

PRESS INFORMATION issued by Shropshire Council

Voluntary and Community Sector Annual Assembly a great success

More than 100 of Shropshire's voluntary and community groups and organisations came together on the 30th June for the third Voluntary and Community Sector Annual Assembly. The event was timely. The Government has recently highlighted the importance of the voluntary sector in helping to achieve its vision of a 'Big Society', where people come together to take responsibility to solve problems and improve life for themselves and for their communities.

Kim Ryley, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council, addressed the delegates and called for the Voluntary and Community Sector to "talk with one voice" and to work with Shropshire Council to "get the delivery of public services right for the people of Shropshire".

This message was reinforced by the Deputy Chief Executive of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) who spoke about the importance of partnership, and working to support those who are most vulnerable to protect them from the impact of the funding cuts now being made by the new Government.

Councillor Martin Bennett, Shropshire's Champion for the Third Sector delivered some important messages regarding the strengths of the Voluntary and Community Sector, such as being able to adapt to change and think creatively. Although many of the groups and organisations that form the sector are small he said "if people think that you are too small to be effective, they have never been in bed with a mosquito."

The event was described by one delegate as "very interesting, informative and impressive". Elaine Griffiths, from the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly, said: "Feedback from attendees at this year's Assembly has been really positive. The day has reinforced the opportunities for partnership working that exist within the county, and highlighted the big issues that will need attention over the coming months."

Information on Shropshire's Compact was also available at the event. Sarah Dodds, Shropshire Council's Compact Officer, explains: "the Compact sets out the shared values and principles of working together for Shropshire Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector. It covers funding, volunteering, equality and diversity, and consultation. The Compact is a way of working and there is considerable commitment in Shropshire to making the relationships between the Public Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector work, despite the challenging times we now face".

The Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Assembly enables VCS organisations to come together to discuss common issues, develop shared strategies and plans and support each other in delivering services to a range of vulnerable and priority groups within in the county. The Assembly supports joint

working with local partnership such as the Shropshire Partnership and also with individual public sector bodies such as Shropshire Council and Shropshire County Primary Care Trust.

Membership of the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly is free of charge to all local voluntary and community groups. To find out more contact the VCS Assembly Coordinator based within the Partnership Team at Shropshire Council on 01743 252740 or email shropshire.partnership@shropshire.gov.uk.