

## Meeting with Surrey County Council Leader,

### Dr Andrew Povey, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

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Following requests made by Jean Roberts-Jones, CEO at Surrey Community Action, to Surrey CC to meet with the leader to discuss the forthcoming funding situation; a meeting was arranged between Dr Andrew Povey, Cllr Denise Saliagopoulos (Cabinet Member for Community Services and the 2012 games). David McNulty came for the last 15 minutes of the meeting. Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) were invited by Surrey CC from the list of newly elected Assembly Representatives (it was seen by them to be impractical to invite all). A list of attendees is given below. 2 other people were invited to join the group from Surrey Community Development Trust as the CEO had recently completed a mini survey (see attached) which helped explain some of the points the group wanted to make.

This meeting was about Surrey CC grant/contract funding cuts to the sector, not about the relationship between Surrey CC and the VCFS.

Two days prior to the meeting, the attendees met briefly to agree the key points they wished to convey. There are itemised below. It was agreed at the meeting that there will be further meetings. The dates are:

- 29<sup>th</sup> September 10.30am–12pm
- 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2–3.30pm
- 25<sup>th</sup> January 2–3.30pm

To ensure continuity it is proposed that the same group attend all meetings, but all would welcome comments from VCFS on the situation, although it will not be appropriate for individual cases for funding to be discussed, except perhaps as a case study.

#### Key issues:

- Explanation about the breadth of the sector. The fact that over 42,000 are in paid work and almost 100,000 in unpaid work (volunteers) in the sector.<sup>1</sup> It was noted that Surrey CC commission £21m of services from the VCFS, but that over 5,000 groups do not receive funding from either Surrey CC, Boroughs/Districts or PCT.
- Surrey Charities Chief Executive Group (32 VCFS organisations) had asked Paul Mitchell as Chair to survey its members which included significantly large organisations. Just under £9.2m of the Surrey CC £21m and Supporting People grants go to 15 Surrey Charities, but their total funding was over £19m. A copy of the survey is attached.
- There was a need from both sides to recognise there needs to be a cultural shift. The Personalisation Agenda – led by adult services, was cited as a positive example of a will to change working practices, but it was felt other departments/managers need to give credence to the abilities of the sector, which is highly skilled & capable.

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- There was a strong proposal to Surrey CC that officers & members work-shadow (two way) to ensure a better understanding of how each works, constraints etc...
- Training – Surrey CC could offer FOC their in house training to VCFS or could Surrey CC attend VCFS training (which might be cheaper?)
- Value for Money is a key driver but the VCFS should not be forced into mergers unless savings/efficient are made. People work for a group because of their passion to support that issue, they will move on if a merged group fails to keep that passion.
- The question was put to Surrey CC – what services could they seriously consider putting out to the VCFS to manage (regardless of how i.e. tender, preferred provider) on the basis that the VCFS should then be commissioned to run that service
- The VCFS is capable of delivering services, Surrey CC do not need to micro manage, just give clear objectives and monitor performance.
- An example was given of how not to do it – Future Jobs Fund, created by a joint partnership with the VCFS by Surrey Economic Partnership, when successful they were told they could not hold the funds, Surrey CC take in house then employ new people – without discussion with the VCFS. It could have had a much better start if collaboration with the sector had been agreed, i.e. managed by a VCFS group.
- There was a need to recognise the contribution all the infrastructure agencies made to keep the VCFS legal, compliant etc...A plea was made for consistency of message from both the VCFS & from Surrey CC. It was recognised that there would be a need for rationalisation of services within the VCFS
- A proposal was made to establish a ‘Transition’ Group which would help minimise the impact of a withdrawal of funds on the clients/beneficiaries. A detailed outline of how the group would work would be worked up for the next meeting.
- There was a plea not to lose the corporate intelligence of the officers who work with the VCFS, and a reminder that the VCFS have long memories and if there is a lack of sensitivity over the next few months, people may be reluctant to work with Surrey CC in the future.
- There was a clear message that the VCFS would fight the establishment of all new social enterprises which were set up by SCC without reference to an equal, level playing field i.e. where there is a hidden subsidy in terms of maintenance of SCC terms and conditions, e.g. local government.
- The sector recognises it is hard to work with due to its diversity, but are keen to do business – trust us and give us clear messages.

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Surrey CC Response: The Leader had opened by saying he was in listening mode, but at the end he (and David McNulty) commented to the effect that:

- It might not be possible to consult fully on the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review due out on 20 Oct but detailed

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figures for Surrey were unlikely to be available until late December early January , and the Budget had to be determined in Feb.

- He would welcome a continuation of these meetings as this had been useful
- SCC had a Medium Term Financial Strategy setting priorities and were working on the Transformation Strategy for Children and Young People's services
- The Leader's personal priorities were zero NEETS, digital inclusion and service rationalisation (value for money)
- The VCFS could become involved in the Public Value Reviews (of services)
- They wanted the VCFS to play a part in communicating to residents/ service users what is, and is not possible in the current difficult economic climate.

It was agreed that:

- a) The VCFS representatives would outline a proposal on the establishment of a 'Transition Support Group' and look at how members/ officers could be better informed about the VCFS, how it works, what it can do.
- b) Surrey CC would look at shadowing both internally and externally, they would look at how the VCFS could attend training FOC and put together a list of areas of service provision they are will willing to consider opening up the VCFS to provide.

#### VCFS Attendees

Mike Abbott	Surrey Youth Focus
Pete Brayne	YMCA, Guildford
Elizabeth Kennedy	Envisage
Paul Mitchell	Surrey Community Development Trust
Carol Pearson	Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
Chris Rich	Guildford Diocesan Dept of Social Responsibility
Jean Roberts-Jones	Surrey Community Action
Carole Anne Roycroft	Voluntary Action Elmbridge
Elaine Tisdall	Surrey Care Trust

**Dated 17.08.10**

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<sup>i</sup> From RAISE: Hidden Asset Report & Subsequent Surrey version, paid for by Surrey Infrastructure Consortium

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