THIRD SECTOR COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

1.   INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) recognises that the Third Sector is an important element of a strong society. It has a clear role in providing services as well as helping to shape policy and contributing to the development of stronger communities.

The Council Plan states:

> *"We want to be a County that supports individuals and communities to develop their own solutions to achieving their goals, proactively helps in the delivery of community services (for example through volunteering and co-production)..."[1]*

NCC is recognised as a community leader, responsible for ensuring more vibrant, safer and stronger communities as well as securing effective outcomes that lead to an improvement in people's quality of life. NCC recognises that it cannot fulfil this role without support from a thriving local Third Sector.

One of the NCC's Core Purposes is 'helping you to help yourself'. We will do this by supporting individuals and communities to develop their own solutions to achieving their own goals.

Also vitally important during this time of financial constraint is the need for Councils to ensure that effective, value for money services are provided for their residents either by themselves or through an organisation commissioned by the council to provide services. It is there important that NCC introduces a robust system that:
- effectively identifies priorities and outcomes
- ensures that the best providers are in place
- ensures accountability and good use of public money

The NCC Third Sector Commissioning Strategy has been developed to provide the framework through which this can be achieved.

1.1   Local Context

The Northamptonshire Joint Agencies Voluntary and Community Sector Compact launched in 2002 sets out how the statutory and Third Sectors can work together to "more effectively tackle poverty, social exclusion and environmental matters." NCC's policy context for this strategy is provided by the NCC Council Plan 2010-2014. NCC's strategy map sets out how we will go about achieving our vision:

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[1] NCC Plan 2010 – 2014 'Helping you to help yourself'

"Proud to make Northamptonshire a great place to live and work"

The theme running through our customer outcomes is 'All of the County for All of Us'. This means we need to understand the differing needs of our communities and find appropriate solutions.

Excellent business processes are crucial to the effective delivery of our customer outcomes and purpose. To achieve these we are striving to excel at, amongst other things,

- Building social capital
- Developing local communities
- Developing local markets
- Commissioning outcomes; and
- Using business intelligence to segment customers and predict demand.

Effective partnership with the Third Sector has an important role to play in the achievement of the above. Indeed, building social capital is a traditional strength of the Third Sector. This strategy seeks to align our approach to investing in the Third Sector with the achievement of our priority outcomes.

1.2 Links to other strategies

This strategy will also contribute to achieving the Northamptonshire Sustainable Communities Strategy and the four partnership ambitions:

- To be successful through sustainable growth and regeneration
- To develop through having a growing economy with more skilled jobs
- To have safe and strong communities
- Healthy people who enjoy a good quality of life.

Other strategic documents to which this strategy is linked include NCC's Voluntary Sector Compact, Public Participation Strategy, Procurement procedures and Commissioning strategies across NCC.

1.3 Involvement in developing the strategy

The development of the strategy has been led by a steering group, which brought together NCC and the Third Sector and was chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Policy, Partnerships and Performance. The Review involved research, interviews, questionnaire surveys and meetings with a wide range of Third Sector organisations. This has helped to shape the actions set out in this strategy.

1.4 Definition of the Third Sector

The Third Sector is the term used to describe the range of organisations which are neither state nor the private sector.
Although the term 'Third Sector' is widely used it lacks precision when trying to determine criteria to confirm the status of individual organisations.

The Government defines the Third Sector as non-governmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals. They also include housing associations in this definition.

The key criteria are that Third Sector organisations are:

- independent of government
- 'value-driven' – that is, they pursue social, environmental or cultural objectives rather than primarily aiming to make a profit
- Principally reinvest any surpluses in the pursuit of their objectives.

For the purposes of this strategy, NCC has adopted the above definition.

1.5   Aim of the strategy

The strategy sets out how we will provide opportunities for the Third Sector to enhance its contribution to our objectives where we share the same goals.

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that the commissioning process will:

1. Create an environment for a thriving Third Sector
2. bring coherence and clarity to commissioning the Third Sector;
3. ensure a fair and equitable commissioning framework that reflects competing priorities;
4. recognise and support the role of Third Sector organisations that provide services to the public;
5. reduce the burden of commissioning on both commissioners and Third Sector organisations; and
6. ensure delivery of an effective commissioning framework.

