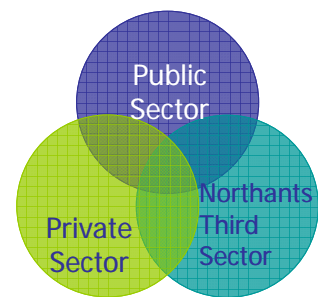


Northamptonshire's Third Sector Partnership Agreement



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1. Background to the Partnership Agreement

Since March 2006 the Infrastructure Steering Group for Northamptonshire has been working together to create a forward plan for the development of infrastructure agencies and their services offered to front line **third sector** agencies within Northamptonshire. ("Third Sector" has now replaced the term "Community Voluntary Sector")

During this time the views of representatives of this group have been gathered to:

- understand what the perceived relative strengths and weaknesses of the Consortium have been to date
- review and discuss the above findings in an open and honest fashion
- consider emerging influences on the development of infrastructure (e.g. Local Area Agreements (LAA))
- debate the needs and priorities of the Steering Group going forward
- take the associated findings forward to inform the development of a new plan for the Steering Group
- create a partnership Agreement and terms of reference (Steering Group) for onward sharing across the third sector in Northamptonshire.

2. Method of Approach

This piece of work was designed to engender and improve open dialogue within the Northamptonshire Infrastructure Steering Group and going forward to create a communication structure for the whole VCS and their stakeholders. Over the last 4 months the following approach has been undertaken:

1. Survey to all Consortium Steering Group Members (March 2006)
2. Report highlighting key findings from survey to Consortium Group (March 2006)
3. Facilitated Workshop 1 (28 June 2006)
4. Facilitated Workshop 2 (13 July 2006)
5. Draft partnership plan and Terms of Reference for the Steering Group (July 2006)
6. An open consultation period for the sector to respond to the Partnership Agreement, which was opened on 22nd February 2007 and closed on 21st May 2007
7. 12 month development period to; monitor, evaluate, make amendments and develop the necessary processes for appointing 3rd sector representatives.

It is intended that both the partnership agreement and Terms of Reference will be communicated to the wider third sector at a countywide communication event for all 3rd sector stakeholders in June 2007, thus ensuring the widest visibility of the work plan of the Infrastructure Steering Group.

3. Statement of Collaborative Working

Partners agree to:

- To work collaboratively and develop strategic plans for the continuous improvement of Third Sector Infrastructure Investment in Northamptonshire
- To work collaboratively, thereby making the best use of available resources and ensuring value
- To promote awareness and understanding of the Partnership and its role within the Third Sector and with other relevant stakeholders
- To work together to realise the goals set down in the Partnership Plan
- To engage in open and honest dialogue with other partners where listening is as important as talking

In all that it does the Partnership and its constituent members will seek to be:

- Transparent
- Accountable
- Fair
- As consultative as possible
- As inclusive as possible

(Information: This partnership agreement has no **legally binding ties**, but sets out how the third sector will work collaboratively and in partnership and in the spirit of **Good Practice and Fairness**)

4. Vision of the Partnership

'To be a Strong, Sustainable and innovative Third Sector¹ in Northamptonshire.'

¹ [It was agreed that the term 'Third Sector' would encompass the widest definition of activity within the voluntary and community sector, including the emergence of social enterprise initiatives and community interest organisations – however agreement on using this term is subject to the wider consultation taking place.]

5. The Partnership

The Partnership has THREE Component structures:

- Third Sector Infrastructure Group
- Third Sector Countywide Forum
- Third Sector Partnership Groups

Principles underpinning the Partnership Agreement

This agreement is framed by the values and priorities outlined in the Northamptonshire Compact.



As such, the agreement Supports diversity and equality of opportunity, as expressed in the Equalities Statement that accompanies the Compact document:

DIVERSITY

We value diversity in our community and affirm the importance of equality of opportunity in all areas of our work. We recognise that all people are equally worthy of respect, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith, mental or physical ability or impairment, or any other difference that may exist from the majority population.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

We oppose all forms of negative discrimination (intentional, unintentional and institutional). We believe that all individuals have the right to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

We are firmly committed to promoting equality of opportunity. We seek to ensure that our processes, including partnerships with other agencies and other sectors, are relevant and accessible to all involved; and that the services provided by the agencies of Northamptonshire are appropriate in design and delivery to those who wish to use them.

