

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-101-2008/09

Date of meeting: 9 March 2009



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Community Wellbeing

Subject: Essex Compact – Adoption by District Council

Responsible Officer: Chris Overend (01992 564247)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendation:

That the adoption of the Essex Compact be supported.

Executive Summary:

A Compact is a written agreement between the statutory and voluntary/community sector aimed at improving their relationship to joint advantage. It recognises the complementary roles of each sector in the development of citizenship, a sense of community and the creation of a just and inclusive society.

Essex County Council formally adopted the current County Compact in April 2008 and is seeking the support of partner organisations to the Compact through formal signing up to the document.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

Compacts provide a framework for ensuring an effective relationship between the voluntary sector and local public sector organisations. They also set out principles and standards to ensure that relationship is open and fair. It is also important that Compacts do not remain static, but are monitored, developed and amended over time to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the local community. The nature and effectiveness of the relationship between the District Council and its partner organisations will be a key part of the forthcoming Corporate Area Assessment.

Other Options for Action:

The only other option would be to refuse to adopt the new Essex Compact. This might impair the existing relationship with the voluntary sector and mean a missed opportunity for enhancing it further.

Report:

1. In 1997 the Government published a report on its vision for the future of the voluntary sector entitled 'Building the Future Together'. Following extensive consultation with the voluntary and community sector, the Government issued a joint national Compact in November 1998 entitled 'Compact: Getting it Right Together'. Local Compacts follow from the national initiative, the concept being for the development of agreements between the local statutory and voluntary sector representatives setting out what each can expect of the other.

2. The Epping Forest District Compact was drawn up and finalised in 2004 following lengthy and thorough consultations between representatives of the voluntary sector, VAEF and the District Council. The Cabinet formally agreed to the adoption of the local Compact at its meeting on 15 March 2004 (Minute 152 refers). The local Compact was also adopted by other partner organisations including Essex County Council, the Primary Care Trust and the Local Strategic Partnership. The local Compact and the principles contained within the associated codes of practice, covering community groups, consultation and policy appraisal, diversity and equality, funding and volunteering, have contributed to ensuring an effective working relationship between voluntary sector and all the partner organisations in the District.

3. The Essex Compact was originally produced in 2004. It was updated and extended during 2007-08 to reflect the changing and developing relationship between the voluntary and public sectors with the new Essex Compact being adopted by the County in April 2008, following an extensive consultation exercise. In writing the new Essex Compact, the County paid close attention to the district compacts, which were up, and running in nearly all the other Essex districts/boroughs, and to the National Compact.

4. The County sees district compacts as guiding district-level activity, the Essex Compact looking at the countywide perspective and the National Compact as applying to national processes. It should be noted that the Essex Compact states very clearly that there is no hierarchy of compacts. The Essex Compact does not overrule or supersede the district compacts in anyway and cannot be overruled by the National Compact. All three operate in their own sphere of influence, namely national, county and district level relationships. The intention is also update the Epping Forest District Compact within the next year so that the various Compacts are even more aligned.

5. Accordingly the County Council has asked the various District/Boroughs and other partner organisations to sign up to the new Essex Compact. A copy of the Compact is appended to this report. Members are recommended to support the adoption of the Compact by formally signing up to the document.

Resource Implications:

There will be no additional costs arising.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None specifically identified although these would be reassessed in the light of any new or revised principles within the Compact.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

Discussions involving VAEF and District Council Members and Officers.

Background Papers:

None.

Impact Assessments:

Signing up to the Essex Compact will assist in promoting equalities throughout the District. The main risk would be a probable negative effect on the Comprehensive Area Assessment score if the Council did not participate.

