



STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

VOLUNTARY SECTOR SUPPORT FUND - REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Background to the VSSF review

There is an opportunity to change the way Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council spends money to support voluntary and community sector partners. This spending recognises the value of the third sector in assisting the Council to achieve the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. We would benefit greatly from your advice to help us shape our future decisions.

The key support that the Council currently provides is grant aid, called The Voluntary Sector Support Fund (VSSF). This questionnaire is the first stage in a review to consider how the Council's decision-making process and priorities for spending could change on this specific fund of money. Please share your opinions with us by returning this questionnaire in the free-post envelope provided by 29th May 2009. If you would like an electronic version of this questionnaire, please access the Stockton Council Website www.stockton.gov.uk/VSSF or alternatively email community.development@stockton.gov.uk.

The Objectives of the VSSF Review

The Voluntary Sector Support Fund during 2009/10 amounts to £550,000. Of this, **£430,000** is the Council's own money and this is the likely budget for all future years beyond April 2010. Currently grant aid from this fund supports the work of ten organisations. The Council is keen to ensure this money continues to be put to the very best use and has agreed three key objectives to help shape the review:

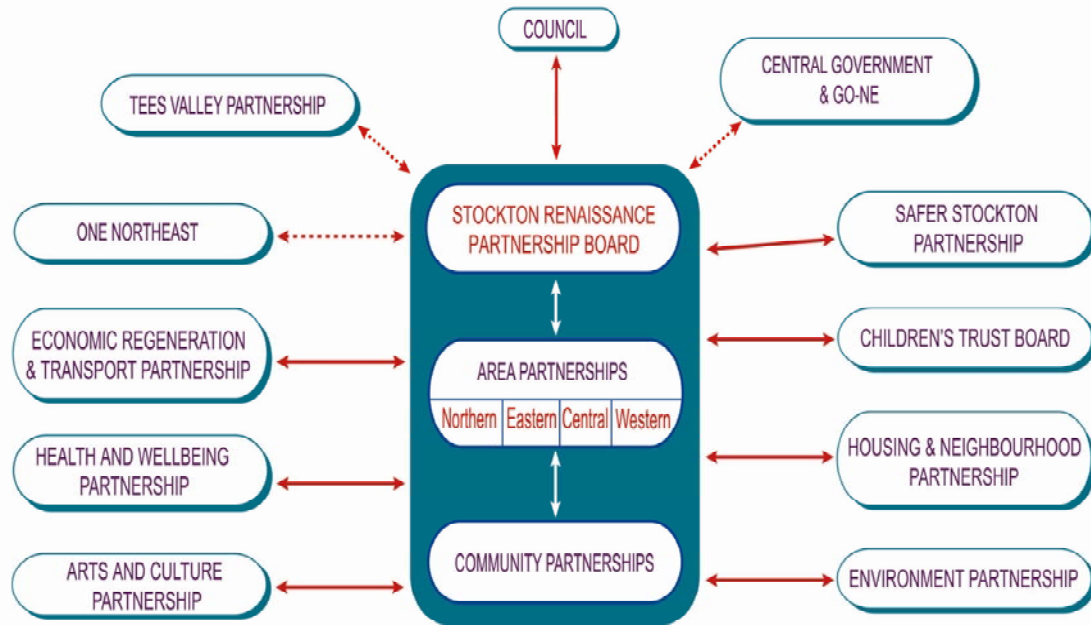
- **Objective 1 – Consolidate the Borough's strategic infrastructure**

Experience in Stockton and nationally demonstrates that strong strategic infrastructure is key to creating an environment for a vibrant and thriving third sector. The principle objective of the 2009 review therefore must be to allocate adequate resources to fund the Borough's infrastructure organisations, namely Catalyst and SRCGA. This is likely to cost £115,000 annually.

The Community Empowerment Network (CEN) underpins Stockton's approach to engaging with residents across the Borough. It was initially financed by a specific Government Grant, which has subsequently been reduced and finally withdrawn. The CEN is important to the functioning of Stockton Renaissance, the local strategic partnership for the Borough. It is the principal means of ensuring residents are adequately informed and empowered to participate in area and thematic partnerships, and to become representatives on the Renaissance Partnership Board itself. No alternative funding can be identified beyond March 2010 other than incorporating this work into the Voluntary Sector Support Fund. Historically this has cost £100,000+ annually.

It could cost up to £215,000 of the £430,000 available to properly support the Borough's strategic infrastructure, leaving £215,000 to support activity (at 2009/10 prices). Sharing your opinion on the following options will help the Council prioritise this spending:

Local Strategic Partnership - Structure



- **Objective 2 - Create a more flexible support fund**

The second objective of the VSSF review is to consider more flexible means of support to the changing needs of Stockton's Voluntary and Community Sectors. For example this is why we are asking your opinion on the need for an emergency/loans fund for the sector.

