

Report to Active and Cohesive Overview & Scrutiny Committee
25 February 2014
Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP)

1. Background:

- 1.1 The initial concept of the PSCiP programme at the outset was aimed at recognising the potential of significant savings for all countywide partners involved in the collaboration process when commissioning from the voluntary/third sector across Staffordshire.
- 1.2 At this time, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (NuLBC), had already launched and was successfully working within its own protocols and procedures linked to its 'third sector commissioning framework' a framework that was shared and adopted by a number of public sector organisations.
- 1.3 NuLBC in collaborating with the County Council and PCTs as part of the PSCiP programme have been the only district to identify the benefits of such work, with a number of similar authorities monitoring outcomes as the work develops and contracts are let.
- 1.4 As part of the work, NuLBC retain the responsibility for needs analysis, priority setting, determining the service they want and will be involved in shaping the service specifications/outlines to make sure they meet their needs.
- 1.5 NuLBC officers are an integral part of the PSCiP commissioning/tender process, they will also have a voice as part of the ongoing monitoring process following mobilisation of new contracts ensuring any issues linked to performance with the successful service provider are reviewed and appropriately responded to.
- 1.6 Officers at NuLBC continue to contribute, support and maintain a profile as part of the work of PSCiP programme, albeit the focus for Newcastle has been linked to two specific service areas: Infrastructure Support & Volunteering Service and Debt, Benefits and Consumer Advice.
- 1.6 A contract for Infrastructure Support & Volunteering Service was awarded to Voluntary Action Stoke-on-Trent (VAST) in April 2013 as a result of the PSCiP programme.

2. Benefits from the programme:

- 2.1 It is believed that shared commissioning will create efficiencies for public sector organisations through back office rationalisation including finance, legal, admin, commissioning, procurement and performance management. Whilst these efficiencies would be significant for larger public sector organisations, in terms of staff resource district borough councils - with smaller investment levels - should also see a reduction in staff time currently committed to all elements of the commissioning/grant process although on a smaller scale. There may also be possibilities to deliver additional services in some areas of the service outlines.

- 2.2 The economies of scale and collective bargaining power of a shared approach should also improve value for money e.g. same level of service at a reduced contract value or increased service levels for the same contract value. This will be particularly important in the current climate of budget reductions.
- 2.3 Robust performance management will improve accountability ensuring services are delivered that meet organisational priorities and community need and this will also provide evidence to support future strategic planning e.g. identifying groups/areas for differential targeted delivery.
- 2.4 The commitment to a partnership approach has brought significant benefits including removing duplication of services and sharing expertise and best practice. More than that it defines the commitment to transparency and equity in commissioning and shows a readiness to adapt in a changing environment in order to continue to secure essential services.
- 2.5 Shared commissioning also creates opportunities for back office efficiencies for third sector organisations particularly the larger organisations. Shared processes will make it easier and less resource intensive to identify opportunities, complete the application process and the performance management returns required. It could also offer real opportunities to work collaboratively.

3. Commissioned Services Outline:

- 3.1 As indicated in para 1.5 (above) NuLBC's focus as part of the ongoing engagement process has been linked to two specific service areas:

- **Infrastructure Support and Volunteering Service**
- **Debt, Benefits and Consumer Information and Advice Services**

- 3.2 ***Infrastructure Support and Volunteering Service:***

NuLBC has, over the past five years, funded infrastructure service support at an amount of £12,000 per annum and agreed as part of the PSCiP programme to transfer such funds as part of the collaborative delivery of the service.

- 3.2.1 This contract was awarded to VAST and delivery commenced April 2013.

- 3.2.2 During 2013-14, the project has delivered events and given support to organisations as planned, and has undergone reviews with the county monitoring group (including the involvement of an officer from Newcastle). Also, there have been meetings held at the Civic offices with officers of VAST to look at ongoing support and delivery in the borough.

- 3.3 ***Debt, Benefits and Consumer Information and Advice Services***

NuLBC has, over the past 5 years, funded debt, benefits and consumer advice and the amount for 2013-14 is £149,999 per annum. The service previously delivered under separate contracts by Age UK and CAB has been delivered collaboratively by the two organisations since 2012 with CAB acting as the lead organisation (until the re-commissioning of the service is completed as part of the PSCiP programme).

- 3.3.1 Officers of the Council have, again at the outset of the collaborative process, worked with commissioning colleagues as part of needs analysis, priority setting and determining service outcomes, developing the service specification/outline before this went out to market.
- 3.3.2 The opportunity advertised through the County Council's electronic procurement platform generated considerable interest with a number of organisations viewing the specification/service outline, albeit on the closing date for completed submissions, only two responses were received.
- 3.3.3 The two submissions were evaluated by a panel of five officers, (including an officer from NuLBC) who were supported by a representative from the County procurement department (who also facilitated moderation with the group on completion of the initial evaluation).
- 3.3.4 As part of the evaluation process one tenderer was invited and delivered a presentation on their proposal to the evaluation team.
- 3.3.5 On announcement of the result, the unsuccessful provider (as part of a standstill period) was offered a full debrief of their submission.
- 3.3.6 The successful provider - Staffordshire South West Citizens Advice Bureau - will commence delivery of the contract on the 3 March 2014 at a total budget of £675,815. Officers from the county and the borough have worked closely with the successful provider as part of the action planning process to address areas of clarification/concern during January and February 2014 to provide reassurances of the ability to deliver the service from March.
- 3.3.7 The service contains several elements:
- Telephone contact centre -operating on three sites in the county, one of them being in Newcastle (Wells Street), from the Staffordshire North and Stoke Bureau
 - Face to face delivery will be funded to all 8 district bureaux, including the Wells Street bureau - this will mean a total of 150 of the most vulnerable service users are provided with generalist and special casework by referral from the contact centre annually
 - Provision of a generalist advice service delivery within the Newcastle-under-Lyme District providing a minimum of 45 hours per week (including 20 hours of advice for older persons delivered by AgeUK) that includes outreach sessions at Kidsgrove and Madeley, and an additional telephone advice service of 16 hours per week.
- 3.3.8 For the borough the funded provision of £131,386 from Newcastle Borough Council ensures delivery and access of a service to local residents as in previous years.
- 3.3.9 The successful provider has accepted an invite from officers to attend this scrutiny meeting, on 25 March 2014, and to give a presentation to Members linked to delivery of the service in the borough.

4. Issues

- 4.1 At the end of March 2014 the funding from Public Health to deliver 'Advice in Healthcare Settings' will cease for the Staffordshire North and Stoke Bureau, as it will in the Staffordshire Moorlands area. The result for Newcastle residents will be no outreach advice sessions delivered from various places, such as GP surgeries within the borough. The outcome of this decision may impact on the demand for the advice from this service during 2014-15.
- 4.2 The service provider will continue to respond to requests from residents of the borough linked to 'Debt, Benefits and Consumer' information advice and it is anticipated that faced with current economic conditions, demand for the service will remain high. The new telephone service, which is intended to deliver advice on a triage basis, will be able to deal with many enquiries at first point of contact. NuLBC propose to continue local monitoring of demand and review the contract delivery with the successful service provider.

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