

THE SHROPSHIRE COMPACT

October 2009

Foreword

Shropshire's New Compact

This is the new Shropshire Compact. The new Compact has been developed in response to both Local Government re-organisation in Shropshire, and also the need to improve on and learn lessons from previous Compacts.

This document has been produced by the Compact Development Group (CDG), which is made up of representatives from the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). It includes input from the Shropshire Compact Conference (November 2008) and a series of focus groups held early in 2009. In addition a draft document was circulated for consultation during July to September 2009. This final version takes into account the feedback received through the consultation process.

This Compact was formally presented for endorsement by Shropshire Council on 5th November 2009, and this version, launched at the Compact Conference on 6th November 2009, is subject to any amendment requested by Council.

It is a living document that will evolve and change over time. We hope that this Compact will provide a practical and useful framework for working together effectively.

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Executive Summary

This 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 they serve. It is more than a document – it is a way of working.

The **aim** of the 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

The **values** of the 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

The Shropshire Compact is structured around 4 **codes of practice**:

- Funding
- Consultation
- Volunteering
- Equality and Diversity

It is a living document that will evolve and change over time. Ongoing review and improvement is considered 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.

Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 What is the Compact?

This 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 they serve. It is more than a document – it is a way of working.

At a national level, there has been a Compact in place since 1998. The purpose of the national Compact is to improve the relationship between government and the VCS, for mutual advantage and community gain. In addition to the national Compact nearly every area of England now has a Compact between the local authority, other statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector.

For more information on Compacts nationally, visit
<http://www.thecompact.org.uk>
<http://www.compactvoice.org.uk>

A Compact identifies Codes of Practice that must be adhered to. Typically Compact codes of practice include:

- Volunteering
- Funding and procurement
- Consultation and policy appraisal
- Community groups
- Equality and diversity

As part of the development of the new Compact in Shropshire we have considered the detail within these national codes to ensure that they are relevant to us.

1.2 What does the Compact mean to my Voluntary and Community Organisation?

The voluntary and community sector in Shropshire consists of a very wide range of organisations, many of whom have some relationship with the Council through:

- Funding relationships
- Partnership working
- Identifying community needs
- Consultations
- Volunteering
- Representing their members
- Their members or beneficiaries
- Promoting equalities

The Compact considers all of these areas. The Compact is a two way process describing how the relationship between the Council and VCS organisations should work in practice. It contains undertakings for both the Council and VCS organisations, and describes the ways in which issues are

addressed and dealt with, and successes are celebrated. In order for the Compact to work, it needs commitment and ownership from both the Council and the voluntary and community sector.

For the purpose of the Compact, the term voluntary and community sector organisations (VCS) includes all organisations and groups working with and within communities for charitable and not-for-profit purposes and objectives, whether or not these groups are formally and legally constituted.

1.3 Background

Shropshire County Council adopted its previous Compact in March 2006. The former district and borough councils also had Compacts with the local voluntary and community sector. With the creation of Shropshire Council, we have now developed this new Compact between the sector and the new Council, learning from past experience and best practice.

There is much that is already good about the way the two sectors work together. A considerable amount of voluntary and community sector activity within Shropshire is funded by the Council and there is a strong record of partnership working between the Council and the sector. However, some areas for improvement were identified under preceding Compacts:

- There was a perceived lack of awareness of and commitment to the Compact from both the Council and the sector
- Smaller voluntary and community groups find it difficult to influence policy and get the support they need
- There is sometimes a lack of understanding of the different issues the two sectors face
- The two sectors do not always communicate with each other as much or as well as they could
- Organisations do not always do all that they could to work together more effectively

1.4 What difference will the Compact make?

The Compact aims to make improvements to the way the two sectors work together. The aims, values and principles of the Compact Codes begin this process by making clear commitments about the expectations voluntary and community organisations, and the Council, can have in dealing with each other. In time, this will enable both sectors to make the improvements identified as necessary above.

