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Your Ref.

Our Ref. PM/FH-VCS 11

Please ask for: Mr Faisal Hussain

Community & Voluntary Relations

Date 12th October 2011

Dear Colleagues

Commissioning with Voluntary & Community Organisations (VCS) within the context of continued Public Spending Pressures

We are writing to you again, as we did last year, to remind commissioners of the need to work with the voluntary and community sector and to do all that we are able to do to ensure that the sector is informed and engaged in the commissioning process. Early dialogue with the sector is the best way to continued positive working relationships.

However, we are also acutely aware of the continuing financial challenges all of us are facing, nothing has changed since the announcements made last year during the Comprehensive Spending Review, with balancing budget pressures whilst maintaining services to our communities. If anything, the financial pressures the public sector agencies are facing have increased for example, Solihull Council are looking at finding savings of up to 20% over the next 3 years. Furthermore, whilst some information has been made available from government there are still some crucial elements that are unknown, not least the financial settlement (including grants) for public bodies for 2012/13. All of this makes planning for service provision and continuity difficult and has the potential impact of causing concern to a number of stakeholders.

We are also aware that many of you, if not all, commission services from Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) providers either through contracts, service level agreements and/or grant making. Therefore, it is very likely that as part of your overall financial pressures you will also be looking at your budgetary commitment to VCS organisations and whether or not you are able to maintain the level of funding and the desired levels of service provision for 2012/13 at similar levels to the current year.

If during your considerations of financial pressures you reach the conclusion that there are likely to be implications for the Voluntary and Community Sector i.e. reduction in finances to a local community organisation (charity, mutual, social enterprise and not for profit groups), we would



request that you enter into discussions at an early enough stage. At a minimum, organisations should be given at least 12 weeks notice of any reduction but this we would stress really is an absolute minimum and the expectation is for earlier engagement and dialogue

Please ensure that you are familiar with the principles of the Compact and use it as a resource to assist your work with the sector. The documents provide you with a framework and tools to make informed decisions when dealing with the VCS and in managing good relationships with partners based on openness, honesty and trust – the spirit of Compact principles.

If for any reason you have not come across these documents before then please use the links below to familiarise yourselves with them:

http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Attachments/Compact_Plus_book_A4.pdf

http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Attachments/The_Compact_Codes_Brochure_SINGLE.pdf

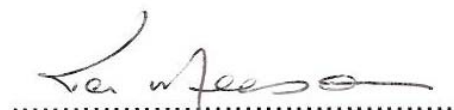
<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/solihullpartnership/default.htm>

(then click on the right banner for Common Commissioning Framework)

For further information and advice on using the guides and/or commissioning with the VCS please contact Faisal Hussain, Head of Community & Voluntary Relations on 0121 704 8541.

We would like to thank you all for your support and cooperation in assisting us to continue to improve our working relationship with VCS organisations – for improving outcomes for our communities.

Yours sincerely



**Councillor Ken Meeson
Leader of Council and
Chairman of Solihull Partnership
Governing Board**



**Phil Mayhew
Director of Transformation
(& Compact Champion)**