- **Objective 3 – Measuring the contribution of the 3rd Sector**

The third key objective of the 2009 VSSF review is to demonstrate clearly the direct and indirect contributions from the investment of VSSF to helping the Council and Renaissance achieve their respective aims.

The Options

Please help us shape our future decisions concerning the Voluntary Sector Support Fund (VSSF) by responding to the following questions. The list of options is not exhaustive and we will be running feedback sessions to support the questionnaire. We want as many groups to respond as possible, so please pass a copy of this questionnaire to colleagues you know haven't received it.

Please let us have your contact details:

Contact Details	
Name:	
Organisation:	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Email Address:	

This is optional, but it is helpful if you can provide some information about yourself: (Please tick the most appropriate box)

Is this response your opinion as an individual or on behalf of a group/organisation?			
A. Individual Reply	<input type="checkbox"/>	B. On behalf of a group/Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you selected B, please tell us the name of your group/organisation:			

Are you?	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Your Age:	16 or under	<input type="checkbox"/>	17 – 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
	20 – 29	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 – 39	<input type="checkbox"/>
	40 – 49	<input type="checkbox"/>	50 – 59	<input type="checkbox"/>
	60 – 74	<input type="checkbox"/>	75 or over	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ethnic Origin:	Asian or Asian British		
	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Any other Asian background, please specify:		
	Black or Black British		
	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	African	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Any other Black background, please specify:		
	Other ethnic groups		
	Arab	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Gypsy/Romany/Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Any other background, please specify:		
Mixed background			
White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>		
White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>		
White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any other mixed background, please specify:			
White			
English	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other British	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Any other white background, please specify:			

1 - Using the VSSF to secure accreditation for third sector groups

There is an opportunity to use a sum of the VSSF to support community organisations to achieve a recognised national standard e.g. Community Matters “Becoming Visible Standards”. Achieving this standard can help community organisations to:-

“Secure a framework for development. Give Management Committees early warning of potential problems. Provide evidence of the breadth & quality of the organisations work. Give comfort to existing and potential funders)” (from *Community Matters – Becoming Visible website*)

For more information on becoming visible visit www.visiblecommunities.org.uk

1. How strongly do you agree that investing VSSF resources on helping organisations meet a recognised national standard e.g. the Community Foundation’s “Becoming Visible Standards”, would be a worthwhile investment?

Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 - Using VSSF to strengthen governance arrangement throughout the sector

Governance arrangements are the processes and policies a community group or association need to have in place to make that organisation run efficiently and legally. New legislation, good practice and advice is published regularly, keeping up to date can be difficult. "Governance" covers a range of topics including: -

Employing staff; having proper health & safety policies and procedures; equality for all; managing the organisations finances; proper and adequate insurance; business planning etc.

2A. How strongly do you agree that spending an element of the VSSF money on strengthening governance support throughout the Borough's third sector is a good use of resources?

Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2B. If you agree or strongly agree that spending an element of the VSSF money on strengthening governance support throughout the Borough's third sector is a good use of resources would you benefit on help and advice on the topics set out below:-

Being an effective committee member	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Being a good employer	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Managing finances	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Business planning & development	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Human resources	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Legal matters	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Building leases and trustees	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Health & safety policies and procedures	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Fund raising	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Insurance	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other	

3 - Using VSSF to provide a flexible grant fund

A number of our neighbouring Tees Valley Authorities have invested funding to provide a grant fund to support voluntary and community sector groups and organisations. Using VSSF in this way could encourage innovation and support new activity. Applications to the fund would be assessed against agreed and clear eligibility criteria and assessed against the proposals contribution towards achieving the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy. It is likely that any grant awarded would be for an agreed time period rather than indefinite.

3A. How much do you agree that an element of the VSSF should support a flexible grant fund to support 3rd sector activity and development? The grant fund would be administered via an open application process and assessed against a clear and stated set of objectives.				
Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

IF YOU DO NOT AGREE THAT AN ELEMENT OF THE VSSF SHOULD SUPPORT A FLEXIBLE GRANT FUND PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 4

3B. If you agree that there is value in a VSSF funded flexible grant fund, who should make the decision on specific applications?				
Councillors	Council Officers	Councillors & Officers	Voluntary Sector Representatives	A mix of all three
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3C. How much do you agree that if there is value in a VSSF funded flexible grant fund that it should particularly seek to encourage innovation within the sector?				
Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 - Using VSSF to provide an emergency/loan fund

Cash flow is always an issue for third sector groups and organisations. The Council is occasionally asked to step in and provide a loan to see a third sector through a cash flow hiatus. Could a specific fund be useful for organisations to draw upon in times of acute cash flow difficulty? Pay back terms would be explicit including the development of a robust financial plan from the outset.

