

Meeting: **Newham Partnership Board**

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Meeting Date: **22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008**

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Subject: **A Thriving Third Sector in Newham**

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Report: **For decision**

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to set out a series of actions to ensure the development of effective support to ensure a thriving third sector in the Borough, together with interim proposals to ensure effective engagement and representation on the LSP.

**Summary:**

This report sets out an approach to the development of support mechanisms to ensure the continuing development and support of a thriving third sector in Newham, in order to ensure an effective and sustainable long term partnership between the Newham Partnership Board and the third sector.

**Recommendations**

1. Mapping the different working arrangements the Council has with the third sector,
2. Developing a joined up approach to work with the third sector, ensuring that we have a consistent approach to commissioning and the development of the supply market.
3. Developing a strategy to third sector support and engagement that takes into account the needs of statutory sector partners within the LSP by mapping both current working relationships and future needs.
4. Ensuring that the strategy is clearly based on the needs of the third sector through consultation.
5. Officers of both the third sector and the Council to jointly attend a Partnership Improvement Programme (PIP) organised through the IDeA.
6. Interim proposals to ensure effective engagement through the development of a Voluntary Sector Forum, continuing representation whilst a review takes place, and increased communication into the sector through the LSP newsletter and the Newham Magazine.

**Originators of report**

Grant Aitken, Head of Culture  
Elizabeth Cuffy, LSP Manager

# **A THRIVING THIRD SECTOR IN NEWHAM**

## **1.0 Introduction**

There is a thriving third sector in Newham with some strong anchor organisations, and a range of medium and small organisations providing services and support into the diverse communities in the Borough.

However there is currently no traditional umbrella organisation such as a CVS in the Borough, although the community empowerment network (CEN), the Newham Voluntary Sector Consortium (NVSC), has provided a role in bringing the third sector together. Details of the work of CENs and NVSC in Newham appear as Appendix 1.

Although funding for CENs has ceased it is important for the Newham Partnership Board to ensure that there is ongoing support for the third sector. The third sector makes an essential contribution to the work of the LSP, and it is important to ensure that it continues to thrive and develop, and that there is appropriate engagement with and representation from the third sector at all levels of the LSP.

## **2.0 Development of Ongoing Support for the Third Sector**

The third sector makes a very valuable contribution in Newham, providing a range of services into communities in a variety of innovative ways, and reaching communities that statutory organisations have often found difficult to access. Some services are provided by small community and faith groups through their volunteer networks, whilst other organisations have grown and developed their services. Many of these services are now commissioned through the Council, the PCT and other agencies, and these organisations have shown themselves to be well-managed with a capacity to deliver efficiently and effectively.

Whatever the size of organisation, or the service they deliver, it is important that the LSP provides support for the sector to help them to become more efficient and sustainable in order for them to continue to serve the people of Newham. It is also important to have clear channels of communication with the sector, and to have good representation, in order to get messages out from the LSP, and to hear the voice not just of the third sector, but of the wider community that they serve.

Whilst funding through the Council for NVSC ceased at the end of March 2008, there is nevertheless the need to ensure that there is a level of ongoing support for the third sector within the Borough. Newham Partnership Board is keen to ensure that an effective and sustainable relationship is developed across the third sector, with

good representation from the sector, effective input in LAA development and delivery and partnership working across all LAPBs.

Additionally, the Newham Partnership Board partners need to be aware that:

- There is a duty to involve and to be seen to involve as widely and effectively as possible
- LSP needs to have engaged the third sector in the design of the LAA
- LSP needs to ensure effective, independent representation on LSP at all levels
- LSP would wish to ensure that the third sector develops its capacity to deliver effective and innovative services into the community
- New Place Survey which will ascertain the third sectors' views on partnership working, and support for the sector
- The new Comprehensive Area Assessment, which will seek the views of the third sector.

In order to respond to these national and local drivers there is a need to ensure future support, whether delivered through the partners in the LSP or independently through the third sector:

- Provides opportunity for effective dialogue between sectors
- Takes account of current partnership working between statutory and third sector partners
- Has the capacity to meet the specific needs of statutory organisations
- Meets the consultation requirements of the Compact.

It is recognised that there is a need to establish closer working relationships between sectors. The following is a summary of the recommended actions to be undertaken by the Council to ensure effective partnership working.

- 1: Mapping the different working arrangements the Council has with the third sector, identifying funding or commissioning streams, identifying ways in which they would like to engage with the sector and their internal support requirements.
- 2: Developing a joined up approach to work with the third sector, ensuring that we have a consistent approach to commissioning and the development of the supply market. This work is presently been led through the Corporate Procurement Unit and an action plan, linked to the Compact, will be developed over the coming months

- 3: Developing a strategy to third sector support and engagement that takes into account the needs of statutory sector partners within the LSP by mapping both the current working relationships with the third sector and their specific requirements for future working.
- 4: Ensuring that the strategy is clearly based on the needs of the third sector. As with any service there needs to be clear evidence that the service is tailored to meet the needs of the recipients. Whilst some initial work has taken place through meetings with the third sector this now needs to be built upon. Once requirements are clearer from both the statutory and third sectors then a period of consultation should take place in line with Compact principles.
- 5: Officers of both the third sector and the Council to attend a Partnership Improvement Programme (PIP), aimed at:
  - Building trust and mutual understanding across sectoral divides
  - Enabling senior staff in local government and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to take the lead in responding to the challenges of working across VCS/local authority boundaries and in VCS/local authority partnerships
  - Developing and implementing local improvement plans for more effective engagement and partnership working across sectoral divides
  - Sharing models of effective cross-sector partnership working and areas of best practice

The PIP is being offered to the Council by the IDeA and is delivered by the Institute of Voluntary Action Research, a highly experienced research and training centre based at Birkbeck College, London.