From "Equalities Statement"

(Information: This partnership agreement has no **legally binding ties**, but sets out how the third sector will work collaboratively and in partnership and in the spirit of **Good Practice and Fairness**)

For more information on the Northamptonshire Compact and full details of the five codes please visit www.n-compass.org

6. The Agreement

As members of the Third Sector Infrastructure Group, we agree to work with our partners towards the following objectives in the spirit of the Compact. The agreement is time framed for 2008 – 2011.

■ Sustainable Voluntary and Community Sector services

In order to best serve the needs of communities, the Third Sector needs to be sustainable. Collective commitment to ensuring the sector's sustainability is essential and this can be achieved by collaborative working between all stakeholders, which is underpinned by the Voluntary Sector Compact -

■ Improving the sector's 'reach'

By providing:

- Support
- Building Capacity
- Improving Skills
- Sharing Resources
- Effective Communication
- Platform for Engagement
- Encouraging Collaboration
- Identifying Commonality

■ An effective Communications Strategy for all stakeholders

Much of what the Third Sector achieves goes unnoticed by others in the sector and those outside it. If we are to be an effective force for mainstream and specialist areas of the third sector, including social and health improvement, we need to communicate our achievements to others. To this end, we need to develop a Communications Strategy, agree and implement it.

■ A new Business Plan for onward Infrastructure Improvement and development

Annual business plans are needed that are built around the six areas of development, given by ChangeUp – performance management, workforce development, ICT development, volunteering and governance improvements.

■ Strong leadership and a voice for the Third Sector in Northamptonshire

Strong leadership of the Third Sector is essential. This provides strategic focus within the sector and a recognisable voice in dealings with other sectors in Northamptonshire.

■ Strong leadership and a voice for the Sector, locally regionally and nationally

Leadership needs to extend beyond the county, as does the influence of the local Third Sector in regional and national debates.

■ Gather and disseminate meaningful information on the activity of the Sector in Northamptonshire

The gathering and sharing of activity data is crucial in the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery. It also plays a crucial role in the development of the Third Sector in terms of reconfiguring services to meet changing needs.

■ Work closely with the development and delivery of the Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement

The LAA provides part of the framework within which we as a sector function. The Third Sector contributes substantially to meeting LAA indicators, and is crucial to its success. The LAA provides resources which aim to benefit vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities.

■ Work closely with the following partners, becoming an equal partner in Northamptonshire and the east midlands

- The Third Sector (all community, voluntary and social enterprise organisations)
- Northamptonshire County Council
- All Borough and District Councils
- The Primary Care Trust
- Police
- The Fire Service
- Learning and Skills Council
- Government Office East Midlands
- East Midlands Development Agency

