

Cheltenham Borough Council

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 11th September 2006

Gloucestershire Compact with the Voluntary and Community Sector

Report of the Assistant Director Community Services

1. Executive Summary and recommendation

1.1 The issue

1.2 The Gloucestershire Compact has been developed as a countywide initiative in response to the Government's requirement that all local authorities and public sector bodies must enter into local Compact agreements. The Gloucestershire Compact (local Compact agreement) was formally adopted by the council in March 2004.

1.3 Since the council's adoption of the Compact, the Gloucestershire Compact Steering Group have worked with the voluntary sector, District Councils and PCTs to produce the related codes of practice, which spell out in more detail the commitments each party makes to improving relationships and working in partnership together, and it is these codes of practice which are now being formally presented to the council for adoption.

1.4 I therefore recommend that:

1.4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that the council adopts the six codes of practice which have now been developed, to underpin this Compact, which will guide CBC in its relationship with this sector.

1.4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet appointing the Deputy Stronger and Safer Communities as the council's corporate Compact Champion.

1.4.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends Cabinet requires Groups and divisions within the authority to produce action plans for their implementation of the Compact requirements for their areas of work, within six months of the adoption of the codes of practice (see Section 2.7)

1.5 Summary of implications

1.5.1 Financial

The Compact and the Funding and Procurement code of good practice underlines that no activity can be carried out without incurring indirect or support costs and aims to ensure that "funding reflects the full cost of the service, including the legitimate portion of overhead costs". This development may ultimately impact upon the council's funding of voluntary and community organisations.

1.5.2 Legal

The Compact refers to agreements and undertakings which are not agreements and undertakings in strict legal sense. The Compact is more a statement of intent and principles for those who sign up to it. The Compact will impact on the working practices of those involved in the services that are to be facilitated through the Compact and those involved must be aware of the requirements of the Compact and the requirements regarding dispute resolution and contracts. If proposals are put forward by the parties who are signatories to the Compact for joint ventures legal advice will have to be sought on the proposals and the legal processes that need to be followed.

1.5.3 Human Resources

Following the adoption of the Gloucestershire Compact codes, the council will be required to produce action plans, within six months, to show how each Group and Division will gradually become compliant with these codes. This may have an impact on current planned work loads. Managers will need to review current business plans within their areas of responsibility to ensure that capacity levels can accommodate any additional work demands.

1.6 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities

1.6.1 Priority 5. we will re-dress the imbalanced in our communities and build strong healthy geographical communities and communities of interest

1.6.2 In addition to **Priority 5**, the voluntary and community sectors in Cheltenham have a wide and varied remit and as such the adoption and implementation of the Gloucestershire Compact will impact upon their role in society, and as such this will impact upon most of the council's corporate priorities.

- **Priority 1.** we will work towards a balanced and sustainable housing market
- **Priority 2.** we will reduce crime and disorder, and the fear of crime in our communities
- **Priority 3.** we will protect and improve the environment of Cheltenham
- **Priority 6.** we will enhance the town's reputation as a national and international culture centre, promote a healthy and sustainable economy and provide opportunities to broaden and enrich sport, play and cultural experiences for all

- **Priority 7.** we will be an excellent and sustainable council delivering high standards of service

1.6.3 Additional corporate impact - corporately all groups, divisions and staff who work with, financially support, or consult with the voluntary and community sectors will be required to adopt the commitments and undertakings detailed in the Compact and its underpinning codes of practice, as a result of the adoption and implementation of the Gloucestershire Compact (See Section 2.7).

1.7 Statement on Risk

1.7.1 Future CPA and Audit Commission reviews will look closely at local authority adoption and implementation of the national Compact with the voluntary and community sector

1.7.2 In March 2005, the Home Secretary launched a consultation to strengthen the Compact. The consultation proposes establishing a new body, the Compact Champion, sitting between Government and the voluntary and community sector, with an ombudsman type role. The Champion would assess organisations against criteria with a kite mark scheme along the lines of the Investor in Peoples award.

1.7.3 Risks identified in the Community Services risk register (2006-2007)

- The Council being unable to meet the key obligations of the Gloucestershire Compact with the voluntary and community sectors which could result in claims of conflict
- Uncertainty about the impact of cuts in revenue budgets and external funding on vulnerable groups.(reputation/ corporate priority and personal H&S risks - stress.) **(Funding and procurement code of practice)**
- Unable to proactively manage partnerships with voluntary groups, and optimise outcomes due to lack of internal dedicated resources. **(Multi-agency partnerships code of practice)**
- Unable to proactively engage with the town's black and minority ethnic communities, and optimise outcomes due to lack of dedicated internal resources (Loss of workers salary in Nov 2006). **(Black and other minority ethnic organisations and Consultation codes of practice)**
- Major capacity problems with the town's community regeneration partnerships and neighbourhood projects which would stall the council's community regeneration plans for Cheltenham **(Multi-agency partnerships code of practice)**
- On going budgetary cuts affecting funding opportunities for the voluntary and community sector **(Funding and procurement code of practice)**

2. Introduction

2.1 In November 1998, the Government published a national Compact with the Voluntary Sector, which represented a statement of support for voluntary and community sector activity and a commitment for local and national government to work in partnership with the voluntary sector. Local authorities, PCTs and other public bodies are expected to enter into local Compact agreements with the voluntary sector. The CPA process checks to see if each Council has a Compact and codes of practice in place.

2.2 The Compact and its codes set out a framework to help the statutory and voluntary

sectors develop positive, effective working relationships by:

- recognising and building on those things that partners already do well together
- setting standards and making clear commitments about the ways the sectors will work with each other
- creating an environment of mutual trust / respect which enhances partnership working (such as through the Local Area Agreement), and encouraging the voluntary and community sector to be more involved in delivering public services.
- providing a framework for mediation should relationships break down.

