



## **VOICE FOR ALL**

### **A FRAMEWORK FOR THE CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE THIRD SECTOR ASSEMBLY**

#### **Introduction**

The VoluntaryWorks Consortium of local third sector support agencies is committed to the development of opportunities for third sector representation and involvement, in the form of a new Third Sector Assembly for Central Bedfordshire, to enable the sector to better engage with public sector bodies. This discussion paper sets out the framework for establishing and developing the Assembly over the next three to four years. **Please let us have your views** on what do you think to the proposed way forward.

#### **Background and Context**

Local government reorganisation and the creation of Central Bedfordshire Council is an opportunity for the Third Sector to refresh its relationship with local government and for it to use its experience, knowledge, skills and links with communities and users to ensure that services tackle the most deep-rooted and intractable problems in ways that will work on the ground.

Coinciding with these changes is a new statutory duty for public sector organisations to inform, consult and involve local citizens, voluntary organisations and community groups in decisions on the delivery of public services.

These new arrangements provide an opportunity for the third sector to establish effective mechanisms for how it wishes to organise itself, decide who will represent it and ensure that its values, knowledge and expertise influence the design and delivery of local public services.

Following extensive consultation with the sector and other stakeholders (July 2008 – September 2009) it was agreed that a Third Sector Assembly for Central Bedfordshire, which is owned and run by the sector, should be established. Some preliminary work has been undertaken to establish the Assembly, including an inaugural meeting on held on the 3 February 2010, and to ensure that the sector is represented on newly established partnerships. The sector has already contributed much to the new arrangements being put in place by *Central Bedfordshire Together*, the area's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

#### **Assembly Name**

In a regional context it will be known as the **Central Bedfordshire Third Sector Assembly** in order to distinguish it from the Luton Assembly (for voluntary and community sector organisations) and the Third Sector Assembly for Bedford. Borough

Within Central Bedfordshire it will be known as the Third Sector Assembly.

It has its own distinctive branding (shown above).

## Values and Approach

In developing the Assembly we will:

- build on existing third sector activity and good practice, including existing relationships with partners;
- ensure there are explicit benefits to all stakeholders participating in, or engaging with, the Assembly;
- make clear its purpose, approach and values to all stakeholders participating in, or engaging with, the Assembly;
- ensure arrangements for supporting the Assembly and representatives on local partnerships are fit for purpose without creating unnecessary new layers of bureaucracy (e.g. by providing clear terms of reference);
- seek to position the Assembly as the recognised mechanism by which third sector views and representational activities can be sourced, acknowledging that this recognition is not exclusive and that third sector organisations have the right to represent their views directly to others;
- encourage active participation of all third sector organisations in local partnerships, networks and forums in a way that recognises the diverse views, approaches, perspectives, capacity and organisational complexities of the sector;
- work in collaboration across its membership and with local public sector partners in a way that meets the principles set out in the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact and, in particular, the Codes of Good Practice on Consultation and Partnerships.

## Assembly Membership

The Assembly will comprise the broad and diverse range of third sector organisations working in Central Bedfordshire, including voluntary organisations, community groups, charities, faith groups, residents association and social enterprises, and is for everyone working, volunteering or leading such organisations.

They will benefit from:

- information about issues affecting their organisation and members/service users;
- opportunities to take part in consultation exercises and stakeholder events;
- ensuring their voice is heard and influencing the design and delivery of local services;
- opportunities to network with others and participate in specialist sub-sector networks/forums/theme groups.

Assembly members can get involved by:

- signing up to become a member of the Assembly (see below);
- visiting the Assembly's website pages to check out current activities;
- receiving and acting upon information on the work of the Assembly;
- attending Assembly meetings (held twice a year in May and November);
- participating in specialist sub-sector networks/forums/theme groups;
- responding to a consultation;
- attending stakeholder events promoted by *Central Bedfordshire Together*;
- contacting Assembly representatives on local partnerships to express their views and concerns;
- representing the Assembly on local partnerships and at key meetings.