7. Introduction to the recommended structures

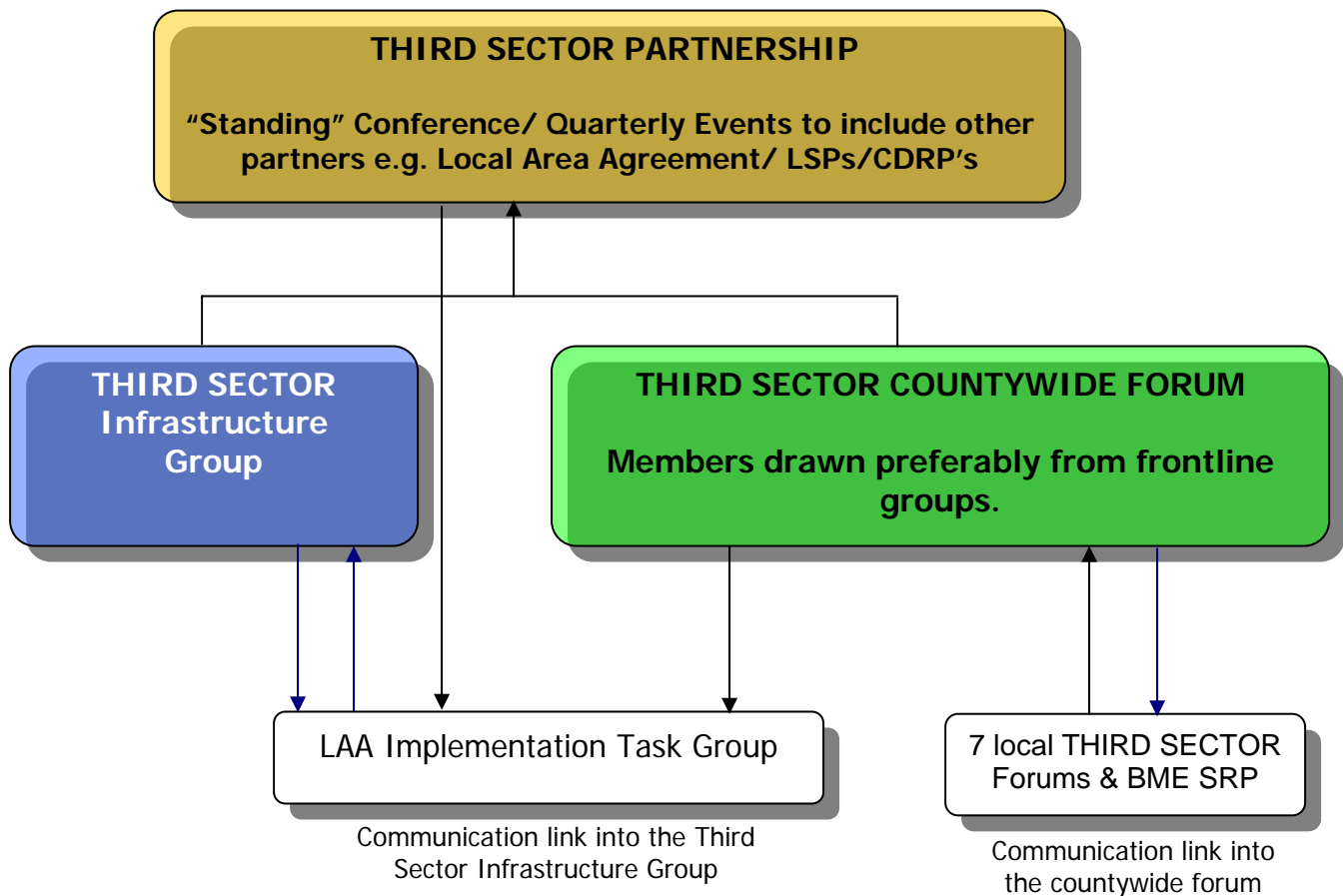
It is proposed that the concept of Third Sector replaces 'VCS', it's aim is to better accommodate the roles of social enterprises; not for profit companies; co-operatives and other specialist areas of the third sector. This shift in language is also aligned with shifts in funding and policy developments at a national level and within areas of government.

In this document 'THIRD SECTOR Partnership' is now replacing 'VCS Consortium'.

Together these shifts signal more than a re-brand! The proposed structure recommended below provides absolute clarity for representative roles; it addresses the need for transparency and accountability; it balances voice and leadership for the third sector.

We've tried to reduce months of discussion and hundred of pages down to its core elements (please see the diagram below and the explanation of the structures which follow.)

Dr Ian McCormick



8. Structure 1

Northamptonshire Countywide Forum for the Third Sector

This will build from the work of the **Third Sector Local Forums**

Membership: (13)

Membership drawn preferably from front line Third Sector organisations.

- Representation from each of the 7 local Third Sector Forums.
- Chair and Vice Chair and remaining 3 places elected by front line members.
- Representative of Infrastructure Steering Group to ensure smooth dialogue.

Role:

- Clear structure of work plan and issues
- Lobbying and campaigning function links into strategic group
- Appointing VCS representatives on Countywide bodies (LAA Boards, CFAP, etc.)
- Operational focus.
- Discussion of issues that link policy and practice

Communication:

Local communication processes within Districts as per current arrangements.

Opportunity for countywide newsletter/bulletins/briefings

9. Structure 2:

Third Sector Infrastructure Group (Steering Group)

Membership: (14)

Membership is to be managed via effective and clear representation / election structures from infrastructure bodies across the county.