The main practical outcomes of the strategy include:

- **Proportionality:** Ensure proportionality at all stages of the commissioning process especially in monitoring.
- **Transparency and fairness:** Ensure that NCC operates transparently and fairly and in line with legislation when making commissioning decisions and in its general approach to Third Sector funding.
- **A consistent approach:** in all practices across NCC relating to commissioning Third Sector organisations.
- **More robust assessment of priorities with a closer link to outcomes:** Ensuring that NCC undertakes a robust assessment of its service priorities and focuses on the outcomes that it wants to achieve when commissioning the Third Sector.
- **A mixed economy of funding:** that includes both funding agreements and contracts as two methods of funding within an overarching commissioning framework.

- **Ensuring sustainability:** by moving towards longer-term agreements and more joined-up working.
- **Ensuring accountability:** both in the spending of public money and in commissioning decisions regarding the Third Sector.
- **Greater involvement from Third Sector:** in terms of service delivery and in designing and shaping policy.
- **Compact**: Adopting a way of working which further embeds Compact principles within the NCC.

1.6   Personalisation

The commissioning cycle described in this framework largely addresses the commissioning of services and activities delivered to a number or range of individuals or service users. However, some services, particularly social care services, are increasingly being commissioned on an individual basis. Although not directly addressing this aspect of commissioning, the intended outcomes and the principles on which this framework is based will be equally relevant to these individual commissioning activities. It is intended that this framework encourages plurality in service delivery and increases public sector knowledge and understanding of the potential Third Sector provider base. These are both important factors in future market development and the achievement of genuine choice through individual commissioning.

1.7   Composition of the Strategy

The strategy is split into a number of sections:

- Commissioning the Third Sector
- Recognising and supporting the role of Third Sector organisations
- Reducing the burden of commissioning
- Ensuring delivery of the strategy

2.   COMMISSIONING THE THIRD SECTOR

To bring coherence and clarity to commissioning the Third Sector, NCC has adopted the 'Third Sector commissioning framework' set out below. It is a robust commissioning framework based on service priorities and outcomes that will be adopted across NCC. The framework will steer commissioners through best practice when funding the Third Sector.
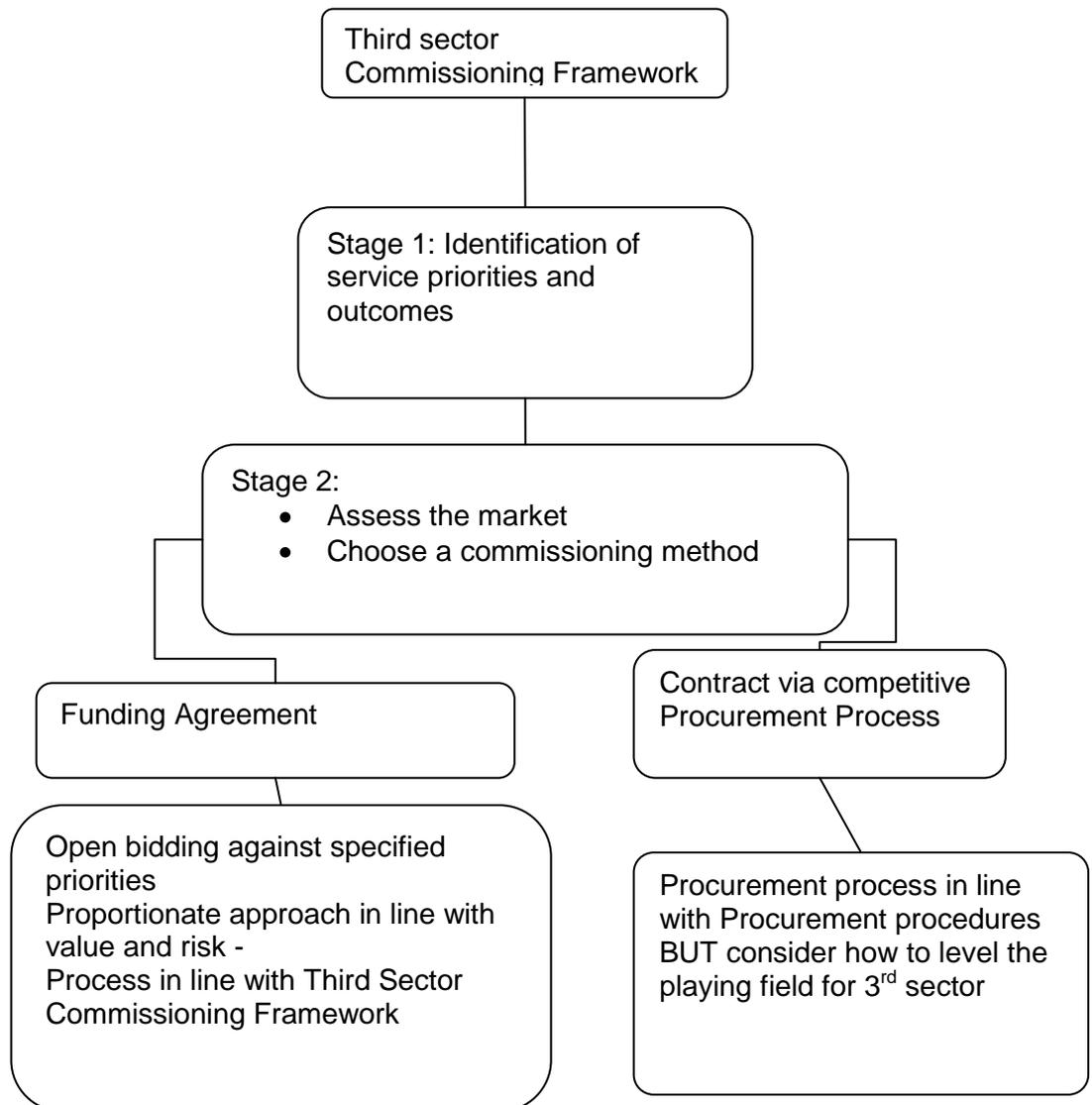
Commissioning for the purposes of this framework is defined as:

