



Third Sector Partnership Board

**Consultation Paper on the third sector's strategic voice
within Communities and Local Government**



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Chapter 1:

The consultation and how to respond

About this consultation

1.1 Communities and Local Government (CLG) – the Department – is proposing to create a revitalised and enhanced **CLG Third Sector Partnership Board** to be at the core of its future strategic engagement with the third sector. Building on the successful experience of our current Partnership Board, our proposals involve:

- giving the Board the role of being the principal forum through which the third sector can, in a consistent and strategic way make its contribution to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of many activities that the Department undertakes
- providing the Board with an expanded membership which will have the necessary expertise and experience to allow it to undertake the role that we are now proposing for it
- putting in place new ways of working and support for the Board which will enable it, effectively and efficiently, to fulfil its role

1.2 The Department is now consulting on these proposals, set out fully in the following chapters of this document. The responses that we receive will help shape the future development of Communities and Local Government's Third Sector Partnership Board. Subject to this consultation we intend, after discussion with members of the current Partnership Board, to put the new arrangements in place by end of 2008.

Who we are consulting

1.3 This is a public consultation and it is open to anyone to respond to this consultation document. We would, however, particularly welcome responses to the specific questions, summarised at Annex A, and from third sector organisations, including national representative bodies. **The consultation period runs for 12 weeks to 30 September 2008.**

How to respond

- 1.4 Your response must be received by 30 September 2008 and may be sent by e-mail or post to:

Third Sector Partnership Board
Third Sector Team
Communities and Local Government
Zone 5/B1, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

e-mail: thirdsector@communities.gov.uk

- 1.5 It would be helpful if you could make clear in your response whether you represent an organisation or group, and in what capacity you are responding.

What will happen to the responses

- 1.6 The Department will take account of the responses received to this consultation before taking decisions on the proposed revitalised and enhanced **Third Sector Partnership Board**.
- 1.7 Within three months of the close of the consultation period we will analyse the responses to the consultation and produce a summary of them. This summary will be published on the Department's web site at www.communities.gov.uk

Publication of Responses – Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 1.8 Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published, or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes. (These are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).
- 1.9 If you want any of the information that you provide to be treated as confidential you should be aware that under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply, and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.

- 1.10 If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.
- 1.11 The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

The Consultation Criteria

- 1.12 The UK Government has adopted a code of practice on consultations. Please see **Annex B** below for the criteria that apply under this code, and advice about who you should contact if you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process.
- 1.13 This consultation is a further stage in our approach to strengthening engagement with the third sector on which we held a 12 week consultation following publication of the *Third Sector Strategy: discussion document* in June 2007.

Additional Copies

- 1.14 You may make copies of this document without seeking permission. If required, printed copies of the consultation paper can be obtained from the contact details above.
- 1.15 An electronic version can be found at the Consultation Section of the Department's website at: www.communities.gov.uk.

Chapter 2:

The Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board – what will be its role?

Our vision for the Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board

- 2.1 Our vision for the **CLG Third Sector Partnership Board** is that it should be at the core of the Department's future strategic engagement with the third sector.
- 2.2 We are proposing that it should have the role of being the principal forum through which the third sector can, in a consistent, coherent, strategic, and timely way, make its contribution to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of the many activities that the Department undertakes both to deliver its strategic objectives and to play its part in the delivery of the cross government PSAs.

The third sector and Communities and Local Government

- 2.3 The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) settlement, published in October 2007, set out the strategic objectives which Communities and Local Government, led by our Secretary of State – Hazel Blears – and her Ministerial team, are committed to delivering.

Our departmental strategic objectives (DSOs)

1. To support local government that empowers individuals and communities and delivers high quality services efficiently.
2. To improve the supply, environmental performance and quality of housing that is more responsive to the needs of individuals, communities and the economy.
3. To build prosperous communities by improving the economic performance of cities, sub-regions and local areas, promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation.
4. To develop communities that are cohesive, active and resilient to extremism.
5. To provide a more efficient, effective and transparent planning system that supports and facilitates sustainable development, including the Government's objectives in relation to housing growth, infrastructure delivery, economic development and climate change.

