

Introduction

Statement of Partnership

This document represents a shared commitment to partnership working between Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and the local Voluntary and Community Sector.

The work of the hundreds of voluntary and community organisations in Neath Port Talbot and the 45,000 people who volunteer each year embraces every aspect of public life and forms a vital part of each of our local communities and Neath Port Talbot as a whole. This work ranges from providing much needed and innovative new services to campaigning for the interests of disadvantaged groups. Voluntary and community action therefore plays a central role in public life in Neath Port Talbot and clearly enhances local democracy and active citizenship.

Voluntary and community groups, as independent, not-for-profit organisations, bring distinctive value in fulfilling a role that is different, yet complementary, to the public and private sectors as together we try to meet the public service needs and aspirations of the people of Neath Port Talbot. The Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector recognise and value the vital contribution of volunteers in our society, and the important role of voluntary organisations in helping them to make that contribution.

This Partnership Agreement (Compact) between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Neath Port Talbot recognises this enormous contribution to the communities and the environment in Neath Port Talbot. It is an agreement between partners founded on our shared interests in building a just and open society where there is equality of opportunity for individuals to play their full part in the life of their communities.

The Partnership Agreement (Compact) is built on principles of integrity, trust and mutual respect. It sets out responsibilities and expectations of both the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector in working together. It promotes greater participation in the formulation and implementation of policy and co-operation in taking forward strategic programmes.

Both agree that the main aim is the creation of a culture in Neath Port Talbot and its local communities which:

- offers equality of opportunity to all its citizens regardless of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, language preference, religion or family/domestic responsibilities;
- is inclusive and enables people to participate in all its economic, social and cultural activities;
- empowers people to participate in the development of their communities;
- relies on people's voluntary action to foster community leadership, strong communities and a vibrant local democracy.

The Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector agree that partnership means working together towards a common set of goals, based on equality in terms of ownership, decision-making and recognition of each party's distinctive contribution.

Shared Principles

The shared principles which underpin the Partnership Agreement (Compact) are set out below.

- Voluntary and community action is an essential component of strong local communities and a vibrant local democracy;
- An independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to both individual and community well-being;
- In the development and delivery of public policy and services, the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector have distinct but complementary roles;
- There is added value in working in partnership towards common aims and objectives. Meaningful consultation builds relationships, improves policy development and enhances the design and delivery of service programmes;
- The Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a different range of stakeholders. But common to both is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

1. General Statement

The Council is committed to recognising, valuing and promoting the Voluntary and Community Sector as it builds on the strengths of the genuine partnership that has been established with the Sector. This Partnership Agreement (Compact) sets out the broad principles and shared values which will govern the relationship between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Neath Port Talbot. In this Partnership Agreement (Compact), the term `voluntary and community sector' incorporates voluntary and community organisations and volunteering interests.

The aim of the Partnership Agreement (Compact) is to set out a framework of principles of co-operation between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector, through the Council for Voluntary Service, which recognises and reinforces their complementary contribution to the quality of life of the people of Neath Port Talbot.

The Partnership Agreement (Compact) complements and builds upon the original partnership agreement that was signed in 1997 and on the ongoing development of the compact between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Voluntary Sector in Wales as expressed in the National Assembly's Voluntary Sector Scheme.

The Council and the Council for Voluntary Service on behalf of the Voluntary and Community Sector will agree an action plan setting out specific measures for implementing the Partnership Agreement (Compact), including the targets and timetable against which this is to be measured. A review of the implementation and impact of the compact and action plan will be conducted annually and a report submitted to the Joint Liaison Committee and the Council's Cabinet.

2. Statement of Principles

- 2.1. The Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service have a shared commitment to work in partnership, ensuring that the Voluntary and Community Sector is able to play its full role in contributing to the Neath Port Talbot Community Plan and the Council's corporate aims and objectives, and:

- (i) to recognise the importance of each of our communities and to deliver to them high quality and cost effective services;
- (ii) to create and sustain an attractive, safe and healthy environment;
- (iii) to support the quality of life of individual citizens;
- (iv) to promote a sense of belonging and civic pride.

2.2. The County Borough Council welcomes:

- (i) the opportunity to engage the Voluntary and Community Sector in complementing its own methods of service delivery;
- (ii) advice and constructive criticism from the Voluntary and Community Sector, as it helps to identify needs and monitor performance.