"The process of specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet individual's needs at a strategic level. This applies to all services, whether they are provided by the local authority or by the private or voluntary sectors".[2]

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[2] Making Ends Meet, Audit Commission, 2004

Figure 1: Third Sector Commissioning Framework

Third sector
Commissioning Framework

Stage 1: Identification of
service priorities and
outcomes

Stage 2:
- Assess the market
- Choose a commissioning method

Funding Agreement

Contract via competitive
Procurement Process

Open bidding against specified
priorities
Proportionate approach in line with
value and risk -
Process in line with Third Sector
Commissioning Framework

Procurement process in line
with Procurement procedures
BUT consider how to level the
playing field for 3rd sector

2.1   Identifying Service Priorities And Outcomes

The priority outcomes we are striving to achieve are:

- A cleaner, greener and more prosperous county
- Young people feel engaged
- Feel treated with dignity in care

The theme running through these outcomes is 'All of the County for All of Us'. This means that we are here to serve the people of Northamptonshire through enabling people to take personal responsibility, personalising our services and, where necessary targeting services/resources, and not creating a one size fits all dependency culture. *The Council recognises that in serving its communities there may be circumstances where targeted and specialised services may be appropriate or indeed will be required.*

As mentioned previously, a key principle for NCC is 'helping you to help yourself'.

The first stage of the commissioning process is the identification of service priorities and outcomes. The priorities and outcomes will be linked to NCC's aims, Sustainable Communities strategy, Local Area Agreement targets and Service plans as it is important to demonstrate the link between NCC's priorities and targets, and the allocation of funds to the Third Sector. This will establish what NCC needs to do in order to secure the best outcomes for the residents of Northamptonshire.

This stage combines the:

- identification and prioritisation of needs; and
- development of commissioning intentions.

Wherever practicable, the Third Sector should be actively involved in determining and shaping service priorities to ensure the best outcomes for residents[3] in line with our Third Sector Engagement Strategy:

- as facilitators of stakeholder involvement;
- as representatives at a strategic level;
- as providers and potential providers at the service specific level;
- as advocates on behalf of certain user groups where appropriate; and
- as campaigners and lobbyists.

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[3] The Audit Commission (2007); office of the third sector

2.2   Identifying needs

Understanding service needs implies understanding the make-up of the target population, identifying what services will meet the diverse needs of that population and what NCC can deliver, realistically, within the budget available[4].