Ultimately this Compact will provide the framework to:

- Create an environment for a thriving voluntary and community sector with a strong infrastructure
- Gain real commitment to an agreed set of principles and working practices
- Establish effective monitoring, review, conciliation and resolution processes
- Improve understanding between the sectors and thereby improve working relationships
- Result in clearer and more meaningful consultation processes which allow all sections of the community to influence policies
- Be recognised and owned by all staff, Council members, trustees and volunteers
- Acknowledge that misunderstandings and mistakes do occur but that parties to the Compact can find ways of resolving these

- Provide greater transparency and accountability between the Council and VCS
- Be accessible to all in both sectors

Section 2 – The Shropshire Compact

2.1 Aim, Values and Codes of the Shropshire Compact

The **aim** of the Shropshire Compact is:

To have an agreed set of principles and an effective framework for working together to develop and improve:

- working relationships in order to provide more effective and co-ordinated services for local communities;
- consultation, communication and partnership working, which builds trust and respect
- understanding between the Council and voluntary and community organisations
- the ways in which we share best practice

The **values** of the Shropshire Compact are:

- to recognise the value and diversity of the voluntary and community sector
- to recognise the parameters 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

Codes of Practice for Shropshire Compact

The Shropshire Compact is structured around 4 **codes of practice**:

- Funding
- Consultation
- Volunteering
- Equality and Diversity

The Shropshire Compact does not include a separate Community Groups Code of Practice. Community groups in Shropshire tend to be small, volunteer and member led, focused on a particular activity, community or geography. These groups play such an essential role in our communities that it has been determined that the needs of community groups are considered across each of the other codes of practice as an integral element of the Compact rather than as a separate code.

The Codes of Practice support the implementation of the Compact. They are the guidelines that control certain areas of activity and working and make important commitments between the sectors. The detailed Codes include the individual and joint commitments of the Council and the VCS.

This document outlines the proposed codes of practice for Funding, Consultation, Volunteering and Equality and Diversity.

2.2 Funding Code of Practice

Purpose: To develop, promote and implement best practice in all funding relationships between the Council and the VCS.

Main principles:

- Simplicity, accessibility and fairness
- Open and transparent procurement processes
- Consistency and co-ordination
- Proportionate procedures and demands
- Recognition of the diversity of the VCS in terms of size, scope and scale
- Being open and explaining our actions
- Focus on what the funding is for and what difference it makes
- Covering all costs

The Council will	The VCS will
F1. Establish and maintain best practice in the way the VCS is funded, including providing opportunities for the VCS to contribute to the agreement of funding priorities	F11. Follow good practice in the use and administration of funding appropriate to its scale and operation
F2. Provide simple, clear and timely information on funding opportunities and implement an effective framework to ensure value for money	F12. Have clear and effective employment policies, management arrangements and procedures
F3. Apply consistent and transparent procedures that address the principles of good regulation and the need to provide effective accountability for public money	F13. Follow effective systems for financial management, control, accountability, propriety and audit

F4. Respect the independence of the sector and their right to campaign irrespective of any funding relationship	F14. Have systems for planning work, monitoring and evaluating activities, quality assurance and accountability
F5. Respond to the sectors need for financial stability, acknowledging full cost recovery and improving sustainability and longer term planning	F15. Budget, cost and plan grant funded services realistically over the funding period and agree an exit strategy prior to any contract delivery
F6. Recognise the importance of cash flow to the sector and the need for prompt payment with the potential to negotiate phased payments for the delivery of work	F16. Where relevant comply with the accounting framework for charities and appropriate guidance from the Charities Commission
F7. Focus on outcomes and milestones and clearly identify proportionate monitoring requirements, conditions and responsibilities	F17. Provide and share information on funding opportunities known to the sector in a clear and timely way
F8. Promote fair access to strategic project and contract funding and provide clarity in respect of eligibility	F18. Make organisation contact details and areas of expertise known to the VCS Assembly to ensure all VCS groups and organisations receive relevant and timely information about funding opportunities
F9. Negotiate and agree appropriate notice periods prior to the commencement of grants or contract agreements	F19. Be honest and transparent and in a clear and timely way report any changes in circumstances of the organisation which may impact on the full use of funding or service delivery
F10. Encourage a joint approach to monitoring and evaluation	F20. Recognise that, aside from any requirements imposed for contracted services, the receipt of public monies carries with it responsibilities to the funding body and to the people that benefit from the services provided
Together we will work to:	
JF1. Recognise and understand each others needs and requirements, including the limitations of resource availability	
JF2. Promote joint training opportunities on funding, grants and control processes to develop consortium bids which secure broader funding opportunities	
JF3. Address full project costs	
JF4. Focus on outcomes, agree realistic outputs and determine performance measures for funding grants and contracts	

