

To: Pete Aley
Head of Communities – PCC

Dear Pete,

CASAP response to Priorities and Budgets consultation feedback 12/13

In response to the opportunity to respond to the progress you outline in the above document, please find CASAP's reply below:

A Co-operative Council

CASAP welcomes the commitment to this model and looks forward to working with PCC to develop its approach. We similarly look forward to working with you to strengthen the VCS across Plymouth. This will need careful prioritisation of investment, take time and require additional collaborative efforts.

The facilitation of communities shaping its own assets and the growth of VCS organisations at community level will need the deployment of Neighbourhood/Community Development workers, to maximise the prospect of fulfilling potential gains.

Commitment to supporting Social Enterprise Development and transfer of assets to the community

We welcome your stated aim of improving VCS infrastructure and capacity across the City and will look forward to working with you jointly on this.

The transfer of assets to the community will need underpinning by careful planning and full strategic engagement with the sector. This area of work will benefit from assimilation of lessons learnt and good practice from other Councils and sectoral bodies.

Supporting Communities

We acknowledge the progress made in supporting communities, recognising the focus on promoting cohesion, inclusion and removing inequalities. The VCS across Plymouth makes an important contribution to this area of work.

Mitigating Welfare Reform

We value the recognition you give to some of the key VCS 'players' in this area of work and concur with your need to raise staff awareness and profiling of potential impacts. However, this educative process needs to reach small, neighbourhood based groups who play an important role in delivering and/or signposting to Welfare programmes and who deal with large numbers of vulnerable children and adults.

The idea of exploring Libraries as community hubs will benefit from a greater degree of development through the strategic engagement of VCS across the City.

Working in Partnership

CASAP fully supports co-operative and collaborative ways of cross sector working to achieve pan City aims and objectives. Budget scrutiny and clear links to priorities for spend will continue to influence new delivery methods and approaches to delivery, through greater degrees of collectivism.

We would encourage PCC and its wider partners to use CASAP as the vehicle and conduit through which to work with VCS in the City to develop services, structures and delivery methods.

Given the LSP is now moribund, there remains the need to develop a key cross sector strategic way of working across the City. The VCS is keen to make a full contribution to city development.

Improving procurement methods.

CASAP is not convinced that Sell2Plymouth is the most effective, efficient or user friendly way of enabling business to be conducted.

We welcome PCCs obligation to consider Social Value, from January 2013, in its procurement processes and would further highlight the benefits of using local service deliverers to retain skills in the City; develop local expertise; make best use of local intelligence and promote continuity of service.

Many VCS organisations feel that tendering timescales are too short and do not promote and/or enable collaborative approaches. Long term relationships built on trust are beneficial to all parties concerned.

Miscellaneous

CASAP believes the local market economy and VCS continues to benefit from a diversity of funding types. We see the re-instatement and promotion of grant funding (with clear
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Outcomes) as an appropriate way of meeting VCS needs, as well as providing PCC with a rich base of service deliverers. Grant funding complements the commissioning processes to good effect and gives good additionality.

CASAP also recognises the as yet untapped benefits from better co-ordination and planned usage of VCS monies across the City in order to better align with PCC Corporate Plan. It will be keen to develop an approach with PCC to tackle this issue in the coming year.

CASAP would also welcome the opportunity to explore the need for a VCS 'seat' on the Health and Wellbeing Joint Commissioning Board. This would facilitate full engagement with the sector and enable it to contribute to strategic and operational decisions that help shape and inform service delivery.