

**Report to Active and Cohesive Overview & Scrutiny Committee
29 August 2013**

Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP)

1. Background:

- 1.1 The initial concept of the PSCiP programme at the outset was initiated by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's (NuLBC) Chief Executive at the time recognising the potential of significant savings for all partners involved in the collaboration process when commissioning from the voluntary/third sector.
- 1.2 At the time NuLBC had already launched and were 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 PCT's as part of the PSCiP programme have been the only district to identify the benefits of such work, with a number of like authorities monitoring outcomes as the work develops and contracts are let.
- 1.4 NuLBC as part of the work 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. NuLBC officers are an integral part of the 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.
- 1.5 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.

2. Benefits from the Programme:

- 2.1 It is believed that shared commissioning will create efficiencies for public sector organisations through backoffice rationalisation including finance, legal, admin, commissioning, procurement and performance management departments. Whilst these efficiencies would be significant for larger PSO's in terms of staff resource District Councils with smaller investment levels should also see a reduction of staff time currently committed to all elements of the commissioning/grant process although on a smaller scale. There may also be possibilities to deliver additionality in some areas of the service outlines.
- 2.2 The economies of scale and collective bargaining power of a shared approach should 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 will bring significant benefits including removing duplication of services and sharing expertise and best practice. More than that it will define the commitment to transparency and equity in commissioning and show a readiness to adapt in a changing environment to continue to secure essential services.
- 2.5 Shared commissioning will also create opportunities for backoffice 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:

- 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 Advice**

3.2 Infrastructure Support and Volunteering Service:

NuLBC has over the past 4 years funded infrastructure service support at an amount of £12,000pa agreeing as part of the PSCiP programme to transfer such funds to the County as part of the collaborative delivery of the service.

3.2.1 Officers of the Council at the outset of the collaborative process worked with commissioning colleagues at the County as part of needs analysis, priority setting and determining service outcomes, developing the service specification/outline before this went out to market.

3.2.2 The opportunity advertised through the County Council's electronic procurement platform generated considerable interest with a high number of infrastructure organisations viewing the specification/service outline, albeit on the closing date for completed submissions, only two responses were received from Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Consortium of Infrastructure Organisations (SCIO) and Voluntary Action Stoke-on-Trent (VAST).

3.2.3 The two submissions were evaluated by a panel of five officers, inclusive of an officer from NuLBC; supported by a representative from the County procurement department who also facilitated moderation with the group on completion of the initial evaluation.

3.2.4 As part of the evaluation process both tenderers were invited and delivered presentations on their proposals to the evaluation team.

3.2.5 On announcement of the result, the unsuccessful provider as part of a standstill period was offered and requested feedback, subsequently requesting further review and clarification following this process.

3.2.6 The successful provider VAST commenced delivery of the contract on the 1st May, mobilisation having commenced with the provider with a number of meetings having taken place with NuLBC officers where the needs within the borough have been communicated.

3.2.7 Additionality as part of the contract has been obtained for the borough and a number of officers have in the early stages of mobilisation received a presentation and overview of the intended service to infrastructure organisations in the borough which will include:

- **Events** – minimum of 1 dedicated Newcastle event p.a.;
- **Information Dissemination** – Disseminate information from Borough Council to the VCS with a minimum of 50 ebulletins/6 newsletters p.a.
- **Support** – Minimum of 3 hours per day x 4 days per week;
- **Volunteering** – Weekly drop in session;
- **Website** – Dedicated Newcastle section;
- **Social Media** – Live Blog & discussion forum;
- **1-2-1 Development Support** – outreach at groups preferred venue;
- **VCS Representation** – Represent the VCS at strategic borough meetings.

Should members of the Active and Cohesive Overview & Scrutiny Committee wish to receive a presentation from VAST linked to the delivery of the service to the borough, officers would be willing to facilitate this.

3.2.8 VAST; following the announcements from Newcastle CVS (NCVS) has as part of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) transferred a number of former NCVS & SCIO staff into their organisation. This has effectively supported continuity of service to infrastructure organisations within the borough.

3.2.9 At a contract performance review meeting on 14 August 2013 VAST presented a progress report to officers from both County and Borough, some of the key achievements impacting on the Borough include:

- Development support to 32 groups within NUL (*note: the 32 groups supported in Newcastle is attributed to having a full time office based in the Borough as a result of NBC funding allocated to the contract*).
- Volunteering support; the total number of enquires received from Newcastle people interested in volunteering amounts to 20 since the start of the contract.
- Service continues to be delivered from 12 Andrew Place, Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- Meeting with Staffordshire Fire & Rescue service to discuss the 'Time Banking' project, being piloted in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- Meeting with the Aspire Group to discuss volunteering with the tenants of Aspire.
- The Aspire Group have signed up to VAST's 'Employee Supportive Volunteering' (ESV) programme.
- Tesco Meir & Kidsgrove are advertising volunteering to their employees through a poster campaign; this includes a total of over 500 employees.

- VAST manned a stand at the annual community event in Newcastle - Midsummer Mayhem.
- VAST to attend a jobs fair hosted by Aspire at the New Vic Theatre in September 2013 to promote volunteering.
- Marketing: The VAST service has been re-branded at the start of the new contract across the whole of Staffordshire and rolled out across all forms of communication. VAST report that their new website gives increased functionality and an ability to control all content making news stories live as soon as these are received by their organisation, the site allows users to:
 - View the Live Twitter Feed and Latest news,
 - Submit their own news stories,
 - Advertise job vacancies, submitting their own directly onto the site,
 - Promote events through the on-line calendar,
 - Participate in on-line forums,
 - Rating system for VAST's support and services,
 - To support customer service there is an area for users to submit both negative and positive feedback.

Officers can make a copy of the progress report available to members of the Active and Cohesive Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3.3 **Debt, Benefits and Consumer Advice:**

NuLBC has over the past 4 years funded Debt, Benefits and Consumer Advice at an amount of £151,386 pa. The service previously delivered under separate contracts by Age UK and CAB is now being delivered collaboratively by the two organisations 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 at the County as part of needs analysis, priority setting and determining service needs, developing the service specification to reflect the needs within the borough.

3.3.2 An Officer from the borough council has been invited and will be included as part of the evaluation and moderation panel.

3.3.3 The budget for the service is being reviewed linked to the potential of delivering savings from the collaborative work, which should release monies to be utilised on commissioning other separate service needs for the authority.

3.3.4 The service outline and evaluation criteria have been established and agreed and the opportunity has been advertised through the County Council's electronic procurement platform. This said and following a recent restructuring of staff at the County Council a new lead officer has been appointed taking on responsibility for this work and as such has resulted in a delay in the commissioning opportunity being advertised.

4. Issues:

- 4.1 The current contract linked to the delivery of Debt, Benefits and Consumer Advice is due to expire in September 2013 in anticipation of a new contract commencing from the 1st October 2013 as part of the PSCiP programme. Due to the delay indicated in para 3.3.4 NuLBC's existing collaborative contract with CAB/Age UK will be extended the provider having been informed of this decision.
- 4.2 Whilst the commissioning/procurement process for the new Debt, Benefits and Consumer Advice has been advertised through the County Council's electronic tendering platform in a transparent manner and whilst officers can inform the current incumbent/s; there is little they can do to promote the delivery of a collaborative solution (e.g. similar to the solution currently being delivered by CAB and Age UK).

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