- Places will be reserved for those contracted by NCC/LAA funding partners to provide infrastructure services.
- Chair and Vice Chair and balance of places elected via infrastructure members.
- Representation is needed from the Countywide Forum to ensure smooth communication.
- Infrastructure Group to be present at the Countywide Forum to promote and encourage effective and efficient lines of communication between Third Sector partners

Role:

- To develop a clear infrastructure plan for the county
- To deliver against the infrastructure plan for the county
- To provide support to the Third Sector District and Countywide Forums to ensure consistency of approach and dissemination of work plan at an operational level
- To link into the development of the LAA plans within the county
- To manage the Investment Improvement Plan (IIP) within Northamptonshire
- To manage SRB6 projects within Northamptonshire
- To manage and monitor the delivery of projects through Capacity Builders
- Strategic development of Compact
- To link into the regional consortiums at a strategic level
- To work with CFAP at both a district and county level
- To link/work with the Thematic Partnerships as appropriate

Next Steps required:

Manage the election of the numerous infrastructure groups within the county to the 14 representatives on to the Steering Group.

Timeframes around post holders will need to be determined and signed up to.

Communication:

Linkages to the local and countywide Forums

Linkages and management of the wider Countywide Consortium communication plan.

Statements around suggested structures:

Administrative support for the Third Sector countywide forum and infrastructure forum will be provided via a Third Sector Partnership Office (formerly VCS Consortium)

10. Structure 3:

The Northamptonshire Third Sector Partnership –

“Standing Conference”

Membership:

Open to all members of the Third Sector in Northamptonshire and all relevant stakeholders (e.g. statutory bodies, community groups, business sector etc).

Role:

- To communicate with frontline Third Sector on developments pertaining to the Sector
- To communicate, debate and discuss as a Countywide Sector on emerging issues and developments e.g. the Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement (LAA), Local Strategic Partnerships etc.
- A structure designed to inform the Third Sector of strategic and operational issues, emerging policies and agendas within the Sector.
- To share practice and developments across the county.
- To elect officers and representatives, as specified, to Countywide Forum and Infrastructure Group.

Communication:

To consistently communicate the development and outputs of infrastructure work to the wider Third Sector.

Conference or Event /Issue led meetings: aim of 1 or 2 meetings per annum.

11. Development of Processes

Processes to be developed for the election of third sector representatives to the various panels that require third sector representation, some of these include:-

- Community Funding Advisory Panel(s) CFAP
- Local Area Agreement Boards LAA
- Local Strategic Partnerships LSPs
- Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships CDRPs

12. Amendment Record

Date	Issue	Change Description
22.02.07	0	Consultation Document
23.05.07	Final Draft 01	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reformatting 2. Inclusion of BME SRP 3. Inclusion of LAA Task Group 4. Third Sector logo 5. Countywide forum membership changed from 13 to 14 6. Page 8, LAA Task Group & BME SRP added 7. Rationalise removed, Improving the sectors reach, included.
11.06.07	Final Draft 02	Grammar, Font, Terminology changes
18.06.07	Release Issue 1	Final amendments, post the Partnership Agreement Launch event, 14 th June 2007, the Saints Rugby Ground. Comment regarding legality of this agreement (page 5) and list of partners and potential partners (page 7).

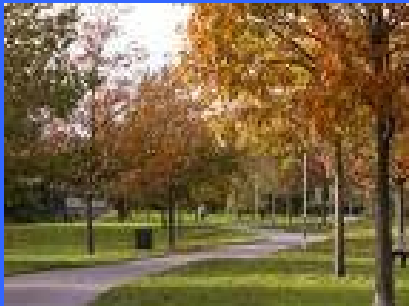
13. Glossary of Terms

- LAA Local Area Agreements
- LSP Local Strategic Partnerships
- CDRP Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- CFAP Community Funding Advisory Panel
- "THIRD SECTOR" replaces "Voluntary Community Sector"
- IIP Infrastructure Investment Plan
- NCC Northamptonshire County Council
- VCS Voluntary & Community Sector
- BME Black & Minority Ethnic
- SRP Sub-Regional Partnership
- SRB6 Single Regeneration Budget

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 Final editing, formatting and amendment recording; Murphy Brown

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Issue: 1



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