

A Compact for Southend-on-Sea



Compact
working together better together

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1 Mission Statement

The Compact is a framework for partnership working between statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector.

It recognises the contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes to our society.

A Compact for Southend-on-Sea will build on and improve relationships for mutual advantage.

2 Introduction

The National Compact was inspired by The Deakin Commission report on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, which recommended partnership between Government and the sector to lay down basic principles of future relations. The Compact is the result of consultation across Government and the voluntary and community sector.

A Local Compact is an agreement between the local authority, other public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.

A Compact for Southend-on-Sea was written by representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and other statutory bodies appointed to form a steering group - The Compact Development Forum, following an extensive consultation period involving all parties.

The Compact is a framework of principles, values and commitments to help improve and develop the relationship for mutual advantage

It is not a legally binding document, but the Compact is approved and signed policy and affects statutory agencies and the sector's conduct.

The Compact is a living document.



3 Key Principles

- A flourishing voluntary and community sector is part of a democratic and healthy society
- A healthy voluntary and community sector is part of a democratic society
- Working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector can result in better policy and services and better outcomes for the community
- Partnership requires strong relationships and openness.
- Statutory bodies can play a role as funder of the voluntary and community sector
- The independence of the voluntary and community sector should be respected

Statutory organisations undertake to:

- Promote the Compact across their organisation and the sector
- Respect the independence of the voluntary and community sector
- Consult early enough to make a difference
- Recognise the cost of doing business when funding public service delivery

The voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- Promote the Compact across the sector
- Operate through open and accountable organisations
- Involve all stakeholders and embrace diversity
- Contribute constructively to public policy

Statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector together undertake to:

- Work together to improve outcomes for the community.

4 Shared Vision

4.1 The Compact is an expression of the commitment of statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector to work in partnership for the betterment of society and to nurture and support voluntary and community activity. It clarifies the responsibilities and expectations of working together. As part of this process, the Compact sets out the key principles and undertakings which should underpin the relationship between statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector in Southend-on-Sea.

4.2 The underlying philosophy of the Compact is that voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic, socially inclusive society. Voluntary and community groups, as independent, not-for-profit organisations, bring distinctive value to society and fulfil a role that is distinct from both the state and the market. They enable individuals to contribute to public life and the development of their communities by providing the opportunity for voluntary action. In doing so they engage the skills, interests, beliefs and values of individuals and groups. Statutory agencies 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.

4.3 Voluntary and community organisations make a major and literally incalculable contribution to the development of society and to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the nation. They act as pathfinders for the involvement of users in the design and delivery of services and often act as advocates for those who otherwise have no voice. In doing so they promote both equality and diversity. They help to alleviate poverty, improve the quality of life and involve the socially excluded. The voluntary and community sector also makes an important direct economic contribution to Southend-on-Sea.

4.4 The Compact recognises that these attributes are a major benefit to society and that statutory agencies can play a positive role both in promoting volunteering and in supporting the work of voluntary and community organisations. Whenever statutory agencies develop policies or programmes they need to be aware of the impact these may have on the work of the voluntary and community sector. The Compact aims to address this positively.

5 Shared Principles

The shared principles which underpin the Compact are set out below.

5.1 Voluntary action is valued as an essential component of democratic society.

5.2 An independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the health and well being of society in Southend-on-Sea.

5.3 In the development and delivery of public policy and services, the statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector have distinct but complementary roles.

5.4 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 services and programmes.

5.5 The statutory agencies 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.

5.6 Voluntary and community organisations are entitled to

campaign within the law in order to advance their aims.

5.7 The statutory agencies play a significant role, among other things, as a funder of some voluntary and community organisations. Funding can be an important element of the relationship between the statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector.

5.8 Both statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector acknowledge the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion. We recognise the diversity of the Southend-on-Sea community and that there will be exemptions under relevant legislation.

5.9 Organisations such as religious organisations currently exempted from certain provisions of equal opportunity legislation, will be similarly exempted from such requirements within this Compact.



For Voluntary & Community groups: consultation and involvement that works with enough time to have a say on what matters to you

6 Undertakings by Statutory Organisations

The undertakings by statutory agencies are set out below.

