

Third Sector Leeds, 'One Council' approach feedback

Issue	Ideas for strengthening practice
Capacity for Implementation of commitments made at corporate level	Additional support for Cllr Yeadon and Sandie Keene in the corporate roles they have undertaken. A Council wide cross departmental third sector team A Lead relationship manager for third sector organisations working across directorate boundaries
Fragmented support and development / infrastructure arrangements	Further develop the work started by E & N, Children's and ASC to define the Council's expectations of infrastructure support. Ensure all departments are signed up to and understand the meaning of a more integrated approach to support and development / infrastructure Agreed timescale for a one Council approach to commissioning infrastructure with one person in the Council with lead responsibility
Sector less well recognised in some areas of activity than others	Embed a positive approach to the sector in the new partnership arrangements, so there is a consistent approach to potential contribution to City Priority Plans Each directorate required to identify which areas it could more actively engage with and commission the third sector; and a programme to achieve this Third Sector Partnership Group should focus on some areas where the sector has played a less prominent role e.g. major capital projects; crime reduction, to identify barriers and problem solve
Speed of decision making about third sector issues	Clarity about the decision making process especially at corporate level – formal adoption of the Compact is a good scenario to learn from.
A one Council approach to commissioning	Recommendations from the Supporting Links to Commissioning Project to be presented to the Corporate Commissioning Group All Directorates to produce a programme of commissioning opportunities for the year ahead Develop a corporate approach to the maximising of social, environmental and economic benefits to the Leeds district from procurement
Collaboration between statutory partners	PSRG to identify savings to be made from a more integrated approach to service delivery across the statutory sector
Equality Impact Assessment	The third sector role in the development of EIAs can be developed further Baseline information about the position of communities of interest needs to be developed or shared with partners if already available. Improvements in equality monitoring need to be maintained, and ways of getting better response rates increased.

Development of new locality arrangements	Sector to work with the Assistant Chief Exec, and area leaders, to improve engagement Better integration of children's and health services at this level are opportunities for better working at this level Need for consistency across the district Delegation of decision making powers to neighbourhoods / towns that are natural communities e.g. neighbourhood management
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Other ideas and Feedback:

Despite the very difficult financial context for public services and especially for the Council, working relationships between the sector and its statutory partners are being maintained, and in some respects even improved. The revised Compact and the high profile support it received from the CEOs of the Council and NHS Leeds, the recognition of TSL by the Council, and the development of the new Third Sector Partnership Group are very positive.

However there are many challenges. Different parts of the sector deal with different departments or teams within departments. For example responsibility for the building occupied may rest with one department, whilst the revenue funding comes mainly from another. There is a lack of consistency across Directorates and also sometimes an issue of consistency at different hierarchical levels within Directorates.

The impact of the cuts has varied considerably across Directorates. In part this is due to central government priorities over which the Council does not have control, but there are local factors at work too, some defensible, others less so. The Council needs to take a more corporate and strategic approach to commissioning out services based on criteria which have been discussed and agreed with the sector, with the overall aim of better integration of services and better value for money.

Whilst consultation has improved, it is sometimes too late in the day for the sector to have a meaningful input. When Council officers do a great deal of detailed work before any consultation takes place, it is difficult to avoid a sense that rubber stamping is really the only option. Earlier engagement with the sector will in our view produce a higher level of ownership and engagement and ultimately better outcomes.

Another feature which determines our real experience as a sector is the relationship between the department or team in question and their statutory partners whether it is the NHS, Jobcentre Plus or the Police. When a voluntary organisation receives funding from more than one statutory agency, or needs to work closely with it, any shortcomings in collaboration are only too obvious.

It is important to acknowledge too the breadth and complexity of the third sector in Leeds which comprises hundreds of funded organisations and thousands of unfunded ones. So the experience that councillors and council officers have of the sector is enormously varied, depending on the ward they represent, the interests they have and the services for which they are responsible.

Partnership arrangements below the district level have always been important to the sector, especially to organisations which don't operate across the whole of what is a very large geographical area. Again at this level there have been issues of consistency in the past.

The increasing role of GP consortia and school-led clusters in the commissioning of services highlights the importance of getting this right if the whole district is to benefit from a thriving third sector.

The Council has promoted some areas of the Compact very effectively. Principle 6 Promoting Volunteering is an outstanding example which deserves and gets national recognition. But there are also aspects of the Council's approach that continue to give rise to significant concerns. It seems slow to acknowledge that having agreed Principle 1 of the Compact, there should not be areas of partnership working where there is no third sector representation. The fact that we are not part of a Shadow Steering group for the development of the Joint Health Board is such a concern. By common consent the record on Principle 4 (Allocating Resources) is mixed, and the day to day work of the Procurement Unit does not feel as if it is rooted in an understanding of this part of the Compact.

So overall our message to the Council is that we welcome the progress made, but there is no room for complacency, especially against the very difficult financial context. If we are to deliver challenging outcomes, especially for some of the most disadvantaged communities, then the Council needs a pro-active strategy which it discusses and agrees with the sector. The third sector and the Council cannot afford to continue to be reactive.

Partnerships / forums with a third sector agenda and council officer attendance / representation

Clearly the main forum for discussions between the sector and its statutory partners is the Third Sector Partnership Group. The most important thing is a consistent approach from the Council which results in a more integrated approach engaging the sector and other statutory organisations. The Children's Trust Board and the Joint Strategic Commissioning Group (Health / Social Care) both seem to be bodies in which there is effective interaction about overall strategy, and service improvement. The new partnership and strategic planning arrangements will provide an opportunity to spread good practice throughout partnership working in Leeds, in line with the provisions of the Compact.