2.4 That CSR settlement also set out the 30 Public Service Agreements (PSAs) which, together, all departments will deliver for Government. The full set of cross government PSAs is available on the HM Treasury website.¹ Of these, this Department leads on two – PSA 20 and PSA 21 – and contributes to a significant number of the other PSAs.

• **PSA20: Increase long-term housing supply and affordability**, which drive improvements to housing affordability by increasing housing supply – making progress toward meeting the Government's ambition of at least 240,000 net additional homes per year by 2016; 70,000 affordable homes per annum by 2010-11; and improvement to the energy performance and carbon footprint of new homes.

• **PSA21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities**, with the aim to create thriving places with shared values and a sense of belonging – people's perceptions of their local communities will be key to measuring progress, alongside measures of a thriving third sector and commitments to increase participation in a wide variety of cultural and sporting activities.

2.5 All these objectives form the basis of our work. It is by delivering on them that the Department will realise its vision of **creating great places where people want to live, work and raise a family**.

2.6 But we cannot do this alone. We will succeed only if we work collaboratively with all those who can contribute or are affected by what we do. Significant among these are the third sector, both as third sector organisations with the potential to contribute to the delivery of our objectives, and more widely as a sector who will be affected by, and potentially can benefit from, our pursuit of those objectives.

2.7 Accordingly the third sector has a significant contribution to make to the many activities that the Department undertakes. Without this contribution we will not be successful. To obtain it, the Department must engage with the third sector in a consistent, coherent, strategic and timely manner.

2.8 Such engagement requires a culture of confidence, trust and respect between the third sector and the Department. Whilst the right institutional and governance arrangements are, on their own, not sufficient to create and maintain such a culture, they are a prerequisite to realising it and maintaining a successful partnership which that culture underpins.

¹ For a full list of the Government's Public Service Agreements see http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr/psa/pbr_csr07_psaindex.cfm

- 2.9 It is for this reason that, in addition to our day to day arrangements for officials to engage with and involve third sector stakeholders as part of our normal process of policy development and implementation, we are adopting two initiatives.
- 2.10 First, we are recruiting² an additional **Non-Executive Board Member** with experience of the third sector. They will bring constructive challenge and support to the work of the CLG Board and Peter Housden. This will assist the Board in its role of providing strategic advice to Ministers, securing effective performance of the Department, and ensuring high standards of corporate governance.
- 2.11 Second, as outlined above, we are proposing in future to centre the Department's engagement with the third sector around a renewed **Third Sector Partnership Board**, to be built on the current Board, established in late 2007 which has demonstrated the value of such a forum. These are the proposals that we are now consulting on.

Proposed role and objective for the Third Sector Partnership Board

- 2.12 We are making these proposals following the establishment in late 2007 of a group, chaired by Baroness Andrews, which provided a forum for discussions between those with experience of the third sector and CLG. This group has now met twice. It has a diverse membership drawn from across the third sector and local government, invited as individuals with knowledge and expertise of the sector. The resulting rich discussions on the issues the sector face and on its relationship with the Department have demonstrated the value of such a strategic forum.
- 2.13 Accordingly, we now want to move on to a more formalised arrangement, whereby the Department and Partnership Board have a clear basis on which to engage. As such, we envisage that the **Third Sector Partnership Board** becomes the principal forum and mechanism for the third sector to contribute, where relevant, its experiences and knowledge to CLG activities. Moreover, our intention is that this should be a two-way process, not only for the Department to invite views but equally as a mechanism for the third sector to raise with the Department strategic issues, concerns and ideas it might have about the delivery of the Department's priorities.

