

Report to: Health & Wellbeing Board Report of Dave Hill	Reference number HWB/023/13
Date of meeting: 21st November 2013 Date of report: 1st November 2013	County Divisions affected by the decision: All Divisions
Title of report: Essex VCS Commissioning Strategy	
Report by Dave Hill, Director of People, Essex County Council	
Enquiries to: Greg Myddelton, Senior Policy & Strategy Manager, Essex County Council	

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To inform the Health & Wellbeing Board of the public consultation underway to inform the development of the Essex VCS commissioning strategy.
- 1.2. To provide an opportunity for members of the Board to respond to the consultation and disseminate the message to their networks to ensure strategy is informed by the full range of stakeholders.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. For the Board to publicise the Strategy consultation process within their organisations and wider networks.
- 2.2. For Board members to consider the approval and governance processes required for public sector partners to formally adopt the strategy following the consultation period, and to consider developing individual action plans to deliver the objectives of the strategy.

3. Background and proposal

- 3.1. The need for a Voluntary Sector commissioning strategy was identified as part of the consultation activity for the Strengthening Communities Whole Essex Community Budget project. Members of the Essex VCS highlighted issues faced as a result of multiple engagement, and funding / commissioning processes across the public sector, observing that a consistent approach would save considerable time, effort and resources. This strategy is a direct result of that consultation activity.
- 3.2. The purpose of the strategy is to provide a consistent and clear approach to commissioning the VCS in Essex. It is a high-level strategic document that sits alongside the Essex, Southend and Thurrock Compacts and states some commitments and expectations of both sectors. It acknowledges the current financial challenges and resulting structural and organisational changes and articulates what a new relationship between the statutory and voluntary sector may look like. The strategy acknowledges the value of the VCS and attempts to create conditions that support the strengthening of local communities to respond to challenges themselves and to reduce the impact on public sector services at a time of increasing demographic pressures and reduced funding.
- 3.3. In developing this strategy, the WECB Strengthening Communities Team have engaged extensively; holding a stakeholder conference event, establishing a task and finish team, examining existing national best practice, meeting individual groups from both the public and voluntary sectors and finally publishing the draft strategy for public consultation to allow all stakeholders to share their views.
- 3.4. In line with Compact guidance, and to allow as many stakeholders as possible to contribute to the consultation, the document will be publically available via Essex Insight from 31st October 2013 until 31st January 2014. Following the conclusion of the consultation process, public-sector partners will be expected to formally adopt the strategy and develop individual action plans to deliver the objectives within the strategy. The strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remain fit for purpose and to reflect changing circumstances.

4. Policy context

- 4.1. The VCS in Essex play a significant part in designing and providing services, supporting residents, patients and families. Improving the ability of the VCS to become involved in the commissioning process will improve services, reduce duplication, and deliver better value for money. The strategy sits alongside existing organisational policies and the Essex Compact, it references Social Value, which will form an element of partners' procurement strategy and also references the work of Sir Thomas Hughes Hallett's "Who Will Care?" Commission.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. This is a high-level strategic document and does not contain any direct financial implications. It does discuss the need for future funding to be evidence-based and outcomes focused and for the need to explore alternative funding arrangements where possible and make use of economies of scale via the development of consortia and sharing best practice.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 This report has no direct legal implications. Individual commissioning decisions will continue to be taken in the context of the public procurement regime.

7. Staffing and other resource implications

- 7.1. The strategy should have no direct effect on resources.

8. Equality and Diversity implications

- 8.1. The strategy has no direct implications.

9. Background papers

- 9.1. Latest draft version of the strategy