There are a wide variety of ways in which needs are identified. These include:

- evidence from statistical returns and demographic data;
- evidence or actions relating to equality Impact assessment
- evaluation of current performance in relation to key performance indicators;
- service user feedback, including current user satisfaction;
- feedback from members of strategic and themed partnerships;
- evidence from specific working groups or service reviews;
- feedback from current provider fora;
- input from local people/service users (including through surveys, user groups, neighbourhood partnerships, community events, specially convened meetings or conferences);
- research and mapping exercises;
- regulatory/inspection reports; and
- central government guidance.

2.3   Prioritising needs

Prioritisation of needs will also be based on the above evidence. Discussion about priorities will take place through the various mechanisms set out above and through internal processes which result in organisational, departmental or service plans.

As well as the overarching strategic priorities set out in the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Local Area Agreement, other factors which might influence prioritisation include:

- statutory requirements for provision;
- the comparison between current outcomes for different groups within the community across the key equality strands of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation;
- comparison between current outcomes for individuals in different geographical areas;
- relevant commissioning activities going on elsewhere in the County regionally or sub-regionally;
- budget constraints; and
- opportunities for greater user involvement.

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[4] Audit Commission (2007:41)

Recognising that there will always be a greater level and variety of need than that which can be met by the public sector alone, this prioritisation process is critical.

Where a wide range of needs is identified, consideration should be given to whether the range of allied or preventative services provided by Third Sector organisations operating in a particular area (geographical or user group) might help to lessen these in future. If so, an appropriate programme of support for such organisations may be a cost effective way to reduce these needs in the longer term.

2.4   Developing commissioning intentions

Commissioners should develop their commissioning intentions based on needs analysis and prioritisation and the outcomes they wish to achieve.

Commissioning intentions include both:
- the specification for the service and/or programme of activity to be commissioned;
- and the commissioning method to be used.

The commissioning intentions should be equality impact assessed to ensure that the proposals have regard to the need for fairness and equity in service provision for all, meet the differing needs of our communities and promote social inclusion. All potential providers should be aware that commissioning activity will directly relate to NCC's priorities.

More detailed commissioning intentions should be published at the earliest opportunity to illustrate where some existing services or activities will no longer be prioritised and where new or refocused activities may be sought. This will give potential providers sufficient time to consider whether what they do fits into NCC priorities. It is also essential to notify well in advance those organisations whose services or activities may no longer be prioritised.

Each directorate will develop its own commissioning intentions for the services it wishes to commission with the Third Sector in line with NCC's priorities. It should be recognised that projects funded by particular directorates may benefit NCC and the County more widely.

Additionally, there are services that, owing to their cross-cutting nature, are better served by being funded corporately. Therefore, some of the existing Third Sector funding will be ring fenced to support delivery of services by the Third Sector on which all directorates of NCC rely. Additionally, the funding currently aligned to the Neighbourhood Community Development Centre and the BME Thematic Partnerships are to be merged to create a single funding pot. The focus of this funding will be to deliver provision against the 'developing local communities' theme of NCC's Strategy Map. These cross-cutting services would secure outcomes that:

- empower communities to come together to address local issues,
- encourage active citizenship and volunteering,
- tackle social breakdown
- promote improved community relations
- reduce social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage (e.g. through the funding of projects dealing with worklessness, training or tackling domestic violence)
- proactively help in the delivery of community services or reduce unnecessary demand on the public finances

The outcomes are primarily social, benefit from supporting close user involvement and aim to build community cohesion and social capital.

2.5 Service specifications and programme criteria

Service specifications will be influenced by national guidance, local needs and input from various stakeholders (including Third Sector organisations) through the various processes set out above.

Commissioners should work toward a standard format for service specifications. The aims and objectives of the service or programme and the level of detail in these will be dictated in part by the nature of the service. They should, however, also be proportionate to the amounts of money involved.

2.6 Understanding the market

An understanding of the market has to sit alongside the identification of service needs. This extends beyond traditional funding streams to all services that NCC funds. NCC's Procurement procedures makes it clear that, social outcomes can, and indeed should, be built into the commissioning process. This is an area that plays to the strengths of the Third Sector.
The Procurement procedures will be updated to explicitly include a section that sets out NCC's commitment to supporting the Third Sector in competing for contracts.