² The department expects to announce the Non-Executive Board Member before the end of July 2008. Details of the CLG Board are available at Board – Corporate – Communities and Local Government. www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/about/who/board/

- 2.14 Whilst we envisage the **Third Sector Partnership Board** being at the core of engagement with the sector across the Department we do not see it as the only means. We would, for example, expect policies and programmes to continue to be developed in consultation with relevant third sector stakeholders as part of our normal process of policy development and implementation. The **Third Sector Partnership Board**, from its strategic perspective might, on occasion, promote or strengthen such day to day engagement.
- 2.15 We would also expect a formal **Third Sector Partnership Board** to co-ordinate its work, where relevant, with other strategic groups, such as the Empowerment Partnerships at national and regional level, the National Community Forum and the Office of the Third Sector's Advisory Body. The Partnership Board has the specific role of being, at a strategic level, the forum for the third sector to contribute across the board to the development and implementation of our activities. Our aim is that the distinct contribution of each group should be complementary and coherent.
- 2.16 To fulfil the role that we are envisaging for the Board, we are proposing that an enhanced **Third Sector Partnership Board** should be given the core objective of providing timely, focused, credible, and strategic advice to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and her Ministerial Team on how the third sector views CLG's activities, the effectiveness of the delivery of its strategic objectives and PSAs, and its response to the major opportunities and challenges it faces. This advice needs to be representative of the views of the sector across England, and, in particular, will need to cover issues about the sector's contribution to the delivery of CLG's objectives and about their impact on the sector.
- 2.17 The Partnership Board has a role which is wholly distinctive from other departments' third sector partnership boards, e.g. the Office of the Third Sector's Third Sector Advisory Body (TSAB). Moreover, given the centrality of local government to many of our activities, the CLG **Third Sector Partnership Board** will necessarily need a membership that brings experience of the interface between the third sector and local government.
- 2.18 These proposals would, in essence, formalize and reaffirm the vision of a Partnership Board being at the core of Communities and Local Government's engagement with the sector.

Consultation Question 1: Do you agree with these proposals on the role of the Partnership Board?

Chapter 3:

The Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board – who will be its members?

Board membership

- 3.1 In order to achieve our vision for the **Third Sector Partnership Board**, we believe the Board requires a mixture of members, drawn from a range of third sector organisations, operating at different spatial levels, their representative bodies, and from local government. We believe the Board should continue to be chaired by a Minister, with the Minister for the Third Sector invited as a member, and supported by a CLG Secretariat.
- 3.2 The current Partnership Board already has 20 members, drawn from the third sector and local government, plus the Chair. All members actively contribute to the Board and have a broad range of individual expertise and knowledge. These arrangements have resulted in rich discussions and we want to continue to benefit from this effective intra-sector and inter-sector dialogue. At this stage of development, and to maintain momentum as the **Third Sector Partnership Board** establishes its role, we propose to retain this membership.
- 3.3 However, we, and the current members, also recognise the need for the membership to draw on the expertise and broader perspective from key representative bodies. We also want to ensure alignment with the work of the National Empowerment Partnership and other forums, such as the Office of the Third Sector's Advisory Body.
- 3.4 We are therefore proposing to invite up to five additional members involving representative organisations. This will bring current membership to 25. We are seeking views on which organisations are best placed to represent the third sector in relation to our strategic objectives.
- 3.5 We will also consider how the proposed "third sector" Non-Executive Board Member on the main board might best be involved with the **Third Sector Partnership Board**, to ensure linkages between this group and the main CLG Board. We will wish to discuss this with the new Non-Executive Board Member when he or she is appointed.

How members will be appointed

- 3.6 Furthermore, we are proposing an **open selection process for members in non-representative roles** during 2009, to formally appoint members to the Partnership Board. We will want to discuss with existing members their wish to continue to be involved and would aim to have a staggered end to terms of appointments so that there is continuity between meetings. We envisage appointments being for two-years and subject to a maximum two terms, with the process operated in line with guidance on public appointments. We also envisage members would be unpaid but eligible to claim expenses.

Consultation Question 2: Do you agree we need a mixture of third sector organisations, representative bodies and local government?