The Assembly will be promoted to all third sector organisations working in Central Bedfordshire. Those that register specifically to join the Assembly or to attend any of its events will become

members of the Assembly. This is primarily to assist with communications as it is recognised that not everyone in the sector will want to receive ongoing or detailed communications about the Assembly.

Membership of the Assembly will consist of individuals representing their organisation. There will be no limit to the number of individuals from any one organisation.

### **Assembly Purpose**

The purpose of the Assembly is to:

- provide accountable, effective, meaningful and coordinated representation for the sector on local partnerships;
- empower skilled and competent representatives to advocate the needs of the sector and service users;
- enable strong voices for the sector to have a greater influence on the design and delivery of local services, including third sector solutions that address the priorities of Central Bedfordshire;
- provide a focus for consultation and engagement with the sector;
- provide a framework for strong, effective and sustainable partnership working with the public sector.

### **The Assembly will achieve this by:**

- facilitating effective community engagement, partnership working and consultation with the Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership, its public sector partners and within the sector;
- empowering third sector organisations to have a strong voice and an active involvement in influencing the strategic, planning and service delivery decisions that shape the communities in which they operate;
- electing or appointing representatives to sit on local partnerships;
- putting in place support arrangements for representatives to gather, represent and feed back views to members and for exchanging information between third sector representatives and the wider sector;
- taking a proactive approach to public policy issues, enabling the sector to be aware of key issues that matter and creating space for the sector to develop and progress third sector solutions that address the priorities of Central Bedfordshire;
- supporting, and where appropriate creating new, networks that enable third sector organisations to come together, share experience and contribute to local partnership working;
- providing training, support and effective terms of reference for those representing the sector;

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Assembly are set out in Appendix 1.

### **Assembly Meetings**

The Assembly's inaugural meeting was held on 3 February 2010 and thereafter will normally be held twice a year in May and November; alternating with six monthly meetings of the Central Bedfordshire Forum (part of the LSP). If required, additional meetings will be called to discuss certain issues in more detail.

Assembly meetings will be a mix of policy, strategy and discussion; combined with information dissemination and awareness raising. It will also receive updates from Assembly representatives and theme groups (see below) and discuss/be briefed on the key local and national issues affecting the sector's work in Central Bedfordshire. Examples of issues that could be discussed include:

- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Local Area Agreement
- Community engagement and partnership working
- Culture, skills and economic participation
- Children and young people's services
- Health and social care
- Housing growth, planning and transport
- Compact

More importantly, Assembly meetings will provide opportunities for the sector to get involved in key issues, contribute their views and ideas, network with others and discuss issues with like-minded people.

From time to time the Assembly could adopt a policy position on certain issues with members of the Assembly and/or the Assembly Steering Group proposing resolutions (and amendments to resolutions) for debate at Assembly meetings. The conduct of debates would need to be in accordance with a set of standing orders prepared by the Coordinating Body. When adopting policy positions the Assembly will need to be mindful of the sector as a whole and the diversity that exists within it.

## **Representation**

On occasions, due to particular expertise, local partnerships may invite an individual from a particular organisation to join that partnership. This is third sector involvement as the individual is not elected to the role and does not feedback information to the wider sector. Third sector representation, on the other hand, includes a clear role and remit, election through a clear and transparent process and a fixed term of office. It also includes mechanisms for the two way flow of information and views between the representative and the wider third sector. Representatives are accountable to the sector, in this case through the Third Sector Assembly.

Voluntary and Community Action, along with other Local Infrastructure Organisations, already provide strategic representation at a number of key partnerships. This will continue, particularly in cases where meetings require an organisation with no vested interest to represent the sector or where community insight and intelligence is the focus of the partnership.

Some partnerships already involve third sector organisations with a specialist interest that attend in their own right. Additional representation from the Assembly will augment the sector's involvement in local partnerships, not replace it.