JF5. Have robust accounting and monitoring systems for audit with reasonable notice proportionate to funding
JF6. Have clear negotiation, disputes and arbitration processes
JF7. Ensure all contracts contain an exit strategy for both parties against agreed notice periods
JF8. Explore options for sustainable funding within 3 years of initial grant support
JF9. Adopt the Compact principles at the earliest stage of the negotiation and discussion of contracts, and use the Codes of Practice within the Compact as the guiding principles in defining the terms of contract between the parties

2.3 Consultation Code of Practice

Consultation is an important part of partnership working. Improved listening and engagement between the VCS and the Council will lead to better planning and delivery of services. Consultation is an opportunity to input knowledge, experience and expertise to any planning.

Main Principles:

- Clearly identify consultation aims, involve people at an early stage, and make sure that everyone has an equal chance to take part and be involved throughout the process
- Allow 12 weeks for responses, unless there are legal reasons or other restrictions preventing this (when an explanation will be given)
- Use appropriate techniques and ensure consultation is suitably targeted
- Take into account the diversity of the voluntary and community sector in terms of size, scope and geography
- Use existing channels of consultation and seek to add new channels of communication as opportunity arises
- Recognise and act on the results of consultation, and give feedback.

The Council will	The VCS will
C1. Involve the VCS in three broad areas of participation: research (collecting information to inform decision making) consultation (inviting people to have their say) engagement (involving people in the decision making process)	C9. Recognise the role of the VCS Assembly as a mechanism to disseminate information and use its infrastructure to encourage consultation and co-operation with each other and intermediary bodies at local, regional and national levels
C2. Ensure the effective participation of the VCS in the planning of consultation processes, including its early involvement in drafting consultation documents where appropriate (e.g. service development).	C10. Consult directly with VCS Assembly members, or if not practicable or appropriate, state consultation is on the basis of knowledge experience and expertise of the interest group concerned
C3. Ensure the residents of Shropshire, service users and all other interested parties have the opportunity to be involved in the planning, prioritisation and monitoring of its services and that they inform the Council decision making processes and activities	C11. Take account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of minority, hard to reach or under represented groups
C4. Listen and respond to the VCS	C12. Ensure information gathered is properly represented and fed back and reflects the range of views of people affected
C5. Allow 12 weeks for VCS responses to consultations wherever possible and if this period has to be shorter explain why	C13. Provide where possible evidence and information to ratify views expressed and give their groups and service users feedback on the outcome of participation
C6. Produce clear, concise and jargon free consultation documents and provide hard copy to consultees if requested	C14. Respect the confidentiality of the Council or partner organisations' information
C7. Review all feedback and take the results into account in future planning	C15. Follow the Charity Commission guidelines and best practice in undertaking consultation and on representation and campaigning
C8. Publicise the results of consultation findings widely including on the Council website	
Together we will work to:	
JC1. Actively ensure effective responses to consultation	
JC2. Ensure that minority and majority groups are engaged in the consultation and feedback process	

JC3. Publicise the results of consultation as widely as possible throughout the VCS Assembly and Council structures and mechanisms
JC4. Listen to and respect each others views
JC5. Acknowledge each others experience, expertise and local knowledge
JC6. Take feedback seriously

2.4 Volunteering Code of Practice

The unique contribution of volunteers (at any level) adds considerable value to the delivery of many services and is fully acknowledged by the Council and the voluntary and community sector. This code sets out undertakings to enable and encourage more people to become involved in varied forms of voluntary activity and offer them the necessary support.

