



Protocol for involving the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in strategic partnership/joint working in Tameside

Status of this document

This document has been agreed by Tameside Compact Group at its meeting in November 2004, and recommended for approval to Tameside Strategic Partnership (TSP).

1. Tameside Voice is the Tameside-wide voluntary and community sector (VCS) Forum. It is a representative body, with a membership made up of a range of networks and forums from across Tameside (geographical and issue/identity based).

2. Membership: Each network or forum is entitled to nominate two members to Voice; in addition there are places for the senior paid staff from infrastructure support agencies. Membership by Networks must be approved by Voice, and there is flexibility, to allow for the changing nature of the VCS.

3. Structure: the Executive Committee of Voice is the Board of T3SC; Voice members are the members of T3SC Ltd, and therefore they elect the T3SC Board.

4. Functions: Tameside Voice can:

- Make decisions on Community Participation Programme Plans and allocation of Funding
- Nominate/elect VCS representatives to TSP and other Partnerships
- Set the agenda for issues for VCS to take to TSP and other Partnerships
- Raise issues of concern and get support in addressing them
- Play a key role in Tameside Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal agendas
- Be a strong and effective voice for the VCS in Tameside

5. Voice Members: are expected to:

- Attend as many meetings of Voice as possible
- Talk to their nominating /networks forums about issues to bring forward to Voice
- Report back to their nominating forums from Voice Meetings
- Take part in other meetings on behalf of Tameside Voice
- Work together in partnership to develop a strong voice for the VCS in Tameside
- Attend any training & development opportunities where possible and relevant

6. Accountability: Tameside Voice is accountable to its member networks/forums and the communities that they serve.

7. Principles and Values: Tameside Voice, through its Executive body, is committed and signed up to the Tameside Local Compact, and works according to the principles of:

- Inclusion
- Democracy
- Openness and transparency
- Effective participation

Representation through its established accountability structures

- All requests for involvement should be directed through T3SC
- All partnership/strategic bodies (where appropriate) should be prepared to include at least two elected Representatives from Voice
- Information about any requests for additional agencies or individuals to be involved as Members should be provided to T3SC

8. Relationship with TSP: Tameside Voice is the voice of Tameside's diverse communities on the Strategic Partnership, and is committed to effective joint working for the benefit of those communities. The relationship is based on the following:

- Tameside Voice is valued and respected as an equal partner on TSP Board
- TSP Board recognises the unique role and contribution of Voice members
- TSP Board recognises the integrity of Voice, its representatives, and its Executive body T3SC.
- A commitment to ensuring equitable representation on TSP Board and Partnerships, moving towards a minimum position of parity of representation from Voice with TMBC on the Board.
- TSP Board will ensure that effective mechanisms exist for the feedback from Voice representatives to be heard and responded to.
- TSP respects and adheres to the established processes for achieving representation from the VCS for its Board, thematic partnerships and sub groups.

9. Election of Representatives to TSP Board:

- Out of the VCS seats available on the TSP Board, 1 seat is specifically elected by the BME Network to represent the interests of BME communities in Tameside. The BME representative is also a member of Tameside Voice.
- All other Representatives are elected by, and members of, Tameside Voice; elections are carried out at the Annual General Meeting, held in July of each year.
- Representatives are elected for a 2 year period.
- For each Voice place on TSP Board there is a 'shadow' or deputy place.

10. Supporting Effective Participation

In order to support the development of skills and experience, and to remove barriers to involvement:

- Shadow Representatives are welcome to attend all TSP Board Meetings in 'observer' capacity
- Shadow Representatives are included in all TSP informal and development sessions
- VCS Officer support is provided to Voice Reps at meetings of the TSP Board and thematic partnerships/sub-groups

11. Process for achieving representation from VCS

- All requests from Partnerships or other bodies for representation from VCS should be made to T3SC, who will ensure that this is addressed by the appropriate VCS network/forum
- Partnerships/joint bodies should inform T3SC if they intend to invite additional VCS agencies or individuals into membership, and should be willing to take advice on their appropriateness
- It is not appropriate for partnerships or other bodies to directly invite VCS representation without going through the above process
- It is not appropriate for individuals within the VCS to agree to represent the VCS on partnerships or other bodies without going through the above process
- Representation on all partnerships and other bodies will be reported to Tameside Voice, who will ratify the nominations from networks/forums

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The T3SC Mission Statement

To build a strong, clear and independent voice for the third sector in Tameside, through developing the capacity and accountability of individuals and groups and of the sector as a whole