## **Assembly Representatives on Local Partnerships**

The Coordinating Body will seek to ensure that the sector has 'places at the table' of all the local partnerships and forums. Some partnerships may seek to have a single representative for the sector. There is always a tension between keeping attendance at a manageable level and isolating or marginalising the sector with one representative when there are several public sector representatives present. To avoid marginalising the sector we will be arguing for two, three or more representatives at the table.

The Assembly will be represented on key strategic partnerships as part of the LSP framework for Central Bedfordshire:

- Local Strategic Partnership Board (one place)
- Healthier Communities and Older People Partnership Board (two places and one deputy)
- Healthier Communities and Older People Partnership Performance Group (one place)
- Environment and Economy Partnership Board (two places)
- Community Safety Partnership Board (one place and one deputy)
- Community Safety Partnership Operational Delivery Group (one place and one deputy)
- Stronger Communities Partnership (two places)
- Children's Trust Board (two places and one deputy through VOC)
- Children's Trust Commissioning Group (one place and one deputy through VOC)

A structure diagram of the LSP can be found at

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/images/FOR%20INFO%20Central%20Beds%20LSP%20Structure\\_tcm5-24264.pdf](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/images/FOR%20INFO%20Central%20Beds%20LSP%20Structure_tcm5-24264.pdf)

Sector involvement or representation in the various Delivery Partnerships is also being sought, either through the Assembly or by direct involvement. Third sector organisations will also be encouraged to participate in the Central Bedfordshire Forum.

The principle of opportunities being open to the sector is important. For some of the Delivery Partnerships, terms of reference and membership are still to be determined or agreed. The Coordinating Body will continue to work with the Thematic Partnerships to bring this work to a conclusion and will publicise opportunities in due course.

### **Election and Appointment of Representatives**

Information on the opportunities for members of the sector to take up the role of Assembly Representative has been circulated widely within the sector. Those interested in undertaking one of these roles have been asked to submit a written expression of interest, which will then be assessed against the selection criteria, shortlisted for interview and appointed to fill a defined role until May 2010 or 2011. Where the Representative is employed in a third sector organisation they will be expected to have the support of their organisation when undertaking the role.

Representatives will usually serve for two years but may stand for re-election at the end of that period. In due course representatives will be elected by the Assembly through an election process managed by the Coordinating Body.

It is important that representatives are credible and able to fulfil the role they are appointed to; the use of clear selection criteria will assist this. Some appointments have already been made, while others have yet to be filled.

Representatives are expected to represent the broad interests of the sector or sub-sector, not their personal views or those of their own organisation. They will not, however, be mandated (told what to say) as they very often have to address issues that arise in discussions and papers considered at meetings. To be effective, they will need to prepare for, and be briefed on, agenda items so that they can make meaningful contributions and respond at the same time as other partners. This may mean making decisions that will impact on the sector; these matters need to be brought to the attention of the Assembly Coordinator so that action can be taken to take such matters forward.

The roles, responsibilities and expectations of representatives, as well as the support they can expect to receive, are set out in Appendix 2.

## Sector Involvement in Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Central Bedfordshire Council has expressed a desire for the sector to be involved in the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Assembly is ideally placed to consider how the sector should engage with these structures so that it can influence policy and advocate on behalf of users. The Coordinating Body will undertake some initial work to ascertain the possibilities once representation on the thematic and delivery partnerships has been completed.

### Sub-Sector Theme Groups

The Assembly will, initially, establish six virtual sub-sector networks/forums/theme groups. These will primarily provide a mechanism for email communications about the work of each theme and enable representatives on local partnerships to share information or solicit views. These six sub-sector theme groups will initially focus on:

- children, young people and families;
- health, social care and housing;
- environment;
- skills, employment and the economy;
- community safety;
- stronger communities.

The number and specialist interest of theme groups will remain flexible and dependent on what organisations require, balanced with the need to align the theme groups with the Local Strategic Partnership structure and its Thematic Partnerships.