During this time officers will be identifying sources of funding for future work from across LSP partners, and will seek to identify what work will be carried out in house, and what areas of work should be carried out by an independent organisation.

As this work progresses, there will also be further clarity on Government thinking as the White Paper and Empowerment Action Plan currently in development is published in the Summer.

All of this is taking place alongside the change management programme within the Council. This will see the development of a Community Engagement Team within Culture, to ensure fuller participation through an effective community engagement strategy, and improved partnership working with the third sector. The development of

effective working relationships with the third sector will be the responsibility of the Community Engagement Manager.

It is recommended that a report on all these actions is the priority focus for the Community Engagement Manager and that s/he reports to the Building an Active and Inclusive Community LAPB in November 2008.

### **3.0 Interim Proposals**

Whilst we need to ensure long term support, there is also a need to be sure that there continues to be effective support for the third sector during this period through more effective engagement, a steady flow of information into the sector, and continuous representation on the Newham Partnership Board.

As such the following mechanisms are recommended:

#### **Engagement**

Development of a Voluntary Sector Forum, organised through Culture and chaired by the Head of Culture to provide an effective forum for discussion between the second tier third sector organisations, and the statutory sector.

#### **Representation**

The current representatives on the Newham Civic Partnership and the LAPBs remain in post until new arrangements are implemented.

The LSP Manager is commissioning a review of third sector representation across the Council, with focus groups for each priority theme looking at issues of both representation and accountability. It is recommended that the LSP Manager co-ordinates this work with the Community Engagement Manager to provide input into the November 2008 report.

In order to provide support for representatives of the third sector, and opportunities for them to have meaningful input into meetings, the LSP Manager will arrange pre-meetings with representatives on the Newham Partnership Board, and will ensure such pre-meetings happen across the LAPBs.

#### **Communication**

During this time it is important to make sure that there continues to be a flow of information into the community on issues of importance to the LSP, and to the

third sector generally. This will be achieved through a wider circulation of the LSP newsletter, regular community supplements in the Newham Magazine, and the continuation of communications through Culture.

**Grant Aitken, Head of Culture**  
**Elizabeth Cuffy, LSP Manager**  
**April 2008**

## Community Empowerment Networks and NVSC

The community empowerment networks were established in 2001 to provide effective representation on local strategic partnerships and to ensure improved partnership working between the statutory sector and the third sector. In Newham, the NVSC, organised separate forums for the community, faith and voluntary strands which in turn elected representatives to represent their views on the LSP.

NVSC was funded directly by central Government until 2006, when funding passed directly into the control of the LSP through the Safer and Stronger Community Fund (SSCF). It also operated a community chest fund, funded by central government, until funding ceased in 2005.

In addition, NVSC:

- commissioned training from external providers and delivered in-house training,
- provided meeting rooms and other resources for the sector
- provided regular communication to its members through a newsletter and e-bulletins
- ensured mechanisms were in place for consultation.

Over time NVSC has taken on other roles, including:

- Worked in partnership with the Council and other public sector partners to establish the Compact to ensure more effective working between statutory sector organisations and the VCF.
- Facilitation of the Change-up Group to co-ordinate the Government's funding to ensure a more professional and sustainable third sector, and has been responsible for the funding that has come into the Borough through Change Up.
- Facilitation of a LAA Steering Group for the VCF sector, established to ensure effective input into the LAPBs through third sector representation, and also to co-ordinate a response to the development of LAAs.

In 2006 NVSC were independently assessed by Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors working directly to Government Office for London. They produced a report supporting the 'passporting' of funds to NVSC for 2006/07. However, their report noted that 'if NVSC are to continue as the CEN within Newham, it was crucial that they be able to work strategically at Borough level and operate collaboratively with all LSP partners and others'. Additionally the report went on to say '*in some areas NVSC have exhibited a positive relationship with partners, including the LB-*

*Newham, but there are certain areas in which there is clear evidence of a breakdown in communication that is detrimental to effective partnership working’.*

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) was developed with Newham in 2006/07 with an agreement “that it did not provide a commitment on behalf of the London Borough of Newham to continue to provide funds or fees to NVSC” following the ending of the contract. NVSC completed most aspects of their work but did not develop a funding strategy that was a key part of the SLA, although it was understood that it would be part of an overall Business Plan being produced by NVSC. As a second tier organisation in the Borough it was anticipated that NVSC would show clear leadership through the development of a strong Business Plan, and an effective funding strategy.

In 2007/08 funding for CENs was no longer available through SSCF. In order to ensure that NVSC had an opportunity to develop their funding streams, further funding was identified. It was made clear to NVSC at this time that further funding through the Council could not be made available and that alternative funding needed to be identified.

Whilst it is noted that NVSC enjoy wide support from their membership, and there has been some improvement in partnership working, including successful working relationships with statutory organisations such as the PCT, there has been insufficient improvement over time to ensure the continuation of funding, and to secure their long-term relationship with the Newham Partnership Board. In particular officers do not feel that NVSC has the capacity to operate strategically at Borough level and there have been several instances of lack of partnership working and poor communication which have been detrimental to the development of an effective and sustainable strategic partnership.