



The Joint Compact



Wyre Borough Council



The Compact between Fylde & Wyre Borough Councils and the Voluntary, and Community Sector (VCS)

Foreword by the Leaders of Fylde and Wyre Borough Councils

Fylde and Wyre councils recognise the valuable role of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations in the day to day life of the local community, across a wide range of activities. They are key partners that make a major contribution towards both councils achieving community objectives.

Relationships with the VCS in both Fylde and Wyre have been productive and prosperous over the years with everyone benefiting. This Compact builds on these strong relationships and provides a framework to develop them further in the future. This Compact is the result of a consultation process that has involved all sectors in the Fylde and Wyre communities and it reflects the key issues explored and discussed during the consultation process. We would like to express our thanks to all those who gave up their valuable time to get involved in the development of this Compact.

Working together with the VCS, we will continue to develop this Compact and the codes of good practice that flow from it and we will encourage our partners in the public sector to adopt similar principles. The Compact and any codes of good practice are working documents that may change over time to meet the needs of the community as we continue to work together to support and develop the communities of Fylde and Wyre.

John Coombes
Leader of Fylde Borough Council

William R. Forsyth
Leader of Wyre Borough Council



Status of the Compact

This joint Compact has been drawn up after consultation with the voluntary and community sectors (VCS) and public sector service providers e.g. the local councils. The Compact does not try to cover everything in relation to working together but recognises the diversity of the VCS and their activities. It is a general framework that will help to improve the relationship between Fylde Borough Council and Wyre Borough Council (referred to as the Councils in the rest of this document) and the VCS.

The Compact is a statement about relations between the Councils and the VCS, how we will work together, not a legally binding document. Its authority comes from its endorsement by the Councils, the VCS, public sector service providers, parish councils and other public bodies through extensive consultation and ongoing development. The Compact applies to the full range of organisations in the VCS.

Shared Vision

The Compact has taken account of the Lancashire County Council's Compact and the principles of the central government Compact published in 1998 to make sure that there is no duplication or contradictions. The Fylde and Wyre Compact is an

expression of the commitment from the Councils and the VCS to work in partnership to meet shared objectives; to build strong communities and promote social inclusion (involving everyone). As part of this process, the Compact sets out the key principles and undertakings that outline the relationship between the Council and the VCS in Fylde and Wyre.

The Compact recognises that organisations and groups in the VCS range from small local groups to large national and international organisations. Some have no income and rely entirely on the efforts of volunteers; others are, in effect, medium-sized businesses run by paid staff. Every organisation adds value to the community and fulfils a role that is distinct from that of the local authority and the private sector.

The VCS make a major contribution to the social, cultural, spiritual, economic and political life of the local community. They offer an opportunity for residents to get involved in the design and delivery of services and often act as advocates for people who otherwise have no voice including the hard to reach sections of the community. In doing so they promote equality, diversity and a stronger community, helping to tackle poverty, improve the quality of life, and involve those that can often be left out.

The Compact recognises that these attributes are a major benefit to society and that the Councils can play a positive role in the promotion and support of the work carried out by the VCS.

Shared principles

Listed below are the shared principles that have been agreed by those who have signed up to the Compact:

- Voluntary action is an essential and integral part of the local community.
- An independent and diverse VCS is essential for building strong communities that work together.
- Working in partnership is vital to help achieve common aims and objectives.
- Commitment to consultation and open communication on every aspect of partnership working.
- The Councils and the VCS have different forms of accountability but common to both is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- The VCS are entitled to campaign¹ within the law to advance their aims.

■ The Councils play a significant role including among other things funding some VCS organisations and/or initiatives. Funding is an important element of the relationship between the Council and the VCS.

■ The Councils and the VCS acknowledge the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for all and recognise the needs of a diverse population. All organisations will demonstrate a proactive commitment to the principles of the government's Equalities Standard.

¹ Where this document refers to 'campaign' or 'campaigning', the VCS, when applying for or receiving funding, should be aware of restrictions placed on the Councils in providing funding to organisations for campaigning or publicity purposes, as set out in the Local Government Act 1986 and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.





Promises by the Councils of Fylde and Wyre

The Councils are committed to making the following promises.

Independence Promise

To recognise and support the independence of the VCS, including their right within the law, to campaign, to comment on policy, and to challenge policy, irrespective of any funding relationships that might exist and to determine and manage their own affairs.

Funding Promise

To develop as part of this Compact and in consultation with the VCS a code of good practice to address principles of good funding. This code will promote:

- Allocating resources on time
- Clear feedback to organisations whose applications for funding are not successful
- The publication of any funds that are awarded to organisations

- Support, advice and guidance for the VCS in when applying for funds
- Partnership working to achieve community objectives and meet agreed targets
- Regular, transparent, consistent and relevant monitoring procedures to ensure accountability by all bodies
- Help to ensure prompt payment
- Informing the VCS about future funding as early as possible, normally before the end of the current grant period
- To recognise the importance of infrastructure to the VCS and volunteering and, where possible to support its development

Policy Development and Consultation Promise

To work with the VCS in appraising, reviewing and developing new policies and procedures, particularly in the early stages to identify any possible implications for the VCS and to consult the VCS on issues likely to affect them.

To take account of the specific need, interests and/or contributions of different groups within the VCS.

To respect the confidentiality of information provided by the VCS, within the constraints of the law and the proper performance of public duties.

To develop jointly with the VCS a code of good practice covering consultation, policy, appraisal and implementation. This will be developed from good practice applied elsewhere that works well.

To promote effective, working relationships, a consistent approach and good practice between the councils and the VCS, particularly in respect of issues that impact on everyone.