Independence

6.1 To recognise and support the independence of the sector, including its right within the law, to campaign, to comment on statutory agencies policy, and to challenge that policy, irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist, and to determine and manage its own affairs.

Funding

6.2 To take account of the need for greater proportionality (e.g. in auditing requirements and funding terms), targeting, consistency and transparency in funding frameworks and to pay particular regard to the concept of strategic or core funding, ensuring the continued capacity of voluntary and community organisations to respond to initiatives.

6.3 To develop in consultation with the sector a code of good practice to address principles of fair funding for statutory agencies.

This will promote:

- (a)** the allocation of resources against clear and consistent criteria including, where appropriate, best value;
- (b)** funding policies which take account of the objectives of voluntary and community organisations and their need to operate efficiently and effectively;
- (c)** common, transparent arrangements for agreeing and evaluating objectives, performance indicators and their associated targets, facilitating prompt payment, reviewing financial support, consulting upon changes to the funding position, and informing voluntary and community organisations about future funding as early as possible, normally before the end of the current funding period;

(d) the value of long-term, multi-year funding, where appropriate, to assist longer term planning and stability.

6.4 To recognise the importance of infrastructure to the voluntary and community sector and volunteering and, where appropriate, to support its development.

Policy development and consultation

6.5 To appraise new policies and procedures, particularly at the developmental stage, so as to identify as far as possible implications for the sector.

6.6 Subject to considerations of urgency, sensitivity or confidentiality (for example, confidential reports to elected members) to consult the sector on issues that are likely to affect it, particularly where the statutory agency is proposing new roles and responsibilities for the sector, for example, in the delivery of statutory services. Such consultation should be timely and allow reasonable timescales for response, taking into account the need of organisations to consult their users, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

6.7 To take account positively of the specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the sector which represent women, minority groups and the socially excluded.

6.8 To respect the confidentiality of information provided by the sector, within the constraints of the law and the proper performance of public duties, when given access to it on that basis.

6.9 To develop jointly with the sector a code of good practice covering consultation, policy appraisal and implementation. This will draw on national codes of practice

Better decisions and working relations

6.10 To promote effective working relationships, consistency of approach and good practice between statutory agencies and the sector, particularly where cross agency issues are concerned.

6.11 To adhere to the principles of open government (which seeks to ensure that decisions and findings are made public) and good regulation.

6.12 To review the operation of the Compact annually in conjunction with the sector.

6.13 To promote the adoption of the Compact by other public bodies.

7 Undertakings by The Voluntary and Community Sector

The undertakings by the voluntary and community sector are set out below.

Funding and accountability

7.1 To maintain high standards of governance, management and conduct and meet reporting and accountability obligations to funders and users. Where applicable, to observe the accounting framework for charities.

7.2 To respect and be accountable to the law, including that on political activities and campaigning and, in the case of charities, observe the appropriate guidance from the Charity Commission,

7.3 To develop quality standards appropriate to the organisation.

Policy development and consultation

7.4 To ensure that service users, volunteers, members and

supporters are informed and consulted, where appropriate, about activities and policy positions when presenting a case to statutory agencies or responding to statutory consultations, and to communicate accurately the views put to them in the course of such representations.

7.5 To respect the confidentiality of statutory agencies' information, when given access to it on that basis.

Good practice

7.6 To promote effective working relationships with statutory agencies and across the voluntary and community sector.

7.7 To involve users, volunteers, members and supporters, wherever possible, in the development and management of activities and services.

7.8 To put in place policies for promoting best practice and equality of opportunity in activities, employment, involvement of volunteers and service provision.

7.9 To review the operation of the Compact annually in conjunction with the statutory agencies.



Our Compact is a working document - a starting point for statutory and voluntary and community sector to work together

8 Issues relating to Community groups, Faith-based groups and Black and Minority Ethnic Organisations

8.1 Although the principles and undertakings contained in the Compact apply across the voluntary and community sector, particular consideration needs to be given to the specific needs, interests and contribution of community groups, faith-based groups and black and minority ethnic voluntary and community organisations.

