

Warwickshire Compact

Stratford - on - Avon District Council

Commendation for Excellence 2005

For Working in Partnership

Stratford has been awarded a commendation for its joint approach to implementing the countywide Compact with champions and an action plan delivering many wins including multi-year funding, joint training, and work shadowing.

The commendation, from the National Compact Working Group, is to be reported to Government Ministers at the Sixth Annual Meeting and Report to Parliament to Review the Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector, be held on 30th November 2005.

Congratulations to all those involved, especially the council and voluntary sector champions. The Council's approach and a summary of their achievements are set out below.

The Voluntary Sector and the District Council

(an extract from the Council's website)

Stratford on Avon District Council recognises and values the benefits that voluntary organisations bring to local people, and seeks to provide voluntary organisations with appropriate support – within the Council's limited resources.

The collaboration of voluntary organisations is essential to the achievement of the Stratford on Avon Community Plan. Through their delivery of key services, voluntary organisations are also important for the achievement of the Council's own Corporate Strategy and associated service plans.

Relationship

The Council does not see its relationship with the voluntary sector as only operated through the grants scheme. It is keen to grow and develop this relationship through policy development, liaison and consultation. The Council values the perspective the voluntary sector can bring to assessing service performance and policies, and undertakes to integrate their involvement into 'overview and scrutiny' processes.

Regular meetings take place to ensure the voluntary sector meet and are consulted on Council and local strategic partnership issues.

The District Council and the Warwickshire Compact

The District Council established a Local Compact Group shortly after becoming a signatory to the first Warwickshire Compact which was launched in January 2002.

Various departments of the Council were represented on the Group together with the Chief Officer of Stratford Council for Voluntary Service.

More recently the Group has been enlarged to include wider representation from the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Group, which meets quarterly, produced a draft action plan, which was subjected to wide consultation with the VCS prior to it being approved by the Council. The Group reviews progress against this jointly owned plan, which continues to be updated as new issues are raised.

Achievements

Some examples of what has been achieved are listed below:-

1. Compact and the Voluntary Sector are items on the agenda for Council staff and new member induction.
2. Councillors invited to CVS Annual Events.
3. Findings from Voluntary Sector survey incorporated into the action plan.
4. "Hot links" have been established from Council's website to CVS and Volunteer Centre websites.
5. The Council now offers "spare" places on in-house training events to the Voluntary Sector.
6. Joint partnership events have taken place.
7. The Council's funding information is now more readily available and a funders forum and a joint bidding form are under development.
8. Three year Service Level Agreements for key voluntary sector partner organisations are now in place. *A big win for the VCS!*
9. The Voluntary Sector is well represented on the Local Strategic Partnership.
10. The Council's Deprivation Mapping information is made available to the voluntary sector, on request.
11. Relevant articles from the CVS newsletter is to be published in Council's staff newsletter to improve awareness of the work of the voluntary sector.
12. Voluntary Sector staff are to be given the opportunity to attend the Council's staff inductions to improve their awareness of the structure and processes of local government.
13. The Council is to review its policies in respect of aid in kind via its property assets
14. Authors of Council committee reports are asked to ensure that the impact on the voluntary sector of any recommendations being made, are considered.
15. Effective links between the CVS and communities preparing Parish Plans are to be established.
16. Job swaps between senior staff in the Council and the voluntary sector have taken place to promote better mutual understanding.

17. Compact development work has been included as an integral part of a senior Council Officer's job description to recognise the importance of this work. The need to put the best and most appropriate person on this work was recognised.

The above examples illustrate some of the broad range of activities which have been achieved through the application of the Compact's principles by partners in both sectors in Stratford on Avon.

Both sectors have had to work hard to maintain the momentum and to achieve the results.

It has not always been easy.

The success culture of all the partners is based on "JDI."

***- Just Do It -
and they have.***