Theme Groups may also provide a forum for organisations involved in certain sub-sectors to discuss in more detail the issues that affect them with occasional networking events held where there is a specific need/reason and funding. Theme Groups may also become established networks with formal terms of reference and operational arrangements determined by their members, but they must work in concert with the other theme groups or networks and the Assembly Steering Group (see below).

The first of these sub-sector theme groups is already in place as *Voluntary Organisations for Children, Young People and Families* (VOCypf), which will link in with the Assembly and coordinate third sector involvement in the Children's Trust for Central Bedfordshire.

There is agreement within the sector for a Health and Social Care Network (incorporating housing) and work is currently underway to determine its future structure and funding arrangements. If sufficient funding for this network can be secured, a network (which will seek to employ a Network Coordinator and/or Partnerships Officer) can be established relatively quickly.

Other sub-sector networks may also be established and included in the Assembly. The *Bedfordshire Advice Forum* will link in with the Assembly and coordinate third sector involvement in advice work within Central Bedfordshire.

Work is currently being undertaken to map third sector involvement in a range of existing partnerships. Where existing partnerships actively engage the third sector, organisations will be encouraged to get involved in current partnership arrangements rather than set up new or additional structures.

### Assembly Representatives Forum

Meeting two to three times a year, this would bring together those who represent the sector on local partnerships to share intelligence and information on key issues facing the sector, discuss any issues arising out of representation meetings and provide a chance to coordinate any actions

required. The Forum will also provide training and development opportunities for Assembly Representatives.

### **Assembly Steering Group**

At the heart of this structure is an Assembly Steering Group. Meeting two to three times a year, this would bring together key representatives from each of the theme groups, the Chairperson of the Assembly and the Coordinating Body to agree the content of Assembly meetings.

### **The Coordinating Body**

Assembly, local forums and other representational structures need support and coordination. Terms of reference, membership and strategies will need to be developed and agreed. Voluntary and Community Action, along with other Local Infrastructure Organisations, can facilitate this, making use of their existing networks and databases to engage, communicate and coordinate activity.

Voluntary and Community Action will facilitate this structure in Central Bedfordshire, organising Assembly meetings, producing an Assembly newsletter, offering support to partnership representatives and theme groups, and acting as the common thread throughout the structure to ensure that it is joined up and coordinated.

It would also act as the main contact for representation requests and work with the Assembly Chairperson and theme groups, as required, to ensure representation is provided and, where necessary and appropriate, provide that representation.

Dedicated pages for the Assembly have already been established on the VoluntaryWorks website: [www.action-centralbeds.org.uk/partnerships/thirdsectororassembly](http://www.action-centralbeds.org.uk/partnerships/thirdsectororassembly). These will provide news of future events; links to partnership website pages and agenda papers; opportunities for consultation, engagement and representation; details of Assembly representatives sitting on local partnerships and feedback on their representational activities. It is envisaged that use of website blogs and social networking sites could enable views and feedback to be exchanged in the future.

The Coordinating Body will:

- organise two Assembly meetings each year, and other meetings as appropriate;
- prepare reports of Assembly meetings and on other matters as shall be determined and to make these available to members of the Assembly and other interested parties;
- promote the Assembly and the work of the Assembly within the sector, to local partnerships and among local public sector agencies;
- administer the election of the Assembly Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, and of Assembly Representatives;
- coordinate Third Sector Assembly representation on local partnerships and at other key meetings; ensuring that adequate representation is provided and, where necessary and appropriate, providing that representation;
- promote opportunities for people from the sector to express interest in particular representative roles, through the VoluntaryWorks website, targeted emails and other forms of direct communication;
- receive expressions of interest, arrange informal discussions with prospective representatives and make an initial appointment. In due course representatives will be elected by the Assembly through an election process managed by the Coordinating Body;

