

Watford Compact 2011

This is an agreement between the statutory and voluntary sectors in Watford to clarify and strengthen their relationship and to achieve better outcomes for individuals and for the Watford community. All signatories to this document will adhere to the national Compact standards and will prepare an annual statement showing how the Compact has supported their work over the past year and how it will inform their work in the coming year.

Principles

Watford is a complex community with diverse needs. The statutory and voluntary sectors can best understand, address and meet these needs by working together in a partnership that:

- focuses on outcomes for Watford's community, to improve effectiveness;
- encourages engagement in local activities and decision-making, to empower local communities;
- recognises and addresses inequalities, to strengthen cohesion;
- is built on openness, honesty and mutual respect, to ensure sustainability;
- recognises that a healthy community has open and accessible democratic processes and a diverse, active and confident voluntary sector.

The statutory and voluntary sectors both recognise that:

- financial resources are allocated to achieve strategic objectives;
- natural resources are limited and everyone should seek to reduce consumption and protect the environment;
- everyone must play their part to overcome inequality, improve efficiency and promote good practice;
- they should appropriately support each others' consultations, activities, events and policy initiatives.

Voluntary sector signatories to this statement:

- recognise that the voluntary sector is diverse and that there will usually be competing views and interests within the sector;
- will support the elected local authorities to carry out their legal and democratic responsibilities;
- understand that local authorities must meet requirements imposed on them by public law or by higher government agencies;
- will seek to contribute to local consultations and to the development of local plans and initiatives;
- demonstrate their commitment to best practice by working within established quality assurance frameworks;
- understand the need to monitor and evaluate their work, and to secure regular feedback from service users;
- will operate openly and accountably and will provide regular public reports on their work;

- will work in partnership with other voluntary groups to benefit their members, client groups and the wider community of Watford;
- will work in partnership with other groups to promote a stronger voluntary sector;
- will work to improve cost effectiveness;
- will work to generate new monies to support their activities;
- will value and support their volunteers.

Statutory sector signatories to this statement:

- recognise the independence of the voluntary sector and the right of the sector to challenge public sector institutions, policies and practices;
- understand that procuring services from local voluntary organisations can be part of efficient commissioning (the process of assessing needs and designing and then securing an appropriate service);
- recognise that demand-led grant funding is essential to the health of the voluntary sector;
- affirm that the monitoring of voluntary organisations will be supportive and proportional with the monitoring of other service providers;
- will try to ensure that funding levels reflect actual costs and that procurement processes do not discriminate against local voluntary groups;
- respect the structure of the voluntary sector and the role of representational bodies such as the CVS;
- will work with the local CVS to ensure that funding programmes follow best practice, are open to all, and that appropriate support and information is provided to interested groups;
- will engage appropriate voluntary groups at the earliest practicable stage in policy discussions;
- recognise that voluntary groups may represent particular communities (of place, of interest or of purpose) and that understanding the perspectives of these communities is often essential to successfully defining or meeting a need;
- undertake to consult with the voluntary sector on all changes to policy or practice that may have a material effect on groups in the sector, and to ensure that consultations take place before decisions are taken and allow a minimum of twelve weeks to allow voluntary groups to properly consult their trustees and members;
- understand the contribution volunteers make to Watford and recognise that local volunteering needs support, recognition and promotion.

Clarifications and disputes: Watford Together

Most issues arising from this document will be resolved informally between the parties concerned. Watford CVS and Watford Borough Council will assist where requested. Watford Together operates under the auspices of the One Watford local strategic partnership and includes representation from the voluntary and public sectors. Should both parties to a dispute request, Watford Together will hear representations from each side and suggest a resolution consistent with this statement of principles. The suggested resolution will not be legally binding on either side.