There are a number of reasons why NCC needs a good understanding of the market. It must:
- understand the level of competition for service provision and identify when it is appropriate to develop the market, as this will influence which funding stream is chosen;
- be aware of the range and variety of organisations that are best placed to provide the service sought;
- be aware of organisations that are already providing services without County Council funding in order to avoid duplication and ensure services already being provided are not threatened by new initiatives;

- be aware of the impact of either funding organisations or withdrawing funding from organisations already receiving County Council funding.

2.7 Choosing the Commissioning Method

This stage offers commissioners the choice about the most appropriate funding method to achieve the desired outcomes and priorities. In commissioning Third Sector organisations there will be two main funding methods from which to choose: funding agreements or contracts. This decision will be influenced by the factors detailed below.

A key factor influencing the commissioning cycle is the achievement of value for money. Treasury guidance is clear that value for money may not always be best achieved through competitive procurement processes and that there is also a place for strategic and development funding of the sector[5]. This includes infrastructure support, funding agreements, multi-agency joint funding or small grants funding. NCC may also wish to consider service delivery partnership agreements that include an element of co-production of services with the Third Sector. The process by which a service or programme is to be commissioned will depend on a number of factors including:

- the state of the open market including the availability of private sector providers;
- the amount of money available for the service or activity;
- the number of potential providers or applicants for the service or programme;
- whether the service or programme has been identified as sector specific or whether it is open to any potential provider;
- the length of time for which funding will be available;
- the amount of time available for the commissioning process;
- Whether the service is subject to the full requirements under EU Procurement legislation including defined time limits for each stage of the process.

It is difficult to state hard and fast rules about the commissioning method to be used in any given circumstance. In all cases, commissioners should seek advice from the relevant Procurement Category Manager and the processes involved should comply with NCC's procurement, legal and financial procedures.

2.8 Funding agreements

There are a number of circumstances in which best value for money may be achieved through funding agreements specifically targeting the Third Sector. These circumstances might arise where any of the following apply:

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[5] *Improving financial relationships with the third sector: Guidance to funders and purchasers*, HM Treasury (May 2006)

- where soft market testing indicates that there is no commercial market;
- the Third Sector has a strong track record of delivery;
- the service requires substantial community added value;
- the service is designed to be shaped and led by service users;
- the service or activity addresses the needs of vulnerable or marginalised groups;
- there is a requirement for awareness raising, information provision, representation or advocacy in relation to these groups;
- there are issues of trust involved (i.e. trust in the provider on the part of the service users);
- local knowledge is essential; or
- only relatively small amounts of money are available.

Funding agreements are most appropriate where:

- there is an opportunity to pilot new provision;
- the outcomes of the activity are uncertain;
- activities are unique to particular providers; or
- a greater range of provision is sought in a particular niche area of activity.

Taking these principles into account commissioners will choose either the method of funding agreements or contracts as the best way to fund their priorities or outcomes.

2.9   Procurement

Where a provision of a specific service is required, it is more likely that a procurement route will be chosen. If a procurement route is chosen, the commissioner will immediately contact the relevant Procurement Category Manager to agree the most appropriate procurement process. As indicated, detailed later in the document, revisions will be made to the Procurement procedures to ensure contract opportunities are accessible to a wide range of Third Sector organisations.

2.10   Length of funding

NCC recognises the benefits of longer-term funding for both the authority and Third Sector organisations[6].

NCC will ensure a move to funding outcomes for a minimum period of three-years as the norm. However, NCC also recognises that short-term funding still has a place and that it must be used appropriately to secure positive outcomes.

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[6] The Compact (P6), Funding and procurement: compact code of good practice; [6] Treasury (2006:22), Guide to funders; The Compact (P6), Funding and procurement: compact code of good practice.

3. RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

NCC's community leadership role requires it to have a strategic overview of the Third Sector. This requires NCC to be aware of the scale and scope of the Third Sector including organisations that are not in receipt of NCC funding.

3.1 Small Grants Scheme

NCC recognises that many, smaller organisations will not wish to take on commissioned services or activities through the process outlined above. Nonetheless, many voluntary organisations fulfil a vital role in their local communities and may require a small amount of support to carry out that role or develop their activities. This is at the heart of NCC's core purpose – *"helping you to help yourself".*

NCC will establish a corporate Small Grants Scheme. It is proposed that the Scheme will be open to small Third Sector /community organisations that benefit their local community. It will aim to support new projects, one-off purchases and development investment and will be linked to corporate priorities and outcomes.

