

## **Do or die – how to survive cuts and recession**

Ideas from some local voluntary groups to balance certainty with uncertainty so you might survive the impact of external economic and political factors and your ability to respond to community needs.

### **What's most important to do?**

- as far as practical, plan for the different possible scenarios and their consequences
- within a clear view of what the agency is there for
- have bottom lines of what must be preserved, without which the organisation will have failed in its purpose
- create a tolerance of ambiguity, using panic and chaos productively
- be not afraid, and be prepared to die if necessary!

In this, pay attention to.....

### **The heart of the matter:**

- update the vision, purpose and principles to uphold whilst navigating the external world
- decide what are your bottom lines and what you are not prepared to do, whatever the apparent benefits
- ensure that community needs/purpose is not compromised by safeguarding organisational needs
- take a hard look at current organisational shape and practices to see if organisational form supports purpose and principles
- provide for the necessary core to support bottom lines.

**Talk sooner rather than later** to your clients, communities and other constituencies; and to staff/volunteers/trustees ....take all those affected along on the journey, they can help and have a right to know about, and influence, your decisions and reactions. Keep to a spirit and practice of team working.

### **Be proactive as well as reactive – be creative and entrepreneurial.**

Be prepared to “sell the stairs” in order to keep to your heart and soul. Work co-operatively with others, particularly other agencies, to find solutions. Challenge and avoid competition. Don't accept forms of denial (“We're okay at the moment”....”we've always had to deal with uncertainty, what's the big deal”). Tackle crisis with common sense – it's just another planning opportunity. Ensure flexibility and opportunism within planning.

**Acknowledge and make use of differences of opinion in how to use scarce resources –** creativity and new paths can arise from breaking patterns of routine. Acknowledge any negatives: worry, panic, self-interest, uncertainty, loss.

**Keep on top of current and emerging public policies** and how these might affect your interests.

**Chase the money, but not if it stops your heart beating.** Build a mixed funding base to spread the risks. Draw on non-monetary resources and remember the charitable trusts as a source of money. Consider self-funding, but decide the principles behind this.