- brief representatives on the work of the Partnership, provide any relevant background papers and provide capacity building and other support to enable them to undertake their role;
- notify the relevant Partnership Manager of the representative's appointment and contact details and arrange for agenda papers and other communications to be sent direct to the representative. Copies of agenda papers will also be sent to the Assembly Coordinator for information;
- provide travel expenses to representatives attending Partnership meetings on behalf of the Assembly. Representatives will be expected to provide the time needed to participate;
- maintain regular contact with representatives and arrange briefings and meetings with others from within the sector and local partners to support and enable them to fulfil their role effectively;
- provide the means through which representatives can be held to account for non-compliance with the agreed role and for stakeholders to raise complaints against decisions and actions taken by representatives and for these to be properly reviewed and acted upon;
- provide capacity building and other support to representatives and to the Assembly, as well as the wider sector and small community groups, so that people can effectively engage in these forums;
- seek funding to support the day-to-day activities of the Assembly and to develop any new networks or initiatives that support the Assembly's purpose;
- develop and implement business planning and project management arrangements to ensure that the activities of the Assembly are properly managed.

### Next steps

An outline of the proposed framework was presented at the Assembly meeting held on 3 February 2010, when those attending contributed their views and suggestions. These have now been incorporated into this framework document, along with good practice from other Assemblies across England and from a meeting of Assembly Coordinators held in Bristol on the 23-24 February 2010.

**Please let us have your views** on what do you think to the proposed framework for the Assembly, including its terms of reference and the arrangements for Assembly Representatives, by **Tuesday 30 March 2010** [this will enable us to report back to funders at the conclusion of a Capacitybuilders funded project]. Thereafter the document will be amended and published, and we will move forward with its implementation. Please send your views to Helen Nottingham, Partnerships Officer, by email to [partnerships@action-centralbeds.org.uk](mailto:partnerships@action-centralbeds.org.uk).

**If you would like to get involved with the Assembly**, please ensure you register with the Partnerships Team at Voluntary and Community Action so that you receive future communications. You can also check out opportunities on our website – we are currently seeking to appoint representatives to various local partnerships. Contact Helen Nottingham, Partnerships Officer, by email to [partnerships@action-centralbeds.org.uk](mailto:partnerships@action-centralbeds.org.uk) or by telephone on 01525 850559.

**DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE 2010****1. Name**

- 1.1 The Assembly shall be known as the **Central Bedfordshire Third Sector Assembly** or within Central Bedfordshire as the **Third Sector Assembly** and hereafter as the Assembly.

**2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of the Assembly is to:

- 2.1.1 provide accountable, effective, meaningful and coordinated representation for the sector on local partnerships;
- 2.1.2 empower skilled and competent representatives to advocate the needs of the sector and service users;
- 2.1.3 enable strong voices for the sector to have a greater influence on the design and delivery of local services, including third sector solutions that address the priorities of Central Bedfordshire;
- 2.1.4 provide a focus for consultation and engagement with the sector;
- 2.1.5 provide a framework for strong, effective and sustainable partnership working with the public sector.

**3. Activities**

- 3.1 The Assembly will facilitate effective community engagement, partnership working and consultation with the Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), its public sector partners and within the sector.
- 3.2 The Assembly will empower third sector organisations to have a strong voice and an active involvement in influencing the strategic, planning and service delivery decisions that shape the communities in which they operate.
- 3.3 The Assembly will elect or appoint representatives to local partnerships.
- 3.4 The Assembly will put in place support arrangements for representatives to gather, represent and feed back views to members and for exchanging information between third sector representatives and the wider sector.
- 3.5 The Assembly will taking a proactive approach to public policy issues, enabling the sector to be aware of key issues that matter and creating space for the sector to develop and progress third sector solutions that address the priorities of Central Bedfordshire.
- 3.6 The Assembly will support, and where appropriate create new, networks that enable third sector organisations to come together, share experience and contribute to local partnership working.
- 3.7 The Assembly will provide training, support and effective terms of reference for those representing the sector.

3.8 The Assembly will elect annually a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.

#### **4. Membership of the Assembly**

4.1 The Assembly will comprise representatives of third sector organisations working in Central Bedfordshire, including voluntary organisations, community groups, charities, faith groups, residents association and social enterprises.