4. How much do you agree that there is a need for a loan/emergency fund that third sector organisations could draw up on to help alleviate cash flow problems?

Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 - Using VSSF to provide a small grants fund for new and developing groups

An element of VSSF could be directed to support the development of new community groups and associations or encourage new project activity by way of a small grants fund.

5A. How much do you agree that there is a need for the VSSF to fund a small grants pot, particularly targeted at developing groups/organisations or to encourage new project activity?

Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5B. If you agree that there is need for the VSSF to fund a small grants pot should there be a limit on the size of grant available?

<£1000	< £2000	< £3,000	<£4,000	Other amount. Please specify
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6 – Using the VSSF to support volunteering bureau for the Borough

An element of VSSF could be directed to support the development and delivery of a volunteering bureau for the Borough

6. How strongly do you agree that an element of the VSSF should support the establishment and delivery of a volunteering bureau for the Borough?

Agree Strongly	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7 – Community Empowerment Network

How would you prefer to influence decision making on services in the borough within the following partnerships?

Please indicate your 1st, 2nd and 3rd preferred option

7.A Area partnerships

The Area Partnership Boards bring together representatives from the voluntary and community sector, local business, local agencies and residents associations to give local people a chance to influence services provided within their area.

Sitting on the partnership board	
Attendance at events including themed workshops	
Questionnaires	
Website forums	
Social networking sites i.e. facebook	
Viewpoint panel	
Text Alerts	
Email Alerts	
Other (please give details)	

7. B Thematic partnerships (i.e. the Safer Stockton Partnership, Environment Partnership etc see diagram)

The Thematic Partnerships are contained within the Stockton Renaissance Partnership structure.

Sitting on the partnership board	
Attendance at events including themed workshops	
Questionnaires	
Website forums	
Social networking sites i.e. facebook	
Viewpoint panel	
Text Alerts	
Email Alerts	
Other (please give details)	

7.C Stockton Renaissance Partnership Board

Stockton Renaissance is made up of representatives from all sectors. This includes the voluntary and community sector, local agencies such as Cleveland Police and North Tees and Teaching Primary Care Trust, local ward Councillors, local businesses and Members of Parliament. These partners work to promote economic, environmental and social well-being in the Borough. Through partnership working, Stockton Renaissance ensures that local needs and priorities are met.

Sitting on the partnership board	
Attendance at events including themed workshops	
Questionnaires	
Website forums	
Social networking sites i.e. facebook	
Viewpoint panel	
Text Alerts	
Email Alerts	
Other (please give details)	

7.D If you were to represent your community or voluntary sector on a partnership board what kind of support would you need?

Please indicate your 1st, 2nd and 3rd preferred option

Stockton Renaissance Partnership Board	
Introductory meeting	
Training	
Pre agenda meetings	
Travel expenses	
Out of pocket expenses	
ICT support i.e. access to internet/laptop	
Exchange visits to other areas	
Leaflets/Newsletters	
Themed group discussions	
Email alerts	
Text alerts	
Other (please give details)	

7.E How would you prefer to receive information on partnership working?

Please indicate your 1st, 2nd and 3rd preferred option

Stockton Renaissance Partnership Board	
Attendance at events	
Questionnaires	
Website	
Social networking sites i.e. facebook	
Twitter	
Blogs	
Leaflets/Newsletters	
Email alerts	
Text alerts	
Other (please give details)	

8 – Prioritising Expenditure

Please review your answers to the preceding questions in order to consider how you would prioritise VSSF expenditure. Please attribute a percentage to as many of the options set out below as you choose, **please do not attribute more than 100% to your combined choices.**

8.A Using VSSF to secure accreditation for 3rd sector groups warrants an investment of VSSF of % of the fund available:-

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.B Using VSSF to strengthen governance arrangements throughout the sector warrants an investment of % of the fund available:-

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.C Using VSSF to provide a flexible grant fund warrants an investment of % of the fund available:-

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.D Using VSSF to provide an emergency/loan fund warrants an investment of % of the fund available:-

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.E Using VSSF to provide a small grants fund for new and developing groups warrants an investment of % of the fund available:-

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.F Using VSSF to support a Volunteering Bureau for the Borough warrants an investment of % of the fund available:-

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please return this form by 29th May 2009 in the free-post envelope provided. If you would like an electronic version of this questionnaire, please access the Stockton Council Website at www.stockton.gov.uk/VSSF or alternatively email community.development@stockton.gov.uk. Thank you very much for your help.