Volunteering must be a choice, freely made by each individual without coercion or compulsion. It should be inclusive and open to all, building bridges and breaking down social exclusion barriers providing the opportunity to gain skills, confidence, achievement and experience from helping others.

Main Principles

- Value and publicly recognise volunteers in an appropriate manner
- Share, develop and deliver good practice in volunteering
- Work to break down the barriers that prevent people from volunteering.
- Develop a better understanding of volunteering and the contribution it makes to society
- Take into account the diversity in volunteering opportunities from small scale community involvement through to complex support for members of the community
- Give volunteers the support, training and management that they need.
- Ensure volunteering is open and accessible to everyone subject to meeting the criteria required

The Council will	The VCS will
V1. Recognise volunteering is an exercise of the basic human right of freedom to assemble and associate and fundamental to democracy	V10. Recognise the importance of high quality and effective management of volunteers
V2. Recognise that volunteering is not free and acknowledge that necessary training, expenses and support may incur cost	V11. Give appropriate support and training to staff who induct and manage volunteers
V3. Consider the impact at the local level of proposed policy, service delivery, legislation, regulations and guidance and processes on volunteering and community activity before implementation	V12. Work to make the best use of volunteers skills, expertise and life experiences and give fair treatment, thanks and recognition to volunteers for their contribution
V4. Work to eliminate barriers to volunteering and community action presented by existing policies and practices	V13. Give volunteers training and support appropriate to the resources of the organisation and take proper account of personal safety needs
V5. Acknowledge and increase awareness within the Council of the added value volunteer contributions make to corporate and departmental objectives	V14. Encourage and enable (but not compel) accreditation of skills acquired through volunteering to contribute to recognised qualifications in partnership with relevant accreditation bodies
V6. In partnership with the VCS, support and promote activities that celebrate the contribution of volunteers to the quality of life in Shropshire	V15. Recognise the rights and needs of volunteers and where possible and appropriate assist them to find volunteering opportunities in keeping with their interests and abilities
V7. In partnership with the VCS, regularly review local volunteering infrastructure, and support initiatives to provide accessible information about volunteering opportunities	V16. Make volunteers aware from the outset what is required of them and their responsibilities
V8. Give fair treatment, thanks and recognition to volunteers for their contribution	
V9. Promote volunteering in schools, colleges and universities and through key Shropshire employers such as public sector services	
Together we will work to:	
JV17. Increase awareness of the value of volunteering and where possible promote the benefits through media coverage, high public profiles and special events	
JV18. Develop and promote innovative programmes for enabling the contribution of volunteers	

JV19. Develop the knowledge and experience of volunteering with young people
JV20. Encourage and develop good practice in recruiting, inducting, training and managing volunteers and seek channels to practically support these processes especially for smaller organisations.
JV21. Work to promote, support and achieve best outcomes for volunteers

2.5 Equalities and Diversity Code of Practice - Outline

In early 2010, Shropshire Council will produce its new Single Equalities Scheme. This will bring together all equality strands and will incorporate the Council's Race, Disability and Gender Equality Scheme action plans as well as actions around the Community Cohesion agenda. The Compact will include the Council's updated Equalities and Diversity Statement at that time.

