

Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP)

Update to the Active and Cohesive Scrutiny Committee

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Introduction

To present to the Committee an update on the progress of the PSCiP programme.

Background

PSCiP was aimed at recognising the potential of significant savings for all countywide partners involved in commissioning from the voluntary/third sector across Staffordshire. In collaborating with the County Council and the then Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) as part of the PSCiP programme, NULBC have been the only district to enjoy the benefits of such work, with a number of similar authorities monitoring outcomes as the work develops and contracts are let.

As part of the work, NULBC retained responsibility to determine the service it wants and was involved in shaping the service specifications/outlines to make sure they meet local needs.

NULBC officers were an integral part of the PSCiP commissioning/tender process, and continue to have a voice as part of the ongoing monitoring process following mobilisation of the new contracts ensuring any issues linked to performance with the successful service provider are reviewed and appropriately responded to.

Officers at NULBC continue to contribute, support and maintain a profile as part of the work of PSCiP, albeit the focus for Newcastle has been linked to two specific service areas: Infrastructure Support & Volunteering Service awarded to VAST and Debt, Benefits and Consumer Advice Staffordshire South West Citizens Advice Bureau.

Members of this Scrutiny Committees have received presentations by both providers prior to the commencement of each contract.

Progress update for the commissioned services:

As indicated 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**

Infrastructure Support and Volunteering Service

Since May 2013, VAST have been commissioned to provide infrastructure and volunteering support across Staffordshire. Infrastructure support involves strategic engagement and representation for local voluntary sector groups and organisations, as well as one-to-one development and support for issues such as business planning, fundraising etc. VAST support volunteering by providing organisations with advice and guidance as well as helping to match volunteers with local opportunities. In addition they support voluntary organisations to become 'volunteer ready' by providing support with recruiting and managing volunteers.

The cost of delivery for Newcastle was £12,000 per annum for an initial period of two years with an option to extend. The County and Borough Councils have recently agreed to extend the contract for a further twelve months to the end of April 2016 and the contribution by this Council remains at £12,000 for the period.

Staffordshire County Council is now looking to re-commission its support for the voluntary sector in Staffordshire from May 2016. A Prior Information Notice was recently issued by the County Council describing their intention to tender. Also, over the coming weeks and months there is planned engagement and consultation by the county with partners in the public and private sector about how best to commission this support moving forward. This Council has participated in this process and responded to the County Council with a statement of its views.

Interested parties will be invited to a market feedback session in the coming months to discuss the potential specification and to provide an opportunity to ask any further questions. The Borough Council intends to be further involved in the planned engagement at this time. A decision as to whether to collaborate on a future infrastructure project with the County Council will be considered at a later date.

The project continues to report to and attend reviews with the county monitoring group (including the involvement of officers from the Borough Council). Added to this, there have been meetings held at the Civic offices with officers of VAST to look at ongoing support and delivery in the borough. Currently VAST is also supporting delivery of the Newcastle Partnership Commissioning Prospectus. Officers would be happy to provide members of Scrutiny with an update of the work at future meetings.

An appendix detailing the quarter four information and delivery by VAST is attached.

Debt, Benefits and Consumer Information and Advice Services

A contract for Debt, Benefit, Information and Advice Service was awarded to Staffordshire South West Citizens Advice Bureau in March 2014 at a total budget of £675,815. The funded provision of £131,386 per annum from Newcastle Borough Council ensures delivery and access of a service to local residents as in previous years for an initial period of two years with an option to extend.

Officers from the County and Borough Councils have worked with the successful provider during the initial year of delivery, undertaking regular reviews and development of the delivery and reporting systems. At the last review meeting it was reported that the telephone contact centres were working well and a total of 2407 users have utilised the Newcastle

service 2014-15. The issues dealt with by the service for clients, remain highest in the areas of Benefits, tax credits and debt.

An appendix detailing the information and delivery in 2014-15 for Newcastle by the Bureaux is attached.

A decision as to whether we extend the contract in 2016 will be considered at a later date.

Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)

Cllr Elizabeth Shenton– Policy, People and Partnerships