The Scheme will usually offer small grants (i.e. up to £5,000) for the purchase of specific items, to undertake specific pieces of work or to support the development of the organisation. Examples of eligible projects could include:

- Buying materials e.g. for a community art group or drama society
- Paying for a training programme
- Paying for a new group to hire rooms for meetings whilst in early development
- Supporting fund raising activities
- Delivering new cultural experiences

3.2 Internal database of funded organisations

A comprehensive database of Third Sector organisations will reduce duplication, increase efficiency and ensure a fair allocation of funding. It will also enable the Council to see the whole picture of its investment relationship with the Third Sector. This can facilitate targeted market development, tailored support, and ensure an alignment between NCC and organisations on the ground.

NCC will establish and maintain an internal database which will record which organisations are funded by NCC, specifying how these organisations are funded. The database will provide a central overview of the scale and scope of NCC's financial involvement. As the database evolves further data will be

captured, such as details about the track record of organisations in achieving outcomes.

NCC has already collected a detailed spreadsheet of whom and what we fund as part of the development of this strategy. This work will form the basis for a continued collection of data.

4. REDUCING THE BURDEN OF COMMISSIONING

4.1 The Application Process

NCC aims to reduce the burden of commissioning on both commissioning and Third Sector organisations where this is unnecessary.

Where possible, NCC will develop standard forms of documentation across commissioning activity as this will enable Third Sector organisations to better understand the systems or processes with which commissioners need them to comply. This will mean that Third Sector organisations will be better prepared to respond in ways that are timely and appropriate.

The application or quotation/tendering process should be clear and well managed and proportionate to the amounts of money involved.

Regardless of the funding method, application and tender opportunities should be advertised to existing and potential providers as widely as possible, including via Source Northamptonshire, through emails alerts and via appropriate networks. Every attempt should be made to build up these networks, and market intelligence more generally, by registering and sharing provider information.

The extent of competition should be proportionate to the value of the funding available. Where appropriate, and in line with the Procurement procedures, , commissioners will operate a Request for Quotations (RFQ) approach rather than going through a Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) or Invitation to Tender (ITT) tendering process. In all cases, an understanding of - and access to up to date information - on the potential provider base is critical, as this will influence the tendering approach. Where RFQ is being used approaches may be made to specific organisations, or particular types of organisation may be sought out and encouraged to bid. However, there will be no preferential treatment for any organisation.

Any advertisement of a commissioning opportunity should make clear the process to be used and the timescales involved.

4.2 Proportionate monitoring arrangements

In line with the application process, the monitoring process will be proportionate to the amount of money involved, the context of the relationship,

the nature of the outcomes commissioned and the nature of the organisation delivering it.

Monitoring requirements will focus on the achievement of outcomes identified in the funding agreement or contract and will require the minimum information necessary to ensure good performance and compliance with legal and other requirements.

4.3   Lead funder model

Where organisations receive funding from more than one part of the same funding body, it is good practice wherever practicable to appoint a lead funder to co-ordinate monitoring and inspection arrangements. This will rationalise both the administrative requirements on funding bodies and control the burden on recipients of funds. Where appropriate, where directorates are looking to commission similar or overlapping similar outcomes, these outcomes will be commissioned jointly with one directorate acting as the lead funder.

4.4   Improving Procurement support for the Third Sector

Competitive procurement processes are most appropriately used to ensure value for money in the purchase of services where any of the following apply:

- the service market is contestable (i.e. there is a range of possible suppliers);
- the type and level of service and its outcomes are clearly defined; and
- the specific service to be provided is a statutory obligation or otherwise required.

Where appropriate, steps will be taken to ensure that the tendering process is accessible to a wide range of Third Sector organisations.

Levelling the playing field

When setting criteria for the evaluation of quotations/ tenders, commissioners should ensure that they do not preclude groups from applying by setting unnecessary restrictions, particularly where these organisations can contribute significantly to achieving best value. NCC will therefore find ways to encourage them to tender, whilst maintaining a fair and transparent process.

