's Office
Isle of Wight Council

Education Dept: George Weech
Principal Youth & Community Officer
Directorate of Education & Community Development
Isle of Wight Council

Social Services Dept: Dawn Cousins
Head of Central Support Services
Directorate of Social Services & Housing
Isle of Wight Council

Parties to the Agreement: The Isle of Wight Council
The Isle of Wight Voluntary Sector Forum

This Agreement sets out clear expectations which both parties will use their best endeavours to honour. It is not intended that the terms of the agreement should be legally binding on either party.

For the Isle of Wight Council

For the Isle of Wight Voluntary Sector Forum

Signed:

Signed:

Name:

Name:

Position:

Position:

Date:

Date:

VALUES

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR TREE OF VALUES

Independence
Integrity & honesty
Not for profit
For the benefit of communities (inc. communities of interest)
Responsiveness
Promoting equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practices
Promotion of social cohesiveness but respecting differentiation
Advocacy and self-help
'Conscientisation' (awakening consciences)
Working at local level (subsidiarity)
Valuing individuals
Enhancing the understanding of different cultures
Relationship and process orientation
Campaigning for social change / challenging
Awareness-raising
Cost-effectiveness (value for money)
Openness
Quality of life and the environment
Altruism
Empowerment
Social inclusion
Democratic
Innovation
Co-operation
Flexibility
Networking
Gap-filling
Informal
Diversity Good practice
Accountability
user involvement
Creative fund-raising

THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Shortly after the re-organisation of the councils on the Isle of Wight in 1995, the new Isle of Wight Council adopted five overall Strategic Aims which are:

- To promote and encourage excellence in service provision.
- To enhance the quality of Island life.
- To promote economic development.
- To secure effective resource maximisation.
- To empower people to achieve.

In July 1998, the government published its White Paper entitled "Modern Local Government - In Touch With The People". It sets out a long term strategy for the reform and modernisation of local government. Chapter 8 of the Paper is about promoting the well-being of communities. It highlights issues such as sustainable development, social exclusion, crime and education and training and advocates working with other partner bodies such as the Health Authority, the Voluntary & Community Sector and the Police.

In response, we have reviewed our aims. The Council's new objectives should have widespread support amongst the public, Council staff and Councillors. They will also provide a framework for the best value reviews that we are undertaking each year. The new objectives will last until 2002 when they will be reconsidered. At this point the Council hopes to have completed work with partners, local groups and individual members of the public to develop a long-term vision or Community Strategy for the Isle of Wight. This Strategy will provide an overarching sense of direction for the Council's own services and also the work and plans of other organisations on the Island. The Council will use the Community Strategy to review its own objectives.

The new objectives proposed for the Council for the period 2001 / 2002 are as follows:

COUNCIL OBJECTIVES 2001/02
A - To care for vulnerable and underprivileged people
B - To raise achievement, encourage community and lifelong learning and promote inclusion
C - To develop the knowledge & skills required for current & future employment opportunities
D - To protect and enhance the health, safety and environment of the Island
E - To protect the natural environment of the Island and its public transport network.
F - To manage efficiently & beneficially the Councils property, human & other resources
G - To promote the Island's economic, tourism and leisure development

TEN MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

1. **Q.** What is a Voluntary Organisation?
A. *A Voluntary Organisation is a non profit making organisation run by unpaid committee of volunteers.*
2. **Q.** Then why are some staff paid?
A. *Because they have to be available when needed, to suit the clients' and organisation's needs, not to suit themselves.*
3. **Q.** If the Voluntary Sector is "Voluntary", why does it need funding ?
A. *In order to deliver effective services to their users, some organisations may incur the same running costs as a business or statutory agency, including premises, paid staff, training and office expenses.*
4. **Q.** What is the difference between a Voluntary Organisation and a Community Organisation ?
A. *At the moment 'Voluntary Organisations' is used to describe those who tend to make use of paid staff and 'Community Organisations' is used for organisations whose staff are entirely voluntary, as in self-help groups.*
5. **Q.** Why do we need a Voluntary Sector?
A. *To enrich the life of the community through arts, sports, education, religion and charitable activities generally.
To harness the goodwill, skills, energy and resources of individuals and enable them to contribute to the life of their communities.
To address social problems and help regenerate disadvantaged communities.*
5. **Q.** What does the Voluntary Sector do?
A. *Meets needs, acts as advocate, delivers services to the community including to most disadvantaged.*
7. **Q.** How many Voluntary Organisations belong to the Forum?
A. *It is an open forum not a membership organisation. The latter function is filled by the RCC. Approximately 100 organisations either attend or ask for reports on the annual forum. Some 400 - 500 are on the mailing list.*
8. **Q.** Aren't they just a bunch of amateurs?
A. *No, volunteers may not be paid but voluntary organisation staff, whether volunteers or paid, are usually highly trained, qualified and experienced in their field.*

9. **Q.** How many Voluntary Organisations are there on the Isle of Wight?

A. *There are estimated to be in excess of 1,000.*

10. **Q.** What would happen if the Voluntary Sector disappeared?

A. *The Council would lose cost-effective, specialist contractors worth £2 million. The Community would lose a responsive and innovative mechanism. Services would diminish, deprivation would increase and culture, sport, leisure and the environment would be undermined.*