

Compact between

The Third Sector and
Cyngor Gwynedd

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

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**RESPONSES TO:-
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FOREWORD

A strong and healthy relationship between the third sector and the Local Authority is vital for the benefit of the County and its citizens. In Gwynedd, the Council and the Sector have been collaborating on various levels for a number of years. This partnership has grown, and has provided many benefits for the citizens of the County.

In the Spring of 2006, research work was commissioned to map the Sector's work in Gwynedd and to ascertain the statistical value of the Sector within Gwynedd. From the results of the research work, it is clear that the Sector plays an important role in the lives of Gwynedd citizens - economically and socially.

Therefore the collaboration between the Council - one of the most important institutions within the County; and the Sector, is very important. In March 2003, a Compact was published to encapsulate an agreement between Gwynedd Council and the Sector, and is the basis for collaboration. This is a revised version of the Compact - and it is hoped that this document builds on the foundation already laid in 2003.

The main general principle is that it's possible to work more efficiently together for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd. As evidence of this you will see in this document steps being introduced to give the Sector an opportunity to give their opinion on relevant issues within the Council's decision making process.

The partnerships collaboration will cultivate the principles of honesty, transparency, trust and respect towards each other. This document sets out the responsibilities and ever increasing expectations on the Council and Sector by co-operating.

On behalf of Gwynedd Council and the Third Sector we commend this agreement, and will endeavour to realize its proposals.

Signed:

Gwynedd Council Leader
Gwynedd

Chair of Mantell

Purpose of the Compact

In November of 1998 the national Compact for improved collaboration between the Westminster Government and the Voluntary Sector was published. Gradually the idea was adopted locally, and by March 2003 the first Compact was published in Gwynedd.

The purpose of this revised version of the Compact is to formalize some elements of the relationship, to facilitate and further improve the collaboration between Gwynedd Council and the Sector within the County.

The Compact is deliberately concise, however further details are available within the appendices.

- Appendix A - Code of Conduct
- Appendix B - Undertakings
- Appendix C - Action points for further consideration

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPACT

The aim of the Compact is to outline the values and principles for healthy collaboration between Gwynedd Council and the Third Sector, and also to operate as a practical guide to operating the partnership, and to note recommended practical steps to be enforced by the Third Sector and Gwynedd Council Liaison Group to improve and develop on existing collaboration.

Although presently an agreement between the Council and the Third Sector, aspirations towards a broader agreement with Gwynedd Together partners exists.

The aims of the Third Sector and Gwynedd Council Liaison Group Compact are:

- Improve the understanding between the Sector and Council on various levels.
- Improve the collaboration between the Council and Sector on an operative/ practical and strategic level.
- Improve communication between the Council and the Sector.
- Ensure that the working relationship between the Sector and Council makes a difference and adds value for the citizens of Gwynedd.

Basic Principles and Values

The aims of the Compact and actions of the Liaison Group are founded on the following principles and values:

- Mutual acknowledgement of each others value and contribution.
- Mutual acknowledgement of the limitations faced by the Council and Sector.
- The need to work in partnership and collectively.

- Commitment to the vision of Gwynedd Together (Gwynedd's Community Strategy)
- Operate in an open, honest and answerable manner.

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON GROUP'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Compact is enforced by the Voluntary Sector and Gwynedd Council Liaison Group. The Group's role is to supervise and ensure that the Compact is enforced and develop a working programme to realize matters raised by the Compact.

The Aims and Objectives of the Liaison Group

- To support the Voluntary Sector and the Council to fulfil the aims set out in the Compact.
- Give the Council information about the Voluntary Sector's needs, opinions and concerns.
- Facilitate the collaboration between the Council and the Sector.
- Refer appropriate matters before Council Committees to the attention of the Voluntary Sector.
- Ensure continual communication between the Sector and Council.
- Endeavour to set targets for the annual working programme to demonstrate progress and to assess the value added by the Group.
- Provide a strategic overlook of the allocation of Council grants to the Sector.
- To ensure the Council's budgetary procedures towards the Sector are consistent.