However, there are other actions which can be taken to improve the chances of the Third Sector being able to compete equally with other potential providers. In many cases these will overlap with actions already identified to open up service markets to small and medium sized enterprises more broadly. These might include:

- the splitting of some contacts into lots, to ensure the resulting supply meets the needs of the whole community, including niche provision for specific groups within that community where necessary, as long as this

does not increase overall cost or break EU Procurement rules on disaggregation;

- social and environmental clauses included in contracts, where permissible, to encourage supply which is sensitive to the needs of the locality and linked to the wider objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement; and
- main suppliers encouraged to sub-contract locally where appropriate via use of evaluation criteria that recognises the economic and social benefits to the local community.

Commissioners and the local Third Sector should jointly consider, as part of the implementation of this framework, whether there are any other barriers to Third Sector delivery which may need to be addressed. For example, consideration may be given to whether there are any requirements in our standard contracts that act as a barrier to Third Sector organisations.

Commissioners will proactively consider Third Sector organisations when developing tenders and embed the principles outlined above into existing practice.

5. ENSURING DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY

Effective relations with the Third Sector need to be underpinned by strong and strategic leadership within the Council. While it is recognised that the Community Partnerships team will co-ordinate the delivery of this strategy, research suggests that a cross-departmental approach is necessary to and ensure that the principles outlined are truly embedded within an organisation.

NCC will establish a Corporate Third Sector Group that provides this leadership, from all relevant directorates – building on the approach used to develop this framework. This group will be responsible for ensuring that all investment in the Third Sector takes place within a corporate framework. A standardised, clear and consistent approach and one message to the Third Sector will create efficiencies within NCC and improve communications between it and the Third Sector.

5.1   Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of this strategy will be evaluated through the development of performance indicators (mainly composing National Indicator 7 'An environment for a thriving Third Sector').

An Action plan containing detailed activities to turn the Strategy into action will be produced annually.

An annual report to the Cabinet will be produced outlining actions and achievements against this strategy and highlighting any concerns about its implementation.

It should be recognised that Implementing the framework should impact favourably on other National Indicators, not just NI 7. For example there should be a positive outcome in relation to NI 6 Participation in regular volunteering.

5.2   Support for NCC Staff

Guidance, support or training will be developed for commissioners to ensure they understand this new approach. The effectiveness of the training will be continually assessed and feedback from the Third Sector will be sought to evaluate it.

5.3   Next Steps

Pooling or aligning budgets

A longer-term objective for NCC is to pool budgets across departments and ultimately partners where it makes strategic sense in order to achieve better outcomes. There are already opportunities and examples of practice moving in this direction and this strategy will enable NCC to pursue this further.

A copy of this Strategy is available on NCC's website at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk

For further information or to request a hard copy, please contact:

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Akin Adepoju
June 2010

Appendix 1

Glossary of Terms

Commissioning Framework	A systematic and consistent approach to analysing, planning, procuring, monitoring and evaluating services that are needed to meet strategic policy outcomes
Co-production	Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours.
Consultation	The process of asking for views and opinions.
Contract	An agreement between two or more organisations that is written and enforced by law.
Funding agreements	Funding agreements is an agreement between the funder and the recipient setting out the terms and conditions and levels of service to be delivered by the recipient.
Infrastructure Support	Infrastructure comprises the facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that enable organisations to deliver their objectives more effectively.
Infrastructure Organisations	Organisations that give support to other Third Sector organisations for example by offering advice about funding, setting up voluntary groups, information and representation. Also known as umbrella bodies or second tier organisations.
Northamptonshire Partnership	Brings together the main statutory service providers in the borough as well as representatives from the Third Sector and the business sectors in order to work together to improve outcomes for local residents. The Partnership is made up of a Board, an Executive and thematic partnerships.
Northamptonshire Sustainable Communities Strategy	Sets out the long term vision for Northamptonshire and how County-wide priorities will be achieved.
Local Area Agreement (LAA)	An agreement between the Government and NCC setting out local priority outcomes, performance standards and targets.
Outcomes	Changes brought about by activities of an organisation, or partnership.
Personalisation	The way in which services are tailored to the needs and preferences of citizens.
Procurement	When a public sector organisation buys goods and services.
Proportionality	In regard to monitoring requirements: taking a

	common sense approach to prevent a disproportionately large (or small) amount of monitoring.
Soft market testing	The opportunity to speak with any known providers of the outcomes being sought and for the providers to consider how goods or services might be delivered without making commitments to enter into contractual arrangements
Value for money	In the context of a procurement process, it means choosing the most economically advantageous tender. This is not necessarily the lowest price.