Main Principles

- Develop a better understanding of equalities issues in Shropshire
- Ensure principles relating to equality and diversity are adopted and implemented by all organisations in Shropshire
- Ensure the diversity and independence of organisations in the county is recognised, as well as their different capacities and contributions to communities in Shropshire.
- Recognise, value and support the contribution of all sectors of the community to the planning and delivery of services

Together we will work to:
JE1. Encourage and support people from all communities to play a full and active part
JE2. Improve consultation with people from diverse groups, to ensure their effective participation in policy development, implementation and evaluation
JE3. Work to highlight and resolve gaps in service
JE4. Support the process of mainstreaming equality into all aspects of policy making, service design, delivery and volunteering

Section 3 - Structures and Processes for the Compact

In order to make sure the Compact is successful, structures and processes have been introduced to support its implementation.

The proposed structures and mechanism for implementing the Compact are shown in the tables below. A flowchart summarising the relationships is included at Appendix A

3.1 Structures

Compact Champions Network	A network of Compact Champions has been recruited from across the VCS and from within the Council and further recruitment is ongoing. These individuals “champion” the Compact in their roles and across their networks. The Compact Champions meet together at least twice a year, and have defined terms of reference and role descriptions.
Compact Implementation Group (CIG)	This Group is comprised of appropriate Council Officers and voluntary sector representatives. The CIG has defined terms of reference, and oversees the implementation of the Compact and the monitoring and review process.
Compact Disputes & Resolution Group (CDRG)	Reporting to the CIG, this Group will oversee the disputes and resolution process (see Section 4 for an overview).
Identified Lead Compact Officer	An officer will have day to day responsibility for the Compact, and will be the first point of call for any issues about its operation
Leadership from elected members	Commitment and leadership are needed from the Council to make the Compact work in practice. The Member Champion for the Third Sector will ensure the Compact is implemented and monitored.
Scrutiny	The Compact is subject to Council Scrutiny processes to ensure it is implemented and its success measured. Representatives from the VCS will be invited to contribute to any Council scrutiny of the Compact.
Compact Conference	A Compact Conference will take place annually during Compact Week to review progress of the Compact and celebrate any successes.

3.2 Implementation Framework

Induction and Training	Induction and Training in the Compact will be available to the voluntary and community sector (paid staff, trustees and volunteers) and to the Council (elected members, senior officers, and officers with responsibility for working with voluntary and community organisations). This is a large task, and will be implemented over time. Induction and training is scheduled to commence as soon as the Compact is adopted.
Monitoring and Review	The Compact Implementation Group (CIG) will have responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Compact. This will include developing and delivering an annual action plan, seeking feedback from Council officers and members and the VCS, and reporting on the success of the Compact.
Disputes and Resolution	See Section 4 for an overview of the disputes and resolution process
Codes of Practice	The detailed Codes of Practice for Funding, Consultation, Volunteering and Equalities and Diversity outline the commitments for the Council, the VCS and their joint responsibilities.
Compact Action Plan	Each year an action plan will be developed, and the Compact Implementation Group will be responsible for ensuring its development and delivery. The annual Action Plan will be presented to the Compact Conference together with a report on progress against the outcomes of the previous year.
Annual Compact Review and Annual Report	There will be an annual Compact Conference which will receive the annual report to highlight successes, share good practice, provide information on the issues raised through the disputes and resolution process, report on delivery against actions and provide an opportunity to endorse the following year's action plan.
Toolkits and Checklists	For each of the Codes of Practice, toolkits or checklists will be developed as appropriate by the Compact Implementation Group, outlining good practice for the Council and VCS to consider when working together.

Section 4 - Disputes and Resolution

4.1 Dealing with Problems

It is the aspiration of the Council that the Shropshire Compact will support strong and positive working relationships by proactively raising awareness of issues for consideration throughout the partnership process

It is recognised, however, that communications do, on occasion, break down. In order for Compact related issues between the Council and VCS organisations to be addressed, the Compact aims to offer a fair and robust disputes and resolution process.

The Compact introduces a new disputes and resolution process, working to seek resolution of disagreements through communication, building of mutual understanding and respect, introducing independent mediation where required. Arbitration is considered as a final stage only when the parties in dispute have failed to reach agreement through constructive dialogue and independent mediation.