Members:

- 9 members from Gwynedd Council - including Chairmen or Vice-Chairmen from the Council's Scrutiny Committee.
- 11 representatives from the Third Sector elected every 2 years (the representatives will reflect the Council's scrutiny areas).
- Deputies will be nominated if representatives can not attend meetings.
- The Chair and Vice-chair to be elected annually - one from the Council, the other from the Sector alternately.

Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Group will exchange according to discussions between the Council and the Sector, depending on available capacity.

Meetings:

- The Group will decide on the dates of meetings, and will meet at least every 3 months.

PRIORITIES

The Liaison Group in Gwynedd is eager to develop its work to a more strategic level, and is eager to ensure that its work adds value and makes a difference.

Out of the Compact review many possible actions points have arisen - some of an operational nature, and some more strategic (they are listed in full in Appendix C). The Liaison Group will ensure that priority will be given to the issues that will have the greatest impact.

Recommended issues are listed below along with suggestions on how to achieve them.

ISSUES	IMPLEMENTATION SUGGESTIONS
<p>A need to develop a method of enabling the Sector to have input in the Council Scrutiny procedures to ensure opportunities for the Sector to voice their concerns and opinions on important Council matters (operational or strategic/ policy matters).</p>	<p>Develop procedures to receive input from the Third Sector into the Council's Scrutiny System by electing representatives from the Third Sector based on the Scrutiny Committees Areas of expertise.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate training for Third Sector representatives and the scrutiny committees chairman in order that dialogue from the sector is facilitated and welcomed into the Council's scrutiny system.</p>
<p>Abolish any unwanted obstacles which make it difficult for the Sector to operate.</p>	<p>Develop methods of overcoming any obstacles or problems between the Sector and the Council, and also any issues experienced by the Sector which the Council could assist in alleviating.</p>
<p>Raise awareness of the influence and contribution the Sector has/ could have within the communities of Gwynedd, and give this consideration when collaborating and co-planning between the Sector and Council on a strategic and operational level - today, and in the future.</p>	<p>Ensure the Members and Senior Managers of Gwynedd Council are aware of the contribution made by the Sector. A possible start would be to present the results of the mapping exercise.</p>
<p>Ensure that there is clear communication with the Sector when decision are being made which may affect the Sector.</p>	<p>Develop clear communication channels - and raise awareness amongst the Sector in sufficient time, of any relevant issues that are subject to discussion within the Council.</p>
<p>Measure the impact of the Compact and the work of the Liaison Group.</p>	<p>Set performance indicators for the Group and/ or the Compact and consider developing a set of indicators - to demonstrate the progress brought about by the Council - Sector relationship. Also, to review the Compact, and conduct a Liaison Group self-appraisal.</p>

IMPLEMENT, MONITOR AND REVIEW

The Council and Sector agree to:

1. Share responsibilities and show an undertaking to enforce and review the Compact.
2. Undertake to conduct a self-appraisal of the Liaison Group regularly, to review the relationship between the Council and the Sector.
3. Monitor and review the aims set out in this agreement.
4. Set performance indicators, and monitor them to review the efficiency of the group.
5. Review the members of the Liaison Group every 2 years.

The Liaison Group will receive reports reviewing and monitoring specific elements of the Compact and how they are to be enforced. The Liaison Group will have to monitor its own efficiency by conducting self-assessments to ensure the relationship between the Council and Sector adds value and makes a positive difference.

APPENDIXES.

Appendix A

CODES OF PRACTICE

There are 4 codes of practice in this Appendix which set an implementation framework for 4 specific fields;

- Communication and consultation
- Resources and Support
- Working in partnership
- Voluntary Code

The codes are Frameworks so there is a clear understanding of divisions and roles between the Council and the Sector.

Implementation points become apparent in order to ensure effective operation of these codes of practice. The operation points are recommended to the Liaison Group's work programme however the work priority will be decided by the Group.

It is recognised that the codes will need to develop as the Compact develops.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION CODE OF PRACTICE

Aim: Have a positive effect on the way the Council consults, makes decisions and asks for approval on policies which deal with the Voluntary Sector and otherwise, and also to improve the process of sharing information between the Council and the Sector.

