



Committee and date

Council  
5<sup>th</sup> November 2009

10.00 am

Item

**7**

Public

## **A new Compact for Shropshire**

**Responsible Officer** Michael Hyatt – Assistant Chief Executive – Performance & Partnerships

e-mail: Michael.hyatt@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: (01743)  
252006

Fax: 01743  
252390

### **Summary**

A Compact is a written understanding between government and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) of how they should work together. The first national Compact was signed in November 1998 with cross party support.

In Shropshire the former County Council produced its most recent Compact in 2006 and each of the district/borough authorities also had Compacts with the VCS in their respective areas.

A review of the existing Shropshire Compacts commenced in the summer of 2008. A Compact Review Group, with representation from the Council and the sector, has led the development of a new Shropshire Compact since that time.

The Shropshire Compact is an agreement that sets out the “rules of engagement” for how Shropshire Council and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the county should work together for the benefit of the people we serve. The Compact is more than a document – it is a way of working.

A draft Shropshire Compact was issued for consultation in June 2009 following a number of events and focus group meetings to gather people’s views. The final document takes into account feedback from the consultation and it is hoped to launch the new Shropshire Compact (attached at Appendix A) at the annual Compact Conference during Compact Week in November.

The new Compact is a key means of demonstrating the Council’s commitment to achieving National Indicator 7 – a thriving third sector.

### **Recommendations**

- A. That Cabinet approves the new Shropshire Compact, endorsing the aims, values, codes of practice, structures and procedures and encourages widespread understanding across the organisation of Compact principles when working with the voluntary and community sector.

## Report

1. The purpose of a Compact is to help build better relationships and partnerships between the Council and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in order to deliver better services to Shropshire people.
2. The aim of the new Shropshire Compact is:

To have an agreed set of principles and an effective framework for working together to develop and improve working relationships, communication, understanding and the sharing of best practice between the Council and the VCS.
3. The values of the new Shropshire Compact are:
  - to recognise the value and diversity of the voluntary and community sector
  - to recognise the constraints within which the Council and the sector have to work
  - to be clear and transparent in our actions and expectations in working together
  - to enable everyone to have the opportunity to get involved
  - to treat each other equally, fairly and with respect
4. The new Shropshire Compact is structured around 4 codes of practice:
  - Funding
  - Consultation
  - Volunteering
  - Equality and Diversity
5. A Compact is a living document that will evolve and change over time. Ongoing review and improvement will be fundamental to the success of the Shropshire Compact, and it is anticipated that this Compact will evolve over time, building upon experience and good practice arising from its implementation.
6. The Compact Development Group was formed in the summer of 2008, involving representatives from each council and the voluntary community sector. The current Compact Development Group includes representatives from each of the Council's Directorates.
7. The group's first task was to review the existing Shropshire Compacts and to capture the best aspects and learn from the experiences of each. An initial survey was undertaken and the findings of this were used as a basis for the review.
8. A key message from the initial survey was the importance of joint ownership of the Compact and the need for both the Council and the sector to work together on its development and implementation from the earliest stage.
9. At last years annual Compact Conference further awareness was raised to the development of the new Shropshire Compact, and more organisations and representatives were encouraged to get involved. Approximately twenty Compact Champions were identified as advocates from across both sectors.

10. We have further benefited from the support and advice of the national organisation Compact Voice, and have researched and learned from successful Compact implementation across the country.
11. In January and February 2009, more than sixty people were involved in focus groups to look in detail at the Compact codes of practice, and consider the importance and relevance of the Compact to their organisations and to the joint work of the Council and the VCS in Shropshire.
12. A draft Compact was issued for consultation in June 2009. The consultation ended in mid September. An analysis of the responses received has been undertaken and a new Compact has been produced (attached at Appendix A).
13. It is planned to launch the new Compact at this years annual Conference in November, with the Leader of the Council and representatives from the VCS signing up to the document and committing to the Compact principles.
14. In previous Shropshire Compacts the lack of any robust disputes and resolution procedure has been considered a major weakness. The new Compact seeks to address this by proposing regular scrutiny of the Compact, monitoring and evaluation and an identified disputes process, including access to a mediation service if required.
15. The Member Champion for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector will be actively engaged in the implementation and monitoring of the Compact and an annual report will be made to Council and the Compact Conference.
16. The Assistant Chief Executive, Performance and Partnerships will lead the work on the Compact on behalf of the Council, ensuring engagement from across the directorates. A full programme of induction and awareness raising, both within the Council and across the sector is being developed.
17. The Shropshire Partnership's Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator will be the lead Compact Officer and manage the Compact Implementation Group and encourage further understanding and compliance. The Voluntary Sector Assembly will lead on behalf of the sector.
18. The Compact is a key means of demonstrating the Council's commitment to achieving National Indicator 7 – a thriving third sector. Following the adoption and implementation of the new Compact, consideration will be given to the development of a Third Sector Strategy, building on the principles of the Compact and incorporating a medium term funding strategy for the Council with its voluntary sector partners.
19. Other public sector partners within the county, such as the Primary Care Trust, have expressed an interest in signing up to the principles of the Shropshire Compact and further links with local strategic partners will be developed following adoption by Shropshire Council.

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b> none
<b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b> The recommendations within this report are compatible with the provision of the Human Rights Act 1998
<b>Environmental Appraisal</b> There are no environmental risks associated with this report.
<b>Risk Management Appraisal</b> The Compact is one of the key tools in meeting the Council's commitment to a thriving community voluntary sector. Whilst not a statutory duty, all local authorities are encouraged to have a Compact with their VCS.
<b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b> Considerable consultation has taken place as part of the development of this Compact. Work started more than twelve months ago and there have been several opportunities for the general public and the sector to input to the document and influence the codes of practice and framework for joint working.
<b>Member Champion</b> Gwilym Butler – Portfolio Holder Community Working Martin Bennett – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sector Champion
<b>Local Member</b>
<b>Appendices</b> Appendix A – The Shropshire Compact