4.2 Disputes and Resolution Process

The Shropshire Compact is an agreement between the Council and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to support and improve partnership working.

The Shropshire Compact and its Codes contain specific undertakings for the Council and the VCS, which aim to make a positive impact on the way in which the Council and the VCS work together.

The Compact process is one of learning, development and dialogue, within which it is recognised that from time to time, differences may occur which need to be resolved. This procedure relates specifically to differences occurring between the Council and a voluntary and community organisation, arising from Compact commitments and undertakings. It is intended to provide a framework for facilitating discussions between each of the parties involved and aims to move them towards a mutually acceptable outcome. The process is about developing understanding and awareness between the two sectors.

The Disputes and Resolution process will follow a staged approach, shown in detail at Appendix A. Only when one stage of the process has failed to provide a mutually acceptable outcome should the process proceed to the next stage. The Compact Dispute & Resolution Group (CDRG) will oversee this process. Detailed procedures for the implementation of the Disputes and Resolution process are available from Shropshire Council (contact details are included in Section 6.0 – Further Information).

4.3 Dispute Resolution Monitoring and Evaluation

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the Shropshire Compact, all organisations should notify the Compact Implementation Group of any differences arising from the Compact, even where these are resolved satisfactorily at an early stage within the organisations' own procedures. The

Compact Implementation Group should also be advised of any disputes progressed under the terms of an existing formal contract, so that the Group has a good awareness of the number, range and levels of disputes as a whole. Written records will be kept of all cases referred to the Compact Disputes & Resolution Group but the details of those cases will remain confidential.

A summary report of any issues notified will be presented to the Annual Compact Conference.

5. Summary and Conclusion

This 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 they serve.

The Compact aims to make improvements to the way the two sectors work together. The aims, values and principles of the Compact Codes begin this process by making clear commitments about the expectations voluntary and community organisations, and the Council, can have in dealing with each other.

The Compact will be implemented under the guidance and direction of the Compact Implementation Group. This group will oversee the development of annual action plans and toolkits to support their delivery. The group will monitor and evaluate performance against these plans and will report annually to Council and to the Compact Conference.

Ongoing review and improvement is considered 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. Further Information

For more information about the Shropshire Compact and the procedures, toolkits and checklists developed to support its implementation please refer to Shropshire Council’s website at

www.shropshire.gov.uk/communityworking

You may also contact the Compact Officer at Shropshire Council - Telephone 01743 253077

Write to:
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Shirehall, Abbey Foregate
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SY2 6ND

