



KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
VOLUNTARY AND
COMMUNITY SECTOR

MANIFESTO
LOCAL ELECTIONS 2010

50 YEARS OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM 1960-2010

According to national statistics¹ there are around 1,000 registered voluntary and community organisations (including Registered Social Landlords and Social Enterprises) operating in Kensington and Chelsea, employing approximately 4,500 people. The sector also has around 4000 people volunteering as trustees and has up to 5,000 people formally registered to help deliver services as volunteers. The sector's combined income exceeds £120 million.

There are many small voluntary and community organisations that work in the borough that receive small pots of funding and rely on grants from the local statutory sector in order to deliver their services. This Manifesto outlines the key issues affecting local voluntary and community organisations and suggests a way forward. We will use this Manifesto as an influencing tool to ensure there remains a thriving voluntary and community sector in Kensington and Chelsea for years to come.

THE RIGHT TO CAMPAIGN

Strong voluntary action sometimes means campaigning and lobbying for a particular cause. Within Kensington and Chelsea the voluntary and community sector prides itself on a history of fighting for social justice. Within a modern society we still believe that the need to campaign and lobby for issues based on inequality and injustice is of the upmost importance. Our concern is that campaigning will not be viewed in a negative light when the reality is that it unites communities through a common cause and galvanises community spirit.

WE ASK

1. That the democratic right of the voluntary and community sector to campaign be respected and encouraged as another vehicle of community engagement and empowerment.

THE COMPACT

The local Compact shows a commitment between the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector based on mutual respect and understanding. Whilst the Compact exists to help maintain good relationships between the sectors, our concern is that the Compact should not become static. It needs to remain a continuous guide to improving relationships and identifying new ways of improving partnership working.

WE ASK

1. That the Compact be actively promoted across the statutory and voluntary and community sector.
2. That there is a commitment from both new and long standing Council and NHS staff to attend voluntary and community sector induction sessions to promote a better understanding of the sector and better partnership working.

¹ National Survey of Third Sector Organisations, Cabinet Office, Office of the Third Sector, 2009

The National Survey of the Third Sector uses the term Third Sector Organisations which incorporates voluntary and community organisations, registered social landlords and social enterprises.

A LOCAL MIXED ECONOMY OF FUNDING

In 2008 the then Minister for the Office of the Third Sector - Phil Hope said that small and often volunteer led organisations addressing local needs were very much 'the life blood of the community'. He also went on to say that they are 'the glue that binds communities together'.²

Whilst some local voluntary organisations are in a position to deliver public sector contracts others are not and rely on grant funding to deliver services that contribute to a local cohesive community. This is true of Kensington and Chelsea where small and sometimes Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community organisations rely on grant funding from the Council and the local NHS.

Our concern is that as commissioning becomes more common place, grant funding will be reduced until such time that local organisations will find it difficult to continue to exist.

WE ASK

1. That local grant funding is maintained to ensure that local organisations that do not qualify under commissioning arrangements are still able to deliver much needed services.
2. That where there are threats to local organisations because of reductions in grants, infrastructure organisations support the sector to be involved in decision making processes which could identify the setting up of partnerships, mergers or any other mechanism to ensure the sustainability of smaller organisations.

RECOGNISING THE VALUE OF LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

Kensington and Chelsea needs strong voluntary sector infrastructure organisations that will work together to ensure that the local voluntary and community sector remains vibrant, delivering good quality services and is supported to get their voices heard by decision makers on behalf of their service users.

Whilst local infrastructure organisations are currently supported financially by statutory bodies, there is a concern that public sector cuts will impact on infrastructure services.

Our concern is that that statutory bodies will view funding from other sources as cushioning the blow when the reality is that funding in general is becoming more difficult to attract. This could lead to local voluntary and community groups not receiving the same level of infrastructure support.

WE ASK

1. That local infrastructure organisations should be adequately resourced to enable the development of stronger partnerships and alignment of services.
2. That there is commitment to funding infrastructure organisations in Kensington and Chelsea, as this will ensure the continued support for local voluntary and community organisations.
3. That local infrastructure organisations should be consulted at an early stage on funding decisions that may impact on services to allow time for making appropriate changes or responses to funding decisions.

² Cited – The Guardian, 6 February 2008; article; *Spreading The Glue*

COMMISSIONING

The local voluntary and community sector has an important role to play in both the design and delivery of public services. As advocates for people within society with specific needs, local organisations bring a mix of diverse and flexible approaches to reaching communities that the statutory sector can find hard to reach. The statutory sector needs to ensure a level playing field to increase opportunities for local organisations to bid for contracts.

Our concern is that barriers which exist around contracting and procurement can prevent organisations participating on an equal footing with larger well established private sector companies and social enterprises.

WE ASK

1. That statutory sector is transparent about their assessment processes for deciding on preferred providers and that this is accessible to the sector.
2. That a level playing field be created and maintained throughout the process of commissioning to ensure that voluntary and community organisations have a greater opportunity to tender for the delivery of a public service.

PREMISES

Local premises for the voluntary and community sector continue to provide a huge challenge. Whilst it has been recognised that available spaces have been identified, it is the affordability of premises which remains an issue.

Our concern is that the voluntary and community sector are unable to compete for space within a general open market.

WE ASK

1. That a future look at the transfer of assets to the voluntary and community sector is explored in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.
2. That premises for voluntary and community sector use through Planning Section 106 become standard practice.

PLANNING

Whilst planning now has a central role in local areas through the Local Development Framework, the process itself can be long and complicated. The recent example of the Wornington Green re-development highlights the importance of community involvement and the ability to influence both local planning processes and major planning decisions.

Our concern is that the approach to the planning process can disengage rather than engage communities.

WE ASK

1. That there is a more flexible approach to community involvement in the planning process, allowing adequate time for consultation, minimising the use of planning jargon, not requiring responses to be framed by set questions and taking into account the views of the sector when arriving at planning decisions and feeding back in light of those views.