4.2 Anyone working, volunteering or leading such organisations is entitled to attend meetings of the Assembly as representatives of third sector organisations and shall be eligible to vote.

4.3 The Coordinating Body may invite representatives of local public sector organisations, partnerships and other agencies to attend meetings of the Assembly as invited guests and who shall not be eligible to vote.

#### **5. Meetings**

5.1 The Assembly shall normally meet in or about May and November each year in an accessible location within Central Bedfordshire. If required, additional meetings may be called to discuss certain issues in more detail.

5.2 Meetings of the Assembly shall be chaired by the Assembly Chairperson or Vice Chairperson or any other person appointed to do so by the Coordinating Body.

5.3 The business of each Assembly meeting will be determined and promoted in advance of each meeting by the Coordinating Body in consultation with the Assembly Steering Group.

5.4 The business of each Assembly meeting is expected to be a mix of policy, strategy and discussion; combined with information dissemination and awareness raising on key local and national issues affecting the sector's work in Central Bedfordshire. The Assembly will also receive updates from Assembly representatives and theme groups.

5.5 Members of the Assembly and the Assembly Steering Group may propose resolutions for debate at Assembly meetings; they may also propose amendments to resolutions. The conduct of debates will be in accordance with a set of standing orders prepared by the Coordinating Body.

#### **6. Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson**

6.1 The Assembly shall elect annually (usually in November) a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson who shall serve from the conclusion of that meeting for a period of one year and thereafter be eligible for re-election.

6.2 Voting shall be by secret ballot from among those registered as members, and who are present at a meeting, of the Assembly where such an election is to take place.

6.3 In the event of no Assembly meeting taking place or at the request of ten or more members attending an Assembly meeting, the Coordinating Body may arrange a postal ballot of those registered as members to determine the result of an election.

6.4 The conduct of elections will be in accordance with a set of standing orders prepared by the Coordinating Body.

## **7. Election and Appointment of Assembly Representatives**

- 7.1 The Assembly shall elect bi-annually (usually in May each year) Assembly Representatives to sit on local partnerships who shall serve from the conclusion of that meeting for a period of two years and thereafter be eligible for re-election.
- 7.2 Voting shall be by secret ballot from among those registered as members, and who are present at a meeting, of the Assembly where such an election is to take place.
- 7.3 In the event of no Assembly meeting taking place or at the request of ten or more members attending an Assembly meeting, the Coordinating Body may arrange a postal ballot of those registered as members to determine the result of an election.
- 7.4 The conduct of elections will be in accordance with a set of standing orders prepared by the Coordinating Body.
- 7.5 In the event of there being no elected representative the Coordinating Body may take whatever steps are needed to ensure that adequate representation is provided and, where necessary and appropriate, provide that representation until such time as an elected representative is appointed.

## **8. Duties and Responsibilities of the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson**

- 8.1 The Coordinating Body shall set out in a Role Description the main responsibilities and a person specification for each role.
- 8.2 The main responsibilities of each role shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:
- determine the agenda for each Assembly meeting in conjunction with the Coordinating Body;
  - chairing meetings of the Assembly;
  - exercising a casting vote in the election of Chairperson (but not if that shall be themselves), Vice Chairperson and Assembly Representatives;
  - assisting the Coordinating Body in making arrangements to ensure that adequate Third Sector Assembly representation is provided on local partnerships and at key meetings.

## **9. Duties and Responsibilities of Assembly Representatives**

- 9.1 The Coordinating Body shall set out in a Role Description the purpose of the partnership on which representation is to be sought, the main responsibilities of the role and a person specification.
- 9.2 The main responsibilities of each representative shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:
- preparing for, attending and contributing to Partnership meetings and other LSP meetings the representative is invited to attend;
  - representing and advocating the views, interests and priorities of the third sector at Partnership meetings and any other public meetings, conferences and forums attended as an Assembly Representative;
  - contributing to the overall direction and development of the Partnership through clear strategic planning, in accordance with the Partnership's Terms of Reference;

- attending meetings of the Third Sector Assembly and through this to gather, represent and feedback views to those they represent.