The Council will strive to:

- Ensure that the consultation process with the Sector is undertaken as soon as possible, especially when the matter or subject disrupts the Sector.
- Ensure that the Sector's voice is heard through its decision making and governing procedures and thereby ensure access to the sector's voice in decisions which could affect them.
- Communicate effectively and efficiently especially when there is a need to inform of changes in contract conditions (e.g. Service Level Agreements), or when a decision is made that could affect or interfere with the Sector.
- Consult meaningfully on matters relevant to the Sector and allowing reasonable time for consultations.
- Clearly setting the framework for consultation at the start of a process, by explaining if there are any restrictions, e.g. that some decisions have already been made, or if a specific option is being favoured.
- Ensure that the type of consultation is relevant and acceptable in accordance with the individual situation, by looking at new constructive ways of including the Sector.
- Produce concise and clear consultation documents in a simple language; and ensuring that documents are available in a specific format, if needed.
- Give attention to observations made, explain how observations are incorporated and explain if observations are not incorporated.
- Ensure sufficient resources to undertake full and inclusive consultations.

The Sector will strive to:

- Respond promptly to consultations.
- Ensure that responses are constructive, clear with regards to the content of observations and who is making the observations.
- Ensure that responses represent a broad opinion across the Sector.
- Show the difference between a response based on an individual's opinion and the opinion of a wider group.
- Ensure that responses are inclusive and participative.
- Work collaboratively with the Council to arrange effective and efficient consultations.
- Allow reasonable time for the Council to be able to respond to any consultation by the Sector relevant to any aspect of the Council's work.
- Inform the Council of other establishments/organisations who should be consulted.
- Communicate effectively and efficiently especially when there is a need to inform about changes in contract conditions (e.g. ability to complete Service Agreement), or when a decision or action is made which affects or interferes with the Council.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT CODE OF PRACTICE

Aim: Ensure the best economic benefit for public money and improve the relationship between the Council and Sector in all aspects of budgeting. Ensure that the needs are identified and that new ways of satisfying the needs are developed.

The financial contact between the Council and the Sector can vary;
Financing projects - Paying for a specific scheme or service, usually through a contract or grant.

Development Finance - Investment in new capacity or to improve ability to contribute towards public policy aims- usually through a grant.

Strategic Financing - For an establishment of strategic importance- usually through grant money.

The Council will strive to:

- Ensure that processes are as facile as possible when administering financing funds.
- Take steps to ensure that different groups within the sector have access to finance.
- Discuss risks beforehand by considering who would be best at managing the risks.
- Pay for service before expenditure is made, and where failure to pay would endanger provision of the service, where the regulations placed on the Council allows.
- Publish:
 1. Financing plan for available sums.
 2. Application criteria.
 3. Timetables for submitting, processing and publishing applications.
 4. Grant application decision results.
 5. Names of officers who are points of contact for specific funds/sources.
- Be open and objective when assessing applications against the criteria.
- Establish reasonable monitoring requirements and realistic performance indicators according to the size of the funds.

- Provide information in good time on when contracts or grants come to an end.
- Support the sector and voluntary groups by providing other resource support, apart from finance.

The Sector will strive to:

- Establish regulatory arrangements and clear and effective monetary systems.
- Comply with the need to monitor and evaluate activities against the agreed aims.
- Recognise, in public, any financial support received by the Council be it financial or with regards to other resources.
- Recognise the Council's financial restrictions, and their necessity to respond to national requirements.
- Recognise that it is the Council's responsibility to be answerable for ensuring that firm processes are in place when dealing with public money.
- Respond to the reporting and accounting requirements and that this is done honestly and openly.
- Plan in good time in order to be able to respond to different situations in order to restrict the negative effect on users and establishments.
- Agree on service provision terms before commencing, and being aware of the risks which they are responsible for.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP CODE OF PRACTICE

Aims: To work in partnership in the spirit of Gwynedd Together and to encourage and improve understanding and disseminate information between the Sector and the Council.

The Council will strive to:

- Share information about the roles of Members and Officers.
- Respect the roles of representatives to be a voice on the sector's behalf.
- Recognise that the Sector has information and expertise that could be valuable when developing policy and service.
- Improve understanding of how the Council works among Members and staff.
- Make sure that arrangements are effective in order to ensure that it is facile for representatives from the Sector to participate in partnership discussions.

