

A Draft Operating Framework for Working with Communities 2014 - 2017

Introduction

Nottinghamshire County Council faces unprecedented challenges, and has to balance a reducing budget with increasing demands on providing high quality services for the most vulnerable citizens.

Against this backdrop, one of the Council's top strategic priorities is to ensure that Nottinghamshire has strong communities that are safe and thriving. The reality of the challenges faced means that the council of the future will be different in the way it is shaped, organised and how services are delivered. The Council is committed to moving with the times and working in partnership with local communities, voluntary groups and volunteers to provide services.

The Council is committed to building on its reputation of working in partnership with the community and voluntary sector to help build local capacity. The Council's ambition is to drive a series of local programmes with communities to deliver services in a different way.

The Council has a strong history of working with communities to support positive change. It has funded the voluntary sector through grant aid and also through commissioned services to secure the best service for the most vulnerable citizens. The Council has committed to 3 year grant aid agreements for 138 voluntary groups supporting people in the most disadvantaged communities.

This Draft Operating Framework sets out the way in which the Council wants to build on, develop and strengthen its engagement with communities, to look at how new and innovative models of delivering services can be implemented.

This Draft Operating Framework will be underpinned by a focus on:

- Fairness, equity and prioritising the most vulnerable
- Championing community needs and aspirations
- Engaging communities in the planning and delivery of services
- Working in partnership

THE CORE OFFER

The Council has several important roles to play in supporting communities to:

- Build a strong sense of community, capacity and pride through collaborative partnerships
- Engage in the planning and delivery of services
- Generate and sustain their own capacity to respond to the challenges which Nottinghamshire faces

Through the Community & Voluntary Sector Team the Council will work across the community and voluntary sector to engage them in the planning and delivery of services by helping to build capacity and confidence to drive improvements in quality of life, influence decisions which affect them and take part in the delivery of services. The Council is committed to:

- Working with communities to move towards more cooperative models of service delivery, promoting community ownership by for example supporting the development of social enterprises and supporting community groups to develop sustainable models for future working like The Tin Hat in Selston, Pleasley Landmark in Mansfield, The Centre for Sport and Learning in Manton and The Crossing in Worksop
- Having a consistent approach to partnership working – an agreed set of shared standards for working with communities ensuring for example, that the community and voluntary sector are engaged at all levels with the priorities for community safety
- Ensuring co-ordinated and targeted engagement – rationalising the community engagement undertaken, ensuring that activities are not duplicated and thereby maximising efficiencies to empower communities for example establishing a WW1 Community Commemoration Fund
- Developing alternative service models – encouraging creativity and innovation in how services are delivered, focusing on outcomes and supporting the community and voluntary sector to move towards greater sustainability rather than being reliant on grant aid
- Better services – listening and responding to the local community, meaning that services meet their needs effectively and efficiently – this will be underpinned by the Council's approach to community safety and cohesion

For Nottinghamshire County Council, this means enabling communities to have a greater influence over local decision making, service provision and delivery. The Council recognises that there are a range of activities that it can undertake to help facilitate this. A single approach; is not appropriate instead appropriate engagement activity will depend on the needs of the community and the issue under consideration. With this in mind knowledge about local communities will be used to ensure that positive engagement is used in the most effective way.

NCC Draft Operating Framework for Working with Communities



Working with Communities Plan

Area	Desired Outcome	Key Actions	Lead
Geographical	Effective community support	Working with groups to help them build capacity so that they can effectively influence and, or play a part in the planning and delivery of services by gaining the appropriate skills, intelligence and governance needed. This includes funding advice, organisational, financial and management skills as well as change management skills such as planning, partnership working and negotiating.	Community & Voluntary Sector Team

Area	Desired Outcome	Key Actions	Lead
Geographical	Funding support including grant aid. Support also includes organisational finance and fit for purpose health checks, assistance with governance arrangements, support to trustees	138 voluntary groups are currently grant-aid.by the County Council totalling just under £6 million over a 3 year period – this is a lifeline for those groups – work is on-going to secure external funding which will maintain the sectors long term sustainability.	Community & Voluntary Sector Team
Geographical	Developing a culture which focuses on business and financial management skills which the sector market themselves better.	This will support communities and groups to consider bidding for commissioned services.	Community & Voluntary Sector Team
Geographical	Partnership working	Acting as link with partners through identified partnership boards and involvement groups such as in targeted pathfinder areas such as Partnership Plus.	Community & Voluntary Sector Team

Area	Desired Outcome	Key Actions	Lead
Elected Member Support	Enhanced support to elected members in performing their community leadership roles	Support to local community and voluntary groups Supporting events Assistance with group development Advice on funding Governance support Being a point of contact for elected members to share local intelligence and knowledge and providing support to pursue community issues Supporting elected members in developing and strengthening the council's reputation by providing the resource to involve and consult with communities on the planning and delivery of services – focusing on working with communities to find local solutions.	Community & Voluntary Sector Team

Area	Desired Outcome	Key Actions	Lead
<p>Focussed Specialist Development</p>	<p>The transformation agenda driven through the Redefining Your Council Framework will require a need to use a diverse range of delivery models and partnerships to deliver services.</p>	<p>Supporting communities and the voluntary sector to be prepared for delivering services will be underpinned by Social Enterprise/Co-op Development – working with willing voluntary and community groups, the team will support them to develop as Social Enterprises/co-operatives so that they can trade to make money and trading is an increasingly important source of income for many voluntary and community groups. VCS groups are in a unique position to offer paid services tailored to communities needs as they have a close relationship and a clear understanding of their interests and problems. Funding advice.</p>	<p>Community & Voluntary Sector Team</p>

Area	Desired Outcome	Key Actions	Lead
Focussed Specialist Development		Commissioned services – focusing on outcomes and Social Value Impact – supporting the VCS to be market ready – developing third sector markets, co-production of preventative services, community safety initiatives and building resilience in communities.	Community & Voluntary Sector Team

Nottinghamshire County Council is proud of the strong relationships which have developed with the voluntary and community sector but recognise that the financial challenges facing the public sector as a whole requires a different approach to what is effectively a changing market of service provision. The Council is committed to working with the sector to support community involvement, engagement and commissioning but also recognises that the sector faces significant challenges in balancing existing user expectations, climate and operational constraints.

The reality is that the significant challenges faced require a step change in joint working. There is however a strong synergy for working together with the VCS taking a leading role in service provision.