



## THIRD SECTOR ASSEMBLY CHESHIRE WEST

### DRAFT GOVERNING DOCUMENT

#### Definition of the Third Sector

**The Cabinet Office defines the sector as** voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, charities, cooperatives and mutuals and says

The third sector is a diverse, active and passionate sector. Organisations in the sector share common characteristics:

- non-governmental
- value-driven
- principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.

#### 1. Vision

The Third Sector Assembly (the Assembly) is an association of independent third sector networks and organisations in Cheshire West.

The Assembly aims

- to improve communication within the sector and between sectors
- to enable the views of Third Sector organisations to be fully and effectively represented to others
- to develop new ways of working to achieve efficient and effective delivery of services to the communities we serve and
- to ensure that the voice of the sector and its needs are recognised by other sectors

The Assembly will operate in a way that is:

- a) Collaborative and Co-ordinated
- b) Proactive
- c) Inclusive
- d) Sustainable
- e) Transparent

f) Independent of other sectors

## 2. Objectives

- I. To act as an effective association of influential networks within the third sector in Cheshire West to co-ordinate communication, to grow influence and to improve the relationship with partners.
- II. To provide an effective forum for third sector networking and support, able to agree and champion positive third sector solutions to challenges facing the sector, statutory bodies and the communities we serve.
- III. To build strong, effective and sustainable working relationships with partners, providing a mechanism to support the third sector's independent, effective and empowered contribution to various statutory body strategies and consultation documents.

## 3. Structure and membership:

Membership of the Assembly will be open to all third sector organisations whose area of benefit lies within the local authority area of Cheshire West and Chester and who share the vision and objectives of the Assembly. At the heart of the Assembly's governance will be the Cheshire West CVS partnership

The CVS partnership will

1. Provide secretariat for the Steering/Management Group
2. Manage links between the Steering Group and the wider sector through local and specialist networks
3. Facilitate the election of third sector representatives to national, regional, sub regional and local bodies as appropriate
4. Advise on further development of the Assembly
5. Work to ensure that the sector is engaged in and consulted on policy development and service delivery by the local statutory sector

The Assembly and the Steering/Management group will elect their own officer as deemed necessary by their members. The Management Group will replace the Steering Group on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Initially it will comprise the Steering Group with an additional two members from each of the third sector networks

## 4. Roles

### Management group:

1. To produce, in consultation with members, a business plan for the development of the Assembly and the wider sector in Cheshire West
2. To respond to consultations and any other matters of urgency To review the Assembly's aims, objectives and future work programme;
3. Ensure that the Third Sector has appropriate representation on partnership bodies such as the LAA, LSP and Area Partnership Boards
4. To act as ambassadors for the Assembly
5. To ensure that there is adequate communication within the sector and to ensure that the Assembly communicates to all its members on policies, strategies and consultations emanating from the statutory sector and coordinates the sector's response.
6. To receive reports from any sub-groups;
7. To undertake surveys of the needs of members and identify possible solutions;
8. To provide guidance on the role of the Assembly and resolve potential conflicts between members
9. To meet further obligations as they develop

#### **Decision making:**

1. Each member of the steering group will attend as a representative of their organisation and any networks which they may also be involved in. All members will undertake to act as a liaison between their organisation/networks and the Assembly and to endeavour to represent the Assembly with their trustees and wider networks.
2. Whilst the Steering Group/Management Group and Assembly will work together to achieve consensus, in some instances a vote may be required. For a meeting to be quorate for such a vote there must be a minimum of two thirds of the members present. It is recognised that such decisions can only apply to the operation of the Assembly as a whole and not to individual member organisations.
3. The Steering group/Management Group will negotiate with partners, including funders, on broad principles and processes. A lead organisation may be chosen to negotiate on behalf of the Assembly

#### **Values**

These values will guide the work of the Assembly and its networks:

- a) The primary commitment to improving the quality of life for the people of Cheshire West

- b) A commitment to collaborative partnership working in a supportive and constructive way
- c) A proactive approach to policy; a commitment to creating space for the third sector to progress its priorities and tackle the big issues it sees affecting Cheshire West
- d) A commitment to value and encourage the diversity of views, approaches, and perspectives which exist in the third sector, and to recognise the varied and complex organisational environments experienced by third sector organisations.
- e) Transparency and openness

Organisations within the Assembly work to :

- Build on existing third sector activity and good practice and not create unnecessary new layers of bureaucracy
- Work in collaboration across its membership and with public sector agencies in a supportive, constructive way, providing proportionate, solutions-focused challenges where appropriate.
- Aim to provide explicit mutual benefits for agencies participating in the Assembly and its networks and for Cheshire West partners engaging with the Assembly
- Aim to be straightforward and clear in its presentation and communication of views, briefings, reports and publications, both written and verbal
- Make clear and explicit its values and approach, both to partners and participating third sector organisations. Publishing these terms of reference will form part of this approach
- Ensure that Assembly networks and activity are fit for purpose by providing a clear support and evaluation framework, including these terms of reference and membership criteria (membership criteria to follow in early 2008).
- Build existing and planned work within the third sector and the many relationships already established between the third sector and Cheshire West partners.

## **MEETINGS:**

The Assembly shall meet at least twice per year

The CVS undertake to convene not less than four meetings per year of the local networks

The Management group shall meet not less than six times per year and elect its own Chair for one year at a time

**FUTURE OPTIONS:**

Whilst the above will provide a mechanism for improved efficiency of working and the consequent freeing up of time to provide better services to our frontline constituents, there may be increasing external pressures to formalise our structures even further. The intention of the current plan is to provide a mechanism whereby we can provide better services to our customers whilst retaining the flexibility to adapt to significant changes in our external environment.

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## APPENDIX 1 – STEERING GROUP

### \*Secretariat

Thematic area	Represented by
Elderly	Age Concern Cheshire
BME	CHaWREC
Faith	Churches Together
Disability	VRDS
Infrastructure	Chester VA EPNAVCO VAVR CABx Cheshire Community Action
Environment	Groundwork
Local Groups	Chester, EP&N and VR Local networks
Health	Cheshire Community Voice