## **10. Duties and Responsibilities of the Assembly Steering Group**

- 10.1 The Coordinating Body may convene an Assembly Steering Group comprising of the
- Chairperson
  - Vice Chairperson
  - Assembly Coordinator
  - Director or Chief Executive of the Coordinating Body
  - Others involved in organising and/or representing the Assembly
- 10.2 The Assembly Steering Group may meet two or three times a year in order to share intelligence and information on key issues facing the sector, discuss any issues arising out of representation meetings, provide a chance to coordinate any actions required, deal with any issues arising between theme groups and agree the content of Assembly meetings.

## **11. Duties and Responsibilities of the Coordinating Body**

- 11.1 The Coordinating Body will seek to ensure that the Assembly is properly organised and accountable for its activities by organising Assembly meetings, producing regular communications with members of the Assembly offering support to partnership representatives and theme groups, and acting as the common thread throughout the structure to ensure that it is joined up and coordinated. The main responsibilities of the Coordinating Body shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:
- 11.2 Organise two Assembly meetings each year, and other meetings as appropriate.
- 11.3 Prepare reports of Assembly meetings and on other matters as shall be determined and to make these available to members of the Assembly and other interested parties.
- 11.4 Promote the Assembly and the work of the Assembly within the sector, to local partnerships and among local public sector agencies.
- 11.5 Administer the election of the Assembly Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, and of Assembly Representatives.
- 11.6 Coordinate Third Sector Assembly representation on local partnerships and at other key meetings; ensuring that adequate representation is provided and, where necessary and appropriate, providing that representation.
- 11.7 Promote opportunities for people from the sector to express interest in particular representative roles, through the VoluntaryWorks website, targeted emails and other forms of direct communication.
- 11.8 Receive expressions of interest, arrange informal discussions with prospective representatives and make an initial appointment. In due course representatives will be elected by the Assembly through an election process managed by the Coordinating Body.
- 11.9 Brief representatives on the work of the Partnership, provide any relevant background papers and provide capacity building and other support to enable them to undertake their role.

- 11.10 Notify the relevant Partnership Manager of the representative's appointment and contact details and arrange for agenda papers and other communications to be sent direct to the representative. Copies of agenda papers will also be sent to the Assembly Coordinator for information.
- 11.11 Provide travel expenses to representatives attending Partnership meetings on behalf of the Assembly. Representatives will be expected to provide the time needed to participate.
- 11.12 Maintain regular contact with representatives and arrange briefings and meetings with others from within the sector and local partners to support and enable them to fulfil their role effectively.
- 11.13 Provide the means through which representatives can be held to account for non-compliance with the agreed role and for stakeholders to raise complaints against decisions and actions taken by representatives and for these to be properly reviewed and acted upon.
- 11.14 Provide capacity building and other support to representatives and to the Assembly, as well as the wider sector and small community groups, so that people can effectively engage in these forums.
- 11.15 Seek funding to support the day-to-day activities of the Assembly and to develop any new networks or initiatives that support the Assembly's purpose.
- 11.16 Develop and implement business planning and project management arrangements to ensure that the activities of the Assembly are properly managed.

## **12. Alterations to these Terms of Reference**

- 12.1 Members of the Assembly may propose amendments to these Terms of Reference by submitting them in writing to the Coordinating Body.
- 12.2 The Coordinating Body shall make any minor amendments to these Terms of Reference as required to update information or to assist with the organisation of the Assembly.
- 12.3 The Assembly Steering Group shall determine by at least a two thirds majority any substantive amendments required to these Terms of Reference.



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES

### Role Purpose

Acting individually and collectively, to contribute a third sector perspective to discussions concerning the strategic direction of the Partnership and the effective delivery of local services.