The Sector will strive to:

- Develop a mechanism in order to encourage participation and accountability.
- Ensure that representatives from the Sector in partnerships with the Council share information with others within the Sector.
- Ensure that representatives in partnerships understand their role within that partnership and contribute appropriately.
- Share the information and explain how the Council works.

VOLUNTARY CODE OF PRACTICE

For this purpose, volunteers are defined as individuals who decide to work without pay.

Aim: Respect volunteers and recognise their value, and strive to give support, and eliminate unnecessary obstacles to voluntary work.

The Council will strive to:

- Recognise the value of volunteer contributions.
- Recognise the variety of needs by Volunteers, and strive to be of assistance to meet those needs.
- Ensure that financial resources are available to support the activities of volunteers.
- Restrict the burden and frustrations that disturb the work of volunteers through its policies, strategies and procedures as much as possible.
- Reach out to voluntary groups that would not usually ask for assistance.

The Sector will strive to:

- Continue providing support, training and guidance to volunteers.
- Give assistance to ensure that Volunteers comply with health and safety needs, along with other important matters which are essential to volunteer activities e.g. appropriate screening, insurance.
- Consultation to ensure the voice of volunteers out in the field when opinion from the sector is sought.
- Recognise the variety of needs by Volunteers, and strive to be of assistance to meet those needs.
- Reach out to voluntary groups that would not usually ask for assistance.

GENERAL COMMITMENTS

Gwynedd Council and the Sector jointly commit to:

- Work together to develop and improve the standards of their work and services.
- Maintain governing standards and meeting with the reporting and accountability requirements of their financiers and service users.
- Recognise the need to use public money in a way which brings the best economic benefits.
- Develop effective means of communication.
- Respond to problems in a constructive and open way.
- Develop and adopt the Codes of Practice for the Compact.

Gwynedd Council are committed to:

- Develop the input from the Sector when developing policy.
- Recognise and support the Sector's independence.
- Recognise the Sector's right to be able to challenge and give observations on policy and strategy developments.
- Recognise expertise and information within the Sector, and recognise the sector's value and this expertise when developing policies, strategies and providing service.

The Sector is committed to:

- Ensure that accountability systems are in place, and that there is an effort to reach high standards with regards to governing arrangements.
- Recognise the restrictions on Cyngor Gwynedd, be it financial, legislative or due to European, London and Cardiff Bay Governments' rules, and due to performance indicators.
- Recognise the decision making role of Gwynedd Council Elected Members, and their responsibility to ensure balance between responding to the needs of everyone in the County when allocating resources and their responsibility when leading the community.
- Develop effective communication arrangements which take key messages to the majority of the Sector's members.

Possible Implementation Points

Some implementation points are recommended in the body of the Compact, and in addition, a number of possible implications and tasks become apparent. Some are matters that can be given urgent attention, and others call for further work and time.

The role of the Liaison Group will be to supervise and ensure that the Compact is implemented, and also to form an Action Plan to achieve matters arising from the Compact. The activities will need to be prioritised in order to ensure that the most important ones are given attention, and are achieved.

Possible Implementation Points:

- Ensure procedures to inform the Sector of any changes in financing arrangements.
- Sector to ensure recognition for financial support or otherwise by the Council on pamphlets, publicity leaflets, signs etc.
- Make it easier for voluntary groups to access the assistance they require.
- Identify 'champion/s' within the Liaison Groups to ensure that the Compact values and principles are implemented in the Council, and by the Sector.
- Facilitate and create more opportunities for the Sector and Council to discuss and raise matters/concerns.
- Ensure that the Liaison Group has a strong voice on the Gwynedd Together Steering Board.
- Create a mechanism to obtain input by the Sector as the Council develops policies.
- Identify the biggest problems and obstacles of the Sector.
- Identify those groups that do not usually ask for assistance, in order to offer them assistance.
- Establish performance indicators for the Group and/ or the Compact.
- Establish a secure procedure for reviewing and monitoring the Compact and/or Group.
- Establish a self-appraisal procedure for the Liaison Group, in order to evaluate the relationship between the Council and the Sector.