To operate within the principles of open government, ensuring that decisions are made efficiently and are clear and accountable to local people.

To review the operation of the Compact, initially a year after implementation. At this review the timetable for future reviews will be decided with the VCS.

To promote the adoption of the Compact by other public bodies in particular the Local Strategic Partnerships. If a local agreement is in

place, the Councils will encourage dialogue to ensure there are common principles across the two boroughs.

Promises by the VCS

The VCS will make the following promises.

Funding and Accountability Promise

To maintain high standards of governance and conduct, to meet reporting and accountability obligations to those providing funds and those benefiting from the fund; and, where applicable, to observe the accounting framework for charities.

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

To develop standards on equalities, child protection and quality appropriate to the organisation.



Policy Development and Consultation Promise

To ensure that customers, volunteers, members and supporters are informed and consulted, where appropriate, about activities and policy positions when presenting a case to the Councils or responding to the Councils consultations, and to accurately convey the views put to them.

To respect the confidentiality of the Councils information, when given access to it on that understanding.

To promote effective working relationships with the Councils, other agencies and across the VCS.

To involve and support users, wherever possible, in the development, management and evaluation of activities and services.

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

To review the operation of the Compact, initially a year after implementation.



At this review the timetable for future reviews will be decided with the Council.

Issues relating to small groups and other VCS groups

The principles and promises in this Compact will apply across the VCS. The specific needs, interests and contribution of small groups, black and minority ethnic (BME) organisations and faith communities, need particular consideration to promote social inclusion and help build cohesive communities.

Meeting the needs of small groups. Small 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 people like themselves. It is important that the distinctive needs and interests of these 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.



Resolution of disagreements

The Compact sets out a general framework for improving the relationship between the Councils and the VCS. As far as possible, the parties should resolve disagreements over how that framework is applied. To help with this, where both parties agree, mediation (including seeking the view of a mediator) may be a useful way of seeking agreement. Individuals can use any of the Councils complaint procedures to pursue a complaint alleging maladministration ('fault') by the Council in the application of the code. The complainant may also go to the Local Government Ombudsman after using the Council procedure.

Taking the Compact forward

The Compact is a framework document and a starting point, not a conclusion. The Councils and the VCS should be committed to working together to develop its application and effectiveness. As part of that process, codes of good practice will be prepared in the areas of funding, consultation and policy appraisal.

As part of the process of making the Compact work, the Council and VCS representatives will meet to review the operation of the Compact and its development, initially a year after implementation. The timetable for future meetings will be decided at that first review. The report of that meeting will be published on both of the Council websites and copies will be placed in public buildings across the boroughs, and widely distributed throughout the VCS.



Glossary of terms

Best Value

A process by which local authorities are legally bound to review services to achieve efficiency savings.

Charities SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice)

An accounting framework for charities in England and Wales designed to meet the need for consistent and transparent public accountability for resources held by charities. The Statement covers maintenance, preparations and audit of accounting. (Source: Charities SORP 2000)

Cohesive communities

Community Cohesion reflects the need for communities to share common values, whilst at the same time valuing and celebrating the inherent diversity that exists in all those communities. A cohesive community is characterised as a caring community, where people feel safe and empowered and can live healthy lives, with high levels of self-esteem and where strong and positive relationships exist between people in the workplace, in schools, and in both urban and rural localities. They are communities where everyone matters, everyone believes that they matter and that everyone else also matters.

Community sector

Those organisations active on a local or community level, usually small, modestly funded and largely dependent on voluntary, rather than paid, effort. Can be seen as distinct from the larger, professionally staffed agencies which are most visible in voluntary sector profiles.' (Source: Volresource.org.uk)

Compact

An agreement between Fylde and Wyre Councils and the voluntary and community sectors (VCS) which aims to improve the relationship between them for mutual advantage.

Diversity

Diversity is about the uniqueness of every individual and about communities and organisations embracing differences.

Equality

Equality is about everyone enjoying a good quality of life and access to opportunities and services regardless of who they are and where they live. It is about organisations making the necessary changes to deliver that for everyone.

Equality Standard for Local Government

The Standard is a means to combat the institutional processes that lead to discrimination and which form part of the culture and administration and governance in Britain. Current assumptions and practices can set up barriers that prevent access and discriminate against people through race, gender and disability. Working with the Standard will allow local authorities to mainstream equality, thereby ensuring that discriminatory barriers which prevent equal access to services are removed.' (Source: CRE Equality Standard for Local Government)

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

non-statutory bodies, which aim to bring together at a local level a range of stakeholders from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Local partners working through an LSP will be expected to take many of the major decisions about priorities and funding for their local area.' (Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) Partnership – Agreement by two or more organisations to work together to achieve a common goal. Within the context of the Compact this is about agreeing the way in which the various partners will work together, respecting each other.

Race Equality Scheme

Fylde and Wyre Councils Race Equality Schemes have been drawn up to meet the general and specific duties arising out of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000.

Small groups/organisations

Groups operating without a paid worker and/or with funds totalling £10,000 or less.

Social inclusion

The process by which efforts are made to ensure that everyone, regardless of their experiences and circumstances, can achieve their potential in life. (Source: Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion, 2002)

Sustainability

Mechanisms for improving the quality of life for people today whilst protecting the environment for our children.

Value for money

Demonstration of economy (delivering at as low a cost as possible); efficiency (delivering the right things at the right price, not necessarily the lowest price); and effectiveness (in delivering policies).

VCS (voluntary and community sectors)

The networks of voluntary or community-led and run groups working to benefit their communities, either locally or nationally. These are usually not-for-profit organisations that respond to and provide ways of meeting identified community needs.

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