Or email: communityworking@shropshire.gov.uk

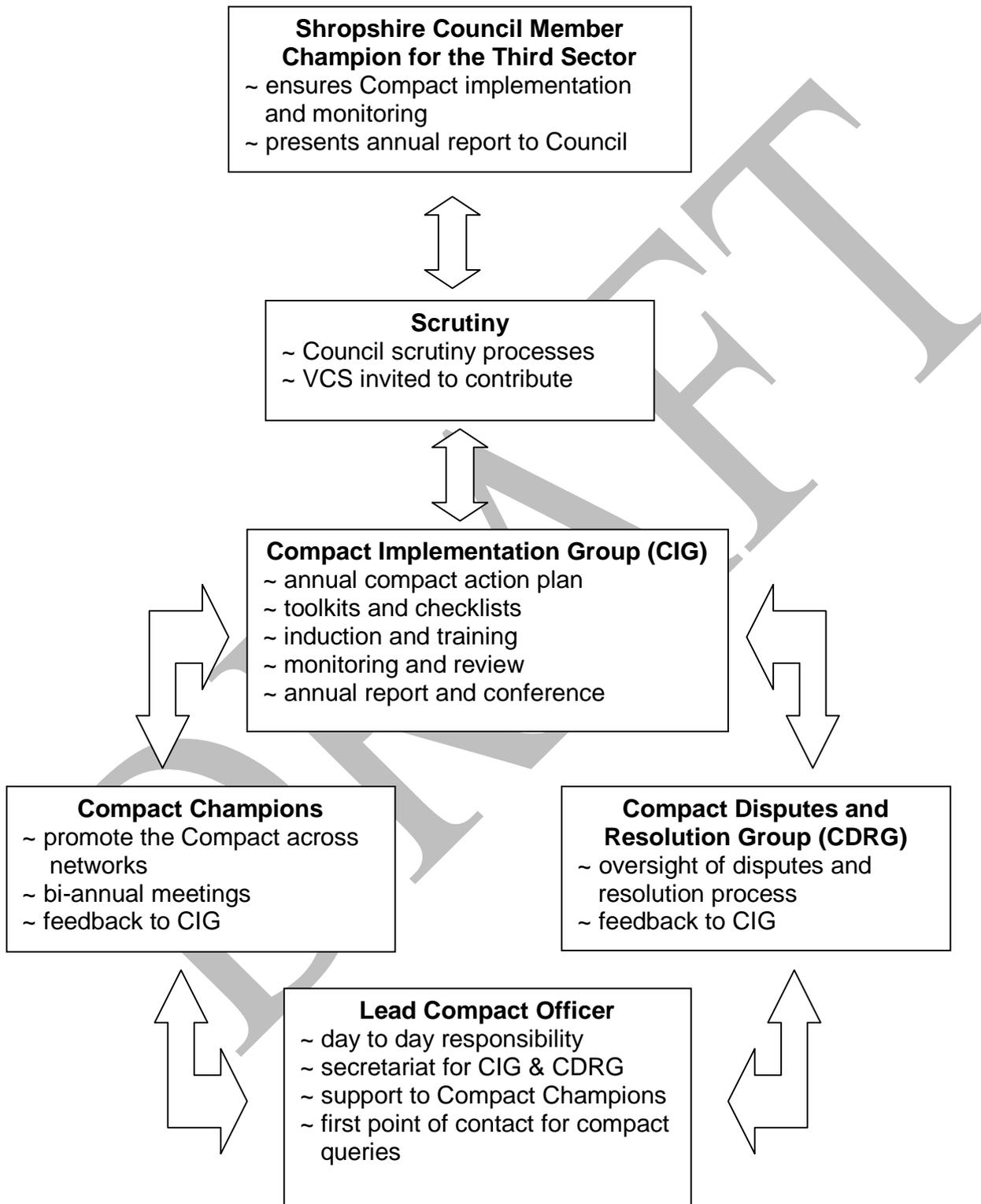
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the many people that have helped in developing this document and the proposed Compact principles for Shropshire. The table below lists the names of people on the Compact Development Group, together with individuals that attended the Compact Development Focus Groups. The new Shropshire Compact is a shared document between the Council and the VCS in the county. We appreciate your continued support and input to this work.