Consultation Question 3: Do you have views on which representative organisations should be invited, given our strategic objectives?

Consultation Question 4: Do you agree with the proposal that the department should hold an open competition for members during 2009?

Chapter 4:

The Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board – how will it work?

- 4.1 To fulfil the role envisaged for the **Third Sector Partnership Board**, it will require a structured way of working to enable it to provide both timely advice at appropriate stages of initiatives and to react to circumstances, based on a culture of mutual trust, understanding and engagement.
- 4.2 We are proposing a planned programme of work and meetings to provide structure and meaning to the engagement, together with an enhanced capacity for engagement outside of the main meetings and involvement of a wider audience.
- 4.3 We are proposing that the **Third Sector Partnership Board** meets, in full, three times a year, with an option for additional ad-hoc meetings if necessary. Each of these meetings should be aligned to key annual milestones in the Department, providing the opportunity to discuss issues such as the Annual Report, analytical programme and the Compact at the earliest opportunity. This will provide a number of fixed items for discussion over the year.
- 4.4 We also believe that the **Third Sector Partnership Board** should consider a shared issues register, identifying the key opportunities and challenges affecting the third sector role in relation to our strategic objectives. These should not duplicate, but complement, the work of the Office of the Third Sector's Advisory Body, the new single advisory group which advises the OTS on the implementation of the Third Sector Review commitments and priorities. The **Third Sector Partnership Board** could then draw from these issues for discussion at future meetings.
- 4.5 We also wish to be able to engage members in preparation for full meetings. We are proposing to **establish project groups**, consisting of at least two members, to meet independently of the main Partnership Board and prepare papers to inform discussion on future agenda items. The project groups would be able to co-opt additional expertise, in agreement with the Secretariat, to inform their work and the Department will provide secretariat support to members.
- 4.6 We are already making more use of an e-forum to enable contributions from a broader range of stakeholders and propose to continue to do so. We are using the forum during this consultation to invite further views.

- 4.7 These proposals represent a significant enhancement to the operation of the Board, which will be supported by a strengthened Secretariat to oversee the programme of work and engagement envisaged.

Consultation Question 5: Do you agree the Partnership Board should meet three times a year linked to key milestones?

Consultation Question 6: Are there key opportunities and risks, relevant to our strategic objectives, that the Partnership Board should consider to discuss?

Consultation Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed approach to project groups?

Annex A

The Consultation Questions

Consultation Question 1: Do you agree with these proposals on the role of the Partnership Board?

Consultation Question 2: Do you agree we need a mixture of third sector organisations, representative bodies and local government?

Consultation Question 3: Do you have views on which representative organisations should be invited, given our strategic objectives?

Consultation Question 4: Do you agree with the proposal that the department should hold an open competition for members during 2009?

Consultation Question 5: Do you agree the Partnership Board should meet three times a year linked to key milestones?

Consultation Question 6: Are there key opportunities and risks, relevant to our strategic objectives, that the Partnership Board should consider to discuss?

Consultation Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed approach to project groups?

Annex B

Consultation Code of Practice

B.1 The Government has adopted a code of practice on consultations. The criteria below apply to all UK national public consultations on the basis of a document in electronic or printed form. They will often be relevant to other sorts of consultation.

B.2 Though they have no legal force, and cannot prevail over statutory or other mandatory external requirements (e.g. under European Community Law), they should otherwise generally be regarded as binding on UK departments and their agencies, unless Ministers conclude that exceptional circumstances require a departure.

The Consultation Criteria

- 1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.**
- 2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.**
- 3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.**
- 4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.**
- 5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.**
- 6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.**

B.3 The full consultation code may be viewed at:
www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Introduction.htm

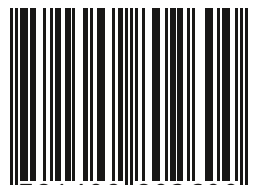
B.4 Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed these criteria? If not, or if you have any other observations about ways of improving the consultation process, please contact:

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