

## VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUB-COMMITTEE - 19TH JUNE 2013

**SUBJECT: MAKING COMPACTS STATUTORY BRIEFING**

**REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief members on research commissioned by the Welsh Government on making compact agreements statutory.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Welsh Government commissioned Practical Wisdom RZZ and Wavehill Ltd to undertake research to help inform its decision on whether to introduce a statutory requirement for local authorities to form compact agreements with voluntary sector organisations in their locality. The Caerphilly borough was selected as one of the six case study areas for this briefing. The compact working in the borough was cited in the research as “undoubtedly a model of good practice” in compact working. The Welsh Government has used this research within the scope of the wider consultation it is currently undertaking on the relationship between the Welsh Government and the Third Sector, entitled *Continuity and Change – Refreshing the Relationship between Welsh Government and the Third Sector in Wales*, which is out to consultation until 8<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Compact Agreement *Delivering Together 2013-17* aligns delivering the Caerphilly borough Community Strategy through *Caerphilly Delivers* the Single Integrated Plan for community planning, which has the following priority outcomes: Prosperous Caerphilly; Safer Caerphilly; Learning Caerphilly and Healthier Caerphilly.
- 3.2 Voluntary and Community Sector organisations make an important contribution to public service provision across the county borough, and therefore form a key part of the Community Strategy.

### 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Welsh Government commissioned Practical Wisdom RZZ and Wavehill Ltd to undertake research to help inform its decision on whether to introduce a statutory requirement for local authorities to form compact agreements with voluntary sector organisations in their locality. The four national compact agreements in the UK came into being in 1998, and then developed in local settings. Case studies for the research were undertaken in Caerphilly, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire, Conwy, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Vale of Glamorgan. Face to face interviews were conducted with 9 members of the Caerphilly borough Voluntary Sector Committee, and the September 2012 committee meeting was attended by one of the report’s researchers.

- 4.2 The research revealed a mixed picture of compact working in Wales, which has not resulted in the sustained adoption of compacts in all local authority areas in Wales. The study found while it was clear in some areas that strong partnership working had led to the development of effective compact agreements such as in Caerphilly, in others areas with less developed relationships between sectors compact working was poor. Overall the researchers concluded “the evidence suggests that local compact working in Wales has lost direction and energy” (page 27) despite the relationship in Wales between government and the voluntary sector being seen as way ahead of the other nations, and of a qualitative different and positive nature.
- 4.3 Caerphilly was cited in the research as “undoubtedly a model of good practice” in compact working, and one of the areas where compact working was at its most effective. The research found that in areas such as Caerphilly, that have a voluntary sector liaison group, there were better promoted compact agreements. The research asserted that the most positive feedback on approaches to governance emerges from the case studies, including Caerphilly, where there is wide representation from individuals that are democratically elected (from both the public and the voluntary sector) and where pre-committee meetings are held, enabling the refinement of the subsequent meetings’ agendas, and for the raising of any queries in response to information distribution from compact partners. Caerphilly was also cited as exhibiting good practice by incorporating the compact agreement into the induction process of the voluntary sector and some of the council’s departments. Citing a Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) report the relationship between the Caerphilly County Borough Council and the voluntary sector is stated as “positive and good.”
- 4.4 The researchers concluded that as compacts are voluntary agreements that depend on the exercise of free choice, the impact of a statutory requirement may be limited. The dangers were noted that by making compacts statutory this “might lead to a superficial response based on lip-service and ticking boxes rather than real change in the way relations with the voluntary sector are conducted” (page 28). However, in areas where partnership working is not so well developed, relations could be improved by putting compacts on a statutory footing. The research makes reference to WVCA’s contention that there is a “strong case for statutory compacts in ensuring the relationship between the sector and local government is strong and taken seriously” (page 27).
- 4.5 The research recommends the development of “existing compact-based and legal frameworks to impose greater control or influence over compacts stating the option is worth a try, since the basics are in place and...action can take place without delay and this will serve notice on the compact world that this is the last step before turning to more heavy-duty methods” of making compacts statutory (page 29).
- 4.6 The research recommends if resources permit it would be worth the Welsh Government establishing a specialist unit to require reports from local authorities and “provide support to partners on setting up schemes and implementing compacts and make available on its website a library of useful guidance, advice, evaluations and relevant studies” (page 30).
- 4.7 The researchers noted their concerns over the poverty of the evidence base around compact working in Wales and advised the Welsh Government in consulting on whether to make compacts statutory to “undertake a large survey of a representative sample of voluntary organisations that would provide a better picture of the sector’s experience of local compact working to date and take the consultation process wider than the “usual suspects” likely to respond to a more conventional invitation to comment on a consultative document” (page 31).
- 4.8 The Welsh Government in their current consultation to strengthen and renew the relationship between Welsh Government and the Third Sector is proposing to move forward on the basis of developing “existing compact-based and legal frameworks to impose greater control or influence over compacts”. If there is support for that approach through the consultation the Welsh Government would be unlikely to proceed with legislation to make compacts statutory in the foreseeable future.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Promoting equalities is a fundamental part of the work of Compact Partners and features strongly in the Compact Agreement. Equalities is embedded into all work around community planning.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None arising.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 This is an information report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 For the Committee to note the contents of this report

## **10. STATUTORY POWER**

- 10.1 Local Government Act 2000

## **11. REFERENCES**

**The Case for Statutory Compacts between the Welsh Local Authorities and the Third Sector: Summary and Recommendations** (2013) Welsh Government - including:  
Annex A Report on Preliminary Interviews  
Annex B Report on Case Studies  
Annex C Literature Review  
Annex D Legal Opinion

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