



Visit to Red Cross – Report by Mike Appleyard

Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Partnerships

The County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Partnerships is seeking to find out as much as possible about the way that the County Council's partnerships with voluntary organisations work. Clearly, if a full picture is to be built up, it is important to know the views of voluntary organisations. Therefore, it would be very helpful to have answers to the following questions.

How would your organisation define a partnership?

Joint opportunity to achieve common goals.

Does your organisation feel that the County Council treats it as a partner and values the relationship? If not, what should the Council do to improve the situation?

No – word only. Relationship undervalued. Council could understand voluntary organisation situation – just looking at financials is only like purchasing stationery. Client should be first issue. BCC don't recognise what Red Cross do from client perspective.

What are the objectives of the partnership and is your organisation clear about them?

Promote independence, Day Care is preventative and allows people to remain in own homes. Try to deliver in cost efficient way.

Is there a satisfactory level of consultation? Are your organisation's views listened to and acted upon?

Some but at wrong level. County structure change has destroyed relationship (now at lower level). Breaking up commissioning will be a disaster.

What form does your contract with the County Council take (for example is there a service level agreement or any other form of written contract with the Council)?

SLA – should be more professionally done, letters exchanged over a period need to be incorporated in one agreement. Ours has not been renegotiated in years.

If there is a written contract, how helpful is it? If there is no such document would your organisation find one useful?

N/A

What contract monitoring or other monitoring does the County Council carry out?

None. SS inspectorate include a standard proposal to improve costing.

How time consuming or onerous is the monitoring process?

It isn't. It is a part of running an efficient organisation.

What problems has your organisation found with the partnership, have they been resolved and how?

Ownership on Council side.

What help does the Council provide with training and developing your organisation's staff?

Yes, helpful.

What more could your organisation do given greater resources and how would it benefit clients?

Centre for OT – expansion of Bourne End. Weekend services when they are really needed. Red X session costs £2.50 + £5 meal + attendance. Council pay £23.70 per client. Council run schemes cost more, so why are they continuing them when they could be saving money.

Is your organisation aware of the Bucks Infrastructure Group (BIG) and the proposed Compact? If so, would your organisation see advantages or disadvantages in a compact?

Sets out relationship and culture which we would like to see BCC supporting.

How could partnerships be made more effective?

More investment, develop trust, more time with partners. Council does not monitor outcomes, simply how many clients and at what cost. How about the clients view of day care, shared between BCC and Red X.

Could your organisation benefit from closer links with County Councillors?

Definitely.

It is not an objective of this particular exercise to get into the detail of funding. Nevertheless, it would be helpful to have some thoughts on the following:

How is funding obtained from the County Council?

Annual negotiation of client price spot purchase. MK is grant and preferable since we are not constantly under pressure on the income side.

How could the system be improved?

3 year contract would be appreciated. We only have one year currently

Does the funding provide security for a reasonable period (one, two or three years or more)?

1 year only.

What additional funding does your organisation have to seek and how time consuming is this?

Spare capacity available. Want to fill with private client. WRVS pay to cook meals at Bourne End only. This is a currently a cost. We need to exchange ideas on a range of issues which would benefit both organisations and provide improved services.

If your organisation receives additional funding, is there any conflict between the requirements of different funding bodies?

No other grant. Council want Amersham to close to help Douglas McMinn at Chesham (1 centre only). We have put in a proposal but had a reply in four months.

Do different funding bodies have different monitoring requirements and, if they do, what difficulties does this create?

MK grant system more effective than spot purchase. MK always full. MK regular monitoring in ratings.

What short-life funding (lottery, charitable trusts etc.) does your organisation receive?

None.

What strategy does your organisation have for dealing with the loss of this or any other funding?

Reduce staffing and probably close because overhead costs will not support smaller organisation.