8.2 Community groups and faith-based groups, as associations of people who come together to pursue a common cause or interest, often on a mutual basis, are usually run entirely by volunteers for others with shared interests, concerns, focuses or beliefs. They may well be affected, directly or indirectly, by legislation, regulation and changes in social policy. It is important that the distinctive needs and interests of community groups are taken into account as their perspective and concerns may differ from those of other voluntary organisations. A code of good practice will be developed to facilitate and reflect this based on the national code of practice.

8.3 Despite their work with a diverse range of groups and communities, many Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations feel outside the traditional structures of the voluntary and community sector. The Compact provides a framework for ensuring that support for, and involvement of, these organisations are mainstream issues for both statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector. In particular, resources need to be targeted at Black and Minority Ethnic infrastructure organisations, whose aim is to increase the effectiveness of the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations. Equally, steps will need to be taken by both statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector to ensure that Black and Minority Ethnic organisations have the opportunity to be directly involved in partnerships, consultation and decision making. This

will help these organisations to develop and realise their potential. These concerns will be addressed through a specific code of good practice based on national guidelines, which will reflect the distinctive needs and circumstances of Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations.

9 Resolution of Disagreements

The Compact sets out a general framework for enhancing the relationship between statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector. As far as possible disagreements over the application of that framework should be resolved between the parties. Where resolution is not possible, both parties should seek mediation through a mutually agreed mediator. Any disagreements which arise throughout the year will be monitored for consideration at the annual review meeting.



For the Compact to be effective it is important that all parties take part in consultation and sign up to the document

10 Taking The Compact Forward

10.1 The Compact, as a framework document, is a starting point not a conclusion. Statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector within Southend-on-Sea are committed to working together to develop its application and effectiveness.

10.2 An effective Compact will benefit the local community and be of mutual advantage to each side. It will make the best use of our energies and resources, so that more joint working is possible

10.3 As part of that process, codes of good practice will be prepared in the areas of funding, consultation and policy appraisal, volunteering, community groups, including those which are faith based, and Black and Minority Ethnic organisations.

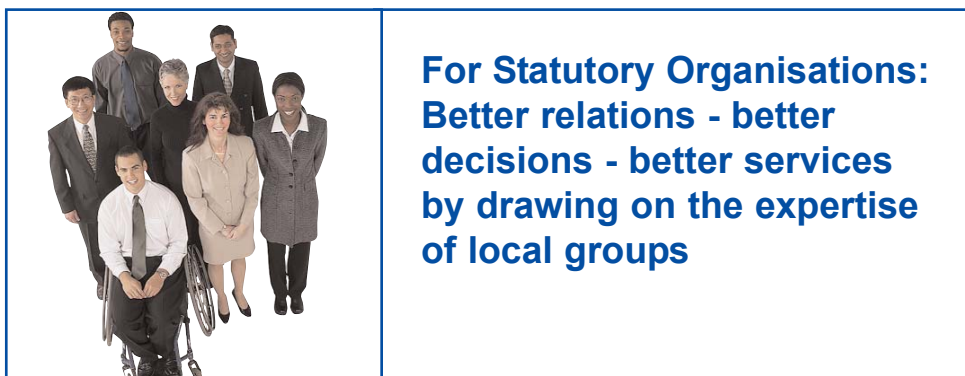
10.4 As part of the process of making the Compact work, there will be an annual meeting between the statutory agencies and representatives of the voluntary and community sector to review the operation of the Compact and its development. This meeting will also consider disagreements that have arisen during the year. The report of that meeting will be published and placed in the Libraries and with participating agencies/organisations.



11 Signing The Compact Agreement

A Compact for Southend-on-Sea is a working agreement concerning relations between statutory organisations and voluntary and community groups. Initially it will apply to those who have signed up to the principles within it. Those agencies will actively encourage other public bodies and voluntary and community sector groups to adopt the Compact.

Organisations and departments will be encouraged to nominate a Compact Champion.



**For Statutory Organisations:
Better relations - better
decisions - better services
by drawing on the expertise
of local groups**

This document can be provided in other formats and translation of this document is also available.

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