### Main Responsibilities

- Preparing for, attending and contributing to Partnership meetings and other LSP meetings the representative is invited to attend.
- Representing and advocating the views, interests and priorities of the voluntary and community sector at Partnership meetings and any other public meetings, conferences and forums attended as an Assembly Representative.
- Contributing to the overall direction and development of the Partnership through clear strategic planning, in accordance with the Partnership's Terms of Reference.
- Using the Third Sector Assembly and own contacts to promote and publicise the Partnership, develop links with individuals and organisations, and encourage support for the work of the Partnership.
- Preparing written articles on the work of the Partnership for publication in local voluntary and community sector newsletters as a mechanism for reporting back to, and gathering views from, the sector.
- Attending meetings of the Third Sector Assembly and through this to gather, represent and feedback views to those they represent.
- Informing own effectiveness as a representative through reading, networking, training and an understanding of the issues affecting the work of the Partnership.

### Person Specification

The person fulfilling a representative role is expected to:

- regularly attend Partnership Meetings, usually held every two or three months during the day at Chicksands, Dunstable or Bedford;
- have a commitment to partnership working and an understanding of community involvement processes;
- be involved in strategic issues and developments in, and be able to contribute to decisions on behalf of, the voluntary and community sector in Central Bedfordshire;
- be able to analyse complex issues, identify priorities and communicate information clearly;
- have experience of representing the voluntary and community sector and/or local communities in public meetings and partnership settings;
- have experience of contributing to discussions and debates on, and knowledge of, a range of [partnership specific] issues relevant to local communities and the third sector;
- be involved in a local 'frontline' voluntary, community or other third sector organisation working in Central Bedfordshire and have a proven involvement with the wider third sector;
- be committed to the vision and priorities included in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## Representation Principles

Representatives will be expected to:

- represent the broad interests of the sector or sub-sector, not their personal views or those of their own organisation;
- report back to the Assembly Coordinator and the wider sector, providing the information, views and input they gave when representing the sector and the outcome of key discussions/decisions;
- be mindful of any conflicts of interest (e.g. where their own organisation is directly benefiting from funding under consideration) and declare these at partnership meetings; it should also be discussed with the Assembly Coordinator;
- promote the core values of the sector and the key principles of partnership work in their representational activities, and seek to make an effective contribution to the work of the Partnership;
- notify the Assembly Coordinator immediately, as well as the relevant Partnership Manager, if they are unable to attend a partnership meeting so that a substitute representative can be arranged (depending on the Partnership's terms of reference). The Assembly Coordinator should also be contacted if communication becomes difficult between the representative and the Partnership, if they are unable to continue as a representative or if other difficulties arise;
- create opportunities to communicate with the wider sector through their own networks and the Assembly so that they can ascertain the views of the sector on key issues under consideration by the Partnership. Representatives' contact details will be published on the VoluntaryWorks website and representatives will be expected to correspond with those who want to contact them about their role;
- adequately prepare for meetings by reading agenda papers beforehand. It may be difficult to ascertain the sector's views on specific issues as agenda papers may well be issued only a matter of days before meetings; the Assembly Coordinator will always be able to advise on implications for the sector of any matter under consideration;
- have an understanding of the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact and, in particular the Codes of Practice on Consultation and Partnerships, and the principles of public law.

## Support Provided to Representatives

Representatives can expect to:

- be briefed on the work of the Partnership, provided with any relevant background papers and provided with capacity building and other support to enable them to undertake their role;
- have their appointment and contact details notified to the relevant Partnership Manager who shall arrange for agenda papers and other communications to be sent direct to them;
- be paid travel expenses for attending Partnership meetings on behalf of the Assembly;
- receive regular contact from the Coordinating Body who may also arrange briefings and meetings with others from within the sector and local partners to support and enable them to fulfil their role effectively.
- be held to account for non-compliance with the agreed role and to have any complaints from stakeholders against decisions and actions taken by them as Assembly representatives properly reviewed and acted upon by the Coordinating Body.