

Director for Communities	Ref No: OKD07_1819
May 2018	Key Decision: Yes
Working in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector	Part I
Report by Executive Director Communities and Public Protection and Director of Communities	Electoral Divisions: All

Summary

The County Council is clear that in order to effectively support better outcomes for the citizens of West Sussex it is imperative that the organisation continues to support and work in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, which is an essential part of a healthy civic society.

In order to strengthen the approach a clear set of principles - The West Sussex Partnership Principles - have been developed in collaboration with the voluntary and community sector to demonstrate a shared commitment to working together in a positive, open manner to deliver common aims and objectives.

The West Sussex Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) Partnership Principles add to the existing commitment set out in the [West Sussex Compact 2012](#) and have been developed in collaboration with a range of partners from both the VCS and statutory sector.

Recommendation:

That the Director for Communities endorses the West Sussex Voluntary Community Sector Partnership Principles as set out at paragraph 2.3 and detailed in Appendix 1.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1. A strong, vibrant and effective voluntary and community sector is a critical component of a healthy civic society. The County Council recognises the vital role which is played by these organisations in supporting West Sussex citizens and communities across the county.
- 1.2. The County Council commissions a range of VCS organisations to deliver a diverse set of services from providers which are critical in ensuring that the County Council is able to meet its statutory requirements. Many local voluntary and community groups and organisations also help to address gaps in, and/or, extend the reach of local service provision, adding significant value and complementing WSCC services.
- 1.3. Ensuring that the VCS has the skill, capacity and resources to meet local need and to develop strong, collaborative and engaged partnerships with the County

Council is therefore fundamental to the achievement of the County Council's key strategic priorities.

- 1.4 As part of the Council's commitment to 'Unlocking the Power of Community' which is a transformation programme developing a new culture of 'working with' citizens and groups to build community resilience and strength, a clearer role for the voluntary and community sector needs to be agreed. At a briefing with senior officers on 31 October 2017 Cabinet Members endorsed a new set of Partnership Principles to re-affirm the County Councils commitment to work positively with our VCS partners, building more productive alliances where organisations share the same aims and objectives.
- 1.5 This growing relationship between the VCS, the County Council and partners will be utilised to co-design a new countywide communication platform to enable ongoing and effective dialogue on other key areas of shared concern and drive the development of a policy on implementing the Social Value Act into the Council's ongoing commissioning and procurement practice.
- 1.6 Work to develop these principles into a systematic approach to share information, develop an effective dialogue and build opportunities for collaboration is on-going and will be the subject of future reports.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. The County Council is currently progressing a transformation programme to 'Unlock the Power of Community' as set out in [The West Sussex Plan](#), focused on building community capacity and resilience. It is in this context that the authority proposes to mark the importance attached to the County Council's partnerships with the West Sussex VCS sector by re-setting the principles upon which the County Council's relationships are conducted.
- 2.2. Representatives from across the VCS have worked with the County Council and partners to establish a set of clear principles that demonstrate the County Councils commitment to working together with the VCS towards common aims and objectives and more effective outcomes for our residents.
- 2.3. These principles, as summarised below, will form the basis for a restatement of the Council's strategic commitment to working closely with the VCS as partners to meet the challenges of the county.

When working with VCS partners West Sussex County Council will respect the following principles:

- **Community Focussed:** We will place our communities central to everything we do, reflecting their local needs, challenges and opportunities for the people and communities we are here to serve.
- **Partnership & Collaboration:** We will focus on longer term partnerships built on honesty, respect and independence and hold each other to account for our collective outcomes.
- **Leadership:** We will recognise the contribution and value of the strength of different sector leadership for common purpose and outcomes.

- **Shared Understanding:** We will share our information to enable collective thinking.
- **Transformation:** We will continue to develop new ways of thinking together for the benefit of our communities.

2.4. The full document is set out in the Appendix.

3. **Resources**

- 3.1. It is intended that the Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities will champion the adoption and use of these Principles across the organisation.
- 3.2. The proposal does not require additional funding but will demonstrate continuing commitment to collaborative working with VCS partners from County Council services and commissioners.

Factors taken into account

4. **Consultation**

- 4.1. External – The currently commissioned VCS Infrastructure services, Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester (VAAC), Mid Sussex Voluntary Action (formally known as Horsham and Mid Sussex Voluntary Action), Community Works Adur and Worthing, Crawley Council for Voluntary Service and Horsham District Council have been consulted in development of the document. They have in turn invited other interested VCS organisations to comment. The Consortium which consists of larger VCS organisations that operate within West Sussex such as 4Sight, Carers Support, Independent Lives, Aldingbourne Trust, Age UK West Sussex and Healthwatch has also been consulted and has commented.
- 4.2. All seven District and Borough Councils, and the Clinical Commissioning Groups, have been consulted and commented, using partnership meetings that are currently reviewing VCS Infrastructure support services.
- 4.3. Internal – WSCC Commissioners were consulted at an event on 07/03/18 held to explore, promote and implement improved ways of working with the VCS.
- 4.4. The feedback from the consultation was positive. The VCS Infrastructure services welcomed the opportunity to help shape the County Councils approach. The need for the Partnership Principles to add to the current values set out in the West Sussex Compact was a common theme and the VCS Partnership Principles are seen as adding to these.

5. **Risk Management Implications**

- 5.1. There is a reputational risk if the Partnership Principles are not demonstrated by West Sussex County Council staff.

6. Other Options Considered

- 6.1. To review and refresh the West Sussex Compact. The West Sussex Compact is a partnership document, co-written by signatory partners within Health, Districts, Boroughs and some VCS organisations; any amendments to the West Sussex Compact would have to be done in consultation and agreement with all signatory organisations. Previous updates of the Compact have taken many months to agree and achieving this was resource intensive. Some partners continue to use the West Sussex Compact effectively. The West Sussex VCS Partnership Principles re-affirms the County Councils commitment to work positively with VCS partners, building stronger alliances where aims and objectives are shared.

7. Equality Duty

- 7.1. The impact of this decision on those with protected characteristics has been considered. The protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex. This proposal will advance equality of opportunity for all West Sussex residents including those with protected characteristics as it proposes to demonstrate the County Council's commitment to specific Principles in developing improved, effective ways of working with the Voluntary Community Sector. In drawing up the Principles the needs of carers and armed forces personnel have also been considered, specifically, in addition to those with protected characteristics, in the Principle of 'Community Focus' – to reflect the needs, challenges and opportunities for the people and communities we serve.

8. Social Value

- 8.1. This proposal should strengthen the social value element of procurement involving VCS organisations. Work with commissioners who engage with the VCS from across the County Council has begun, a commissioners staff group will be formed to share best practice in empowering social action and to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area through the commissioning process.

9. Crime and Disorder Act Implications

- 9.1. None.

10. Human Rights Implications

- 10.1. None.

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Appendix 1: **West Sussex Voluntary Community Sector
Partnership Principles**

Background Papers: **None**