

## **Voluntary Sector Chief Officers Group (VSCOG)**

20 June 2010

### **Position on public sector cuts and service modernisation**

The Voluntary Sector Chief Officers Group (VSCOG) recognises that difficult times are ahead now that public sector cuts are beginning in earnest. We know that this will impact our sector as it will others. Our primary concerns for the future are

1. To ensure that local communities continue to receive those services they value most, and
2. To make full use of voluntary sector expertise in the service modernisation that will result from the radical reshaping of statutory funding.

With this in mind, we make the following suggestions to local statutory authorities:

- Make clear your strategic process for identifying savings, and be consistent and open in the way you do this. Partners in all sectors need to understand as fully as possible how this will happen in order to plan for the future. We believe the criteria set out in the Treasury's Spending Review Framework<sup>i</sup> set a sensible benchmark for assessing current provision.
- Involve the voluntary sector (and other partners) from the outset in spending discussions. Given early involvement and honest, open dialogue, the sector can support you in finding the economies you need.
- Help the voluntary sector to manage the inevitable impact on our services by engaging us as fully, and as soon, as possible; use the new national Compact<sup>ii</sup> as a guide to best practice. Where decisions to remove funding are taken separately, their combined impact may be prejudicial to the ongoing capacity of an agency. Extra care should be taken in such cases, to ensure that future activity is not precluded by short-term decisions.
- Work with the voluntary sector as a trusted partner in shaping future provision. Ask us how, and where, we can help; there is a wealth of expertise in the sector to support you in identifying areas where services could be delivered differently.
- Unilateral action will lead inevitably to missed opportunities. No one authority can represent an area on its own; now more than ever we need a genuine partnership approach, a 'coalition of talents' to set a way forward. Chief executives and directors should ensure that all staff taking these difficult decisions on the allocation of resources understand the wider consequences of their decisions, particularly as expressed in the new national Compact. Similarly, VSCOG members should take seriously the obligations on the third sector contained within that Compact.

We urge statutory authorities across North Staffordshire to now engage wholeheartedly with the local voluntary sector on how best to achieve the above. VSCOG, backed by Voluntary Action Stoke-on-Trent, offers any support it can to achieve this.

## **Appendix**

### Spending Review criteria (para 2.5)

- *Is the activity essential to meet Government priorities?*
- *Does the Government need to fund this activity?*
- *Does the activity provide substantial economic value?*
- *Can the activity be targeted to those most in need?*
- *How can the activity be provided at lower cost?*
- *How can the activity be provided more effectively?*
- *Can the activity be provided by a non-state provider or by citizens, wholly or in partnership?*
- *Can non-state providers be paid to carry out the activity according to the results they achieve?*
- *Can local bodies as opposed to central government provide the activity?*

### **VSCOG:**

Chair:	Lloyd Cooke (Saltbox)
Vice-chair:	Simon Harris (CAB)
LSP Board rep:	Martin Chadwick (Beat the Cold)
LSP HC&OP rep:	Gill Brown (Brighter Futures)
LSP S&SC rep:	George Tzilivakis (Mediation North Staffs)
LSP ED rep:	Danny Flynn (YMCA)
LSP C&YP rep:	Karen Wilson (North Staffs Mind)
VAST CEO:	Sajid Hashmi
Development Officer:	Louise Norgate

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<sup>i</sup> See [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/spending\\_review\\_framework\\_080610.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/spending_review_framework_080610.pdf) - p.8, section 2.5

<sup>ii</sup> See <http://www.thecompact.org.uk/files/140472/FileName/TheCompact.pdf>