2.3 In March 2004, the Cabinet signed up to the Gloucestershire Compact. Since then, CBC officers have worked with the voluntary sector, District Councils and PCTs to produce the related codes of practice, which spell out in more detail the commitments each party makes to improving relationships and working in partnership together.

2.4 The six codes of practice make recommendations on good practice in the following areas: (See Appendix)

- Community groups
- Multi-agency partnerships
- Consultation
- Funding and procurement
- Black and minority ethnic voluntary and community organisations
- Volunteering

2.5 The Gloucestershire Compact Steering Group was established after a conference was held to launch the process of establish a local Compact for Gloucestershire in March 2003. The role of this group was to develop the Gloucestershire Compact and the six codes of practice which underpin the Compact. This group is made up of partners representing the public sectors (inc. all local authorities, the Probation Service, Primary Care trusts and NHS Trusts, the Learning Skills Council, Job Centre Plus and Connexions) in addition to representatives from a wide range of voluntary and community groups from across the county.

2.6 All the Councils and PCTs in Gloucestershire have been involved in developing these codes, and are currently in the process of adopting them. Local authority adoption of the Gloucestershire Compact across the county is as follows:

- Gloucestershire County Council – Compact signed up to in 2004 and was formally re-endorsed by Cabinet on 19 July 2006
- Forest of Dean District Council – Compact report to be presented to the Council's Executive Committee in October 2006
- Cotswold District Council – Cabinet endorsement received in principal with final ratification planned to be taken to September Cabinet meeting
- Gloucester City Council – Compact signed up to in 2004 and is due to be re-endorsed by the Cabinet leader
- Stroud District Council – Compact signed up to in 2004 and the underpinning codes will be adopted under delegated powers
- Cheltenham Borough Council – Compact signed up to in March 2004 and is hopefully planned to be re-endorsed by Cabinet at its September meeting

- 2.7 Following the adoption of these codes, the council will be required to produce action plans, within six months, to show how each Group and Division will gradually become compliant with these codes and adopt a 'Compact way of working' to underpin their relationships with the voluntary sector.
- 2.8 The Compact does not expect all signatories to be compliant immediately, but that they will work towards it.

3. Background

- 3.1 The National Compact, 'Getting it Right Together' is a partnership agreement between the Government and the voluntary and community sector. The Compact provides a framework for their relationship to focus on providing benefits for the community. Local Compacts are agreements between local public bodies and the voluntary and community sector aiming to improve and sustain better working relationships.
- 3.2 The National Compact was drawn up in partnership following extensive consultation with the voluntary and community sector and Government Departments, and was published in 1998. The Compact recognising the diversity of the voluntary and community sector and its activities, and it represents a reciprocally beneficial and constructive relationship between the statutory and voluntary sectors. The Compact and its codes of good practice list the commitments and responsibilities to which both sectors should adhere in order to make that relationship work.
- 3.3 The Compact is an agreement between key local public sector agencies (including county and district authorities) and the voluntary and community sector, to support and improve partnership working between the sectors. It sets out values, principles and commitments on how best the sectors can work together to achieve more for the local community. It is underpinned by six codes of practice which contain specific undertakings for the public sector and the voluntary and community sector, as well as a series of joint undertakings, to improve partnership working.

For public sector partners commitment to partnership working is necessary for many external audits and inspections. For voluntary and community groups it can mean having local public bodies that are supportive and enabling, as well as consultation and involvement that works

- 3.4 The final drafts of the Gloucestershire Compact and its underpinning codes of practice have now been produced, and these are now in the process of being adopted across the county by both public sector bodies and voluntary and the community sector organisations.

4. Consultation

4.1 Countywide consultation

- Work with partner agencies and representatives from the voluntary and community sectors has taken place over the last eighteen months to develop a joint Compact and its underpinning codes of practice.
- The LGA branch's feedback from its meetings in January 2006 has been used to influence the spirit and content of the Compact and its underpinning codes of practice.

- Extensive consultation has taken place with both public sector bodies and the counties voluntary and community sectors.
- The Partnership and Participation Project which has supported the Gloucestershire Compact Steering Group conducted a major countywide consultation exercise from 1 November 2005 to 31 January 2006
- A number of Compact conferences and events have been held across the county to promote the development of the Compact, to raise awareness of the Compact with both public sector bodies and voluntary and community sector organisations. (Cheltenham has hosted two major conferences – the launch of the Gloucestershire Compact and the launch of the Compact consultation exercise)
- In addition presentations have also been given by the Partnership and Participation Project at the Cheltenham Regeneration Conference, and to the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership.

4.2 Corporate consultation

- a briefing note was issued in December 2005 as part of the countywide consultation exercise, to all CBC councillors, Directors and Assistant Directors as well as third tier managers
- a formal response to this exercise was issued on behalf of the Council, on 6 February 2006, which was approved by the council's Acting Chief Executive
- A presentation was made to the council's Senior Management Team to promote corporate awareness of the Compact and its potential impact upon the work of the council.
- Details regarding the development of the Gloucestershire Compact have been provided through the council's leader's briefings in order to promote Cabinet and corporate awareness of the Compact
- Details of the Compact and its development have been promoted on the council's corporate website via the community web pages.

Background Papers	<p>Cabinet - 9th March 2004 - Gloucestershire Compact with the Voluntary and Community Sector - Report of the Deputy Neighbourhood and Community</p> <p>Member briefing note – December 2005 – Gloucestershire Compact Consultation exercise Winter 2005-2006 (This briefing note was also sent to all Directors and ADs and to all third tier managers)</p>
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