

# COMPACT AT WORK

## Elected members take the lead in Shropshire

Partnership working in Shropshire has been boosted by creating a new leadership role for a Cabinet member who is also a Compact Champion. Shropshire Council has strengthened its commitment to a Compact approach by appointing Councillor Gwilym Butler to lead on working with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), community engagement and community leadership and governance.

### Impact

Leadership from a Cabinet member and other elected members who are Compact Champions sends out a positive message that the voluntary and community sector is a valued and important partner. Strong leadership and effective partnership working mechanisms have formed the foundation for joint work to address current challenges together and secure better local outcomes. This has been supported by funding of £100,000 from Shropshire Council for the VCS Assembly to prepare the sector for the changes ahead.

“The council sees the voluntary and community sector as a major player in its future development, and this is illustrated by my new Cabinet post. I believe by working together as the new Government agenda evolves, we can achieve much more for Shropshire.”



- Councillor Gwilym Butler, Cabinet member and Compact Champion (pictured, source: Shropshire Council)

“Elevating the responsibility to Cabinet level demonstrates that the council has responded to calls from the VCS Assembly to work closely together and involve voluntary sector representatives in partnership decisions at the most senior level.”

- Sonia Roberts, Chair of Shropshire VCS Assembly

### What happened

#### Background

The Shropshire VCS Assembly began in 2003 and has been a good basis for developing effective joint working and strong relationships with public sector in Shropshire, including agreeing a local Compact in 2009.

“We have got good mechanisms for engagement in place so people use them.”

- Sarah Dodds, VCS Assembly Coordinator

**Published:**  
14 June 2011

**Theme:**  
Implementing Compact

**Compact Names:**  
Shropshire

**Contact:**  
Sarah Dodds  
VCS Assembly  
Coordinator  
Shropshire County  
Council  
T:  
01743 252 740  
E:  
[sarah.dodds@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.dodds@shropshire.gov.uk)

### Compact Principles

1 (Partnership Working)

### Keywords

Engagement

Champions

Local Compacts

## Compact champions

Shropshire has about 50 Compact Champions. They act as advocates for the Shropshire Compact and include both elected members and officers from the public sector and voluntary and community sector.

A Compact Champions Network ensures they are supported in their role and meet together regularly.

“We’re very lucky because we have really keen elected members who take an interest and promote good partnership working. We work with them to communicate to other elected members”.

- Sarah Dodds, VCS Assembly Coordinator

## Acting together on current challenges

Shropshire Council and the VCS Assembly are determined to approach the current time of change together and have set up a number of task groups to overcome some of the challenges impacting upon the public sector and VCS. The work includes a focus on the implications of the Decentralisation and Localism Bill and the Big Society agenda.

The VCS Task Group is chaired by the Chief Executive of Shropshire Council and has three sub groups on key issues - Commissioning, Performance, Community Right to Buy and Community Right to Challenge. Each group is led by a Senior Manager at the council and includes elected members, council officers and VCS Assembly representatives.

“We work in a very action focussed way, collaborating on key issues. A number of projects are already spilling out from the task groups.”

- Sarah Dodds, VCS Assembly Coordinator

## Learning

The factors which have helped to bring about such productive partnership working in Shropshire include:

- A track record of good partnership working and relationships between the sectors, including an active Compact
- A VCS assembly with elected sector representatives and clear accountability
- Effective and active mechanisms for engagement
- Strong leadership at a senior level, including from elected members
- Funding to support partnership working
- Regular communication, workshops and opportunities for involvement
- National policy raising the profile of the VCS
- Good communication, facilitated by the VCS Assembly coordinator being based at the Council

## Next steps

The next step for Shropshire is to look at renewing the local Compact, to bring it in line with the latest national Compact.

Currently Shropshire Council is the only statutory body which is signed up and the aim is to encourage other agencies to commit to the Compact.



## Relevant Compact Principles

1: A strong, diverse and independent civil society

## Related links

- [www.2shrop.net/shropvcsassembly](http://www.2shrop.net/shropvcsassembly)
- [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)