2.3. On behalf of the Voluntary and Community Sector, the Council for Voluntary Service welcomes:

- (i) the opportunity to encourage community participation and help meet community needs, through joint action with the Council;
- (ii) the Council's investment in the Sector and its activities, both financial and in-kind.

2.4. There are voluntary organisations which are not members of the Council for Voluntary Service. Whilst the Council strongly encourages membership, non-membership will not, of itself, adversely affect the Council's relationship with any voluntary organisation. However, the Council recognises and respects the role of the Council for Voluntary Service as the co-ordinating organisation for the local Voluntary and Community Sector which ensures the cohesion and consistency of engagement of this very diverse sector.

3. Partnership Objectives

3.1. Together, the Council and the Council for Voluntary Service, on behalf of the Voluntary and Community Sector, will:

- (i) develop policies to clarify the ways in which the Voluntary and Community Sector can contribute to the quality of life and the well-being of the community;
- (ii) establish clear, jointly agreed mechanisms for consultation and, where appropriate, joint planning with a commitment to listen to the views of the Voluntary and Community Sector, taking action where necessary;
- (iii) co-operate in identifying alternative sources of funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector;
- (iv) develop, and participate in, jointly agreed monitoring and evaluation of partnership working.

3.2 The Council will:

- (i) provide opportunities for the Voluntary and Community Sector to contribute to corporate and service strategies and to discuss immediate and long term plans to deliver those strategies;
- (ii) offer early consultation on matters which affect voluntary organisations with adequate time for representations to be made;
- (iii) promote a two way dialogue with the Voluntary and Community Sector recognising the importance of the sector and the community development dimension;
- (iv) work with the Council for Voluntary Service in any review and development of voluntary sector provision;
- (v) provide clear and consistent advice and information on grant aid procedures;
- (vi) endeavour, within the current financial constraints, to develop a funding system which takes account of the problem of short-term and capital only grants which will lead to more stable long-term funding;

- (vii) provide an information directory containing details of the Departments, their activities and lists of contact persons.

3.3 The Council for Voluntary Service, on behalf of the Voluntary and Community Sector, will:

- (i) provide information to identify the needs of service users and any problems or gaps in service provision;
- (ii) offer a mechanism for disseminating the Council's policies and plans to the Voluntary and Community Sector and provide feedback on behalf of the sector;
- (iii) offer a means of delivering services to specific client groups;
- (iv) use their independent status to develop flexible and responsive solutions which are not always available in other sectors;
- (v) recognise the importance of developing and identifying alternative sources of funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector;
- (vi) co-ordinate the training needs of the sector;
- (vii) promote the adoption of best practice by voluntary organisations in terms of management, employment and working with volunteers;
- (viii) provide an information directory of voluntary organisations operating in Neath Port Talbot.

4 Communication and Formal Liaison

4.1 Effective communication between the Council and the Council for Voluntary Service will be facilitated by:

- (i) the continuing development of contacts between voluntary organisations and appropriate Departmental Officers;
- (ii) Voluntary and Community Sector involvement in training for Officers on the work of the sector;

- (iii) clearly defined roles for members and Officers on voluntary organisations' management committees;
- (iv) readily available advice from Officers to voluntary organisations;
- (v) a recognition of the skills, expertise and knowledge available within voluntary organisations and volunteers in general.

4.2 Without prejudice to any existing arrangements, formal liaison between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector will be effected by:

- (i) the Joint Liaison Committee comprising equal numbers of Members and Voluntary and Community Sector representatives;
- (ii) the Committee will meet twice yearly and report to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board and Scrutiny Committee;
- (iii) all members of the Committee will have equal voting rights;
- (iv) chairmanship of the Committee will alternate between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector;
- (v) the Voluntary and Community Sector representatives will be elected by a Voluntary Sector Forum organised by the Council for Voluntary Service;
- (vi) the Committee's terms of reference will be:
 - to monitor and keep under review the objectives of this Partnership Agreement (Compact);
 - to act as a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between the County Borough Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector on matters of policy and service delivery;
 - to receive regular reports on the work of grant-aided voluntary and community sector projects;

- to discuss issues of interest to the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Council.

5. Review of the Compact

Notwithstanding any review that may take place in accordance with the above provisions of this Partnership Agreement (Compact), the operation and effectiveness of the Partnership Agreement (Compact) will be reviewed by the end of March 2008.

Signed on behalf of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council:

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Councillor Derek Vaughan
Leader

Signed on behalf of Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service:

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Mrs Margaret Thorne OBE
Chairperson

This twentieth day of October 2005