Julia Baron	Heather Osborne	Nigel Denton	Val Oldaker
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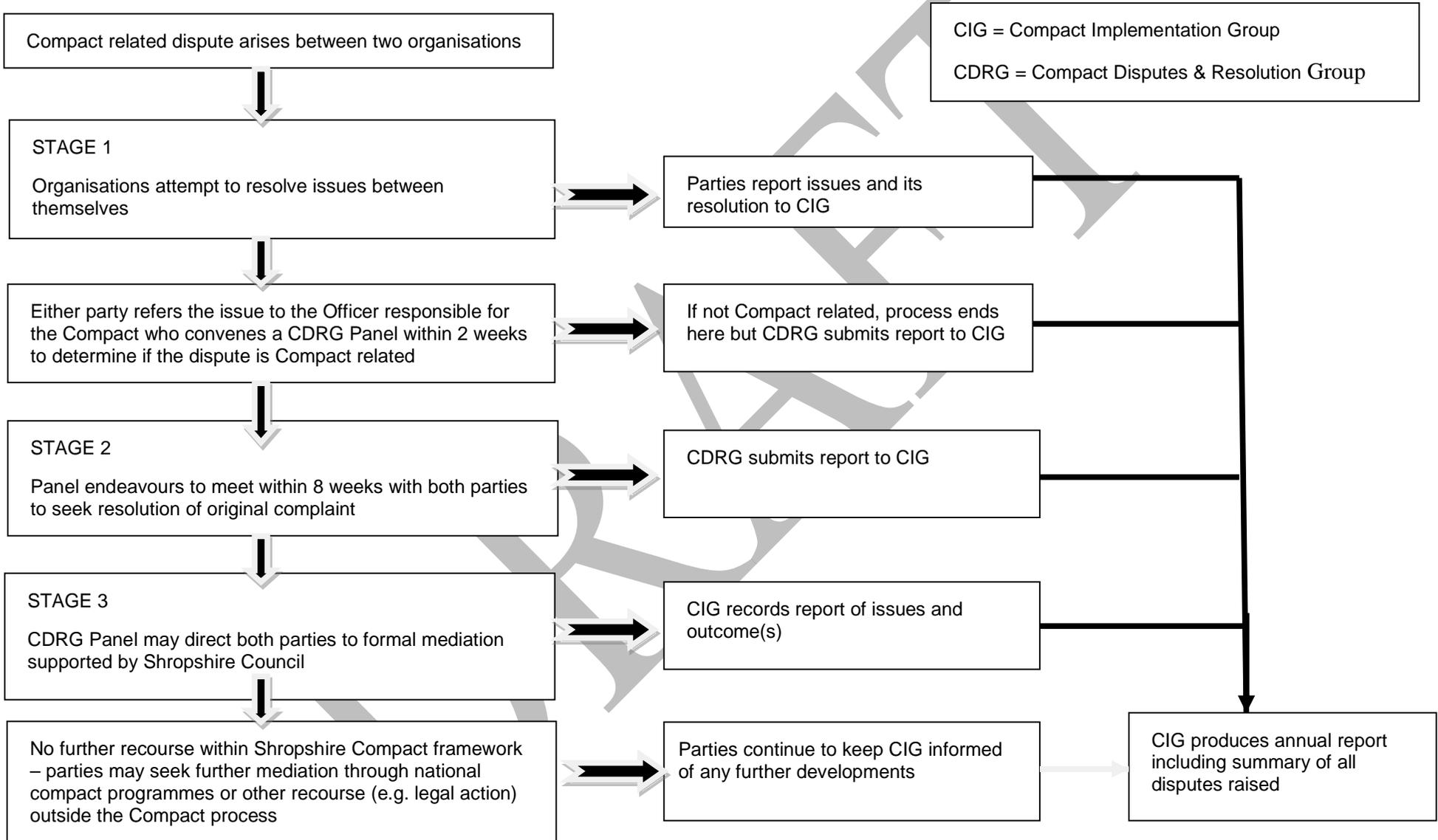
APPENDIX A

The Shropshire Compact - Structures and Processes for Implementation



Proposed Disputes and Resolution Process for Shropshire's Compact

APPENDIX B



For the purposes of the Compact the following definitions apply:

Procured Services

Services that the Council wishes to commission or contract for generally in order to fulfill a function that it is under a duty to provide.

Grant funding

Given to VCS organisations to fund specific projects or support the service being provided. The service will generally be one that the Council does not have a responsibility to provide, but one that is recognised as meeting one of its strategic objectives and being of benefit to Shropshire residents.

VCS organisations enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the Council as to how the funding will be used and what information the organisation will need to provide to the Council. The nature of the agreement and the level of detail and responsibilities included will depend on the amount of funding being provided.

Glossary of Terms

CDG	Compact Development Group
CDRG	Compact Disputes and Resolution Group
CIG	Compact Implementation Group
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector