

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 July 2013

12 MONTH REVIEW: INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP ON COMMISSIONING AND THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

[OS2](#) – Appointments to Informal Scrutiny Groups and External Bodies, 1 June 2011

[Minutes](#) of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 20 June 2011

[OS34](#) – Findings of the Informal Scrutiny Group on Commissioning and the Voluntary and Community Sector, 19 March 2012

[CAB2325](#) – Findings of the Commissioning Informal Scrutiny Group – Recommendations for Cabinet, 11 April 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report summarises the progress made in delivering the recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group on Commissioning and the Voluntary and Community Sector, as approved by Cabinet on 11 April 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee

- i) note the progress to date in implementing the recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group on Commissioning and the Voluntary and Community Sector as set out as an appendix to this report, and
- ii) raise any matters of concern with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development.

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#### DETAIL:

1. The Findings of the Informal Scrutiny Group on Commissioning and the Voluntary and Community Sector were considered and endorsed at the meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 March 2012 (Paper OS4 refers).
- 1.1 The Informal Scrutiny Group's recommendations were then referred by the Committee to Cabinet and were approved at its meeting of 11 April 2012 (CAB2325 refers)
- 1.2 This report provides a review of the progress made in delivering these recommendations, just over a year after they were approved. This update is set out as an appendix.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

#### 2 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 2.1 The subject of the Informal Scrutiny Group was directly relevant to delivery of the Economic Prosperity and Active Communities outcomes of the Winchester District Community Strategy, as well as to the corporate outcome of being an Efficient and Effective Council.

#### 3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1 There are no additional resource implications to those originally set out in Report OS24.

#### 4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 None directly arising from the monitoring of the implementation of the Informal Scrutiny Group's recommendations.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

#### APPENDICES:

Progress achieved to date in implementing the recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group on Commissioning and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

## Appendix

Progress achieved to date in implementing the recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group on Commissioning and the Voluntary and Community Sector, shown in **bold** below:

- a) The Assistant Directors should proceed with a wider review of the needs of the not-for-profit sector (including social enterprises) begun at the consultation meeting on 23 February, and work with local authority colleagues and the council for voluntary services (CVS organisations to identify the most appropriate 'package' of support;

**The Council took part in a Hampshire-wide survey of sector needs, which concluded with a number of open meetings held in September facilitated by the University of Winchester. A full copy of the report on this work can be found at:**

**<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/community-support/SupportneedsoftheVoluntaryandcommunitySector-SurveyResults2012724.doc>**

**A report went to Cabinet on 26 June 2013 taking this discussion further and seeking approval for a more focussed local consultation, prior to taking a decision in the autumn about the way the Council grant-aids Winchester Area Community Action to provide this package of support (CAB2470 refers).**

- b) At the same time, officers should work with Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) to provide additional training for the sector in identifying bidding partners, constructing strong bids, making good presentations and using the South East Business Portal (where opportunities are advertised);

**A bidding training session was organised jointly by the Council and WACA last November, and a 'Meet the Funders' seminar (attended by 120 delegates from local voluntary and community groups) included presentations and workshops on constructing strong bids for grant applications which were equally applicable to commissions. WACA has continued to run quarterly meetings of the Voluntary Sector Forum for the District, which enables local organisations to meet, network and strike up partnerships.**

- c) The Assistant Directors should roll out training for the Council's Heads of Team on commissioning best practice to enable not-for-profit organisations to bid for a wide range of opportunities;

**This has so far happened on a case-by-case basis, largely due to lack of capacity in the Assistant Directors team (having been one member down for over a year). With the appointment of two new Assistant Directors in the recent staff reorganisation, there is greater scope for taking this work forward. However, in the cases where it has been possible there have been some encouraging results – eg the youth music commission, now under way, awarded to Winnall Rock School working in partnership with SOCO from Southampton.**

- d) The Head of Corporate Communications should work with the Assistant Directors to increase the consistency, clarity and visibility of the information on the Council's website setting out the commissioning approach; actively communicate it to the sector, and enhance it, for example with tips and guidance, examples of best practice, useful contacts, answers to frequently asked questions;

**The relevant web pages were reviewed during the corporate redesign of the Council's site. Information can be found at [www.winchester.gov.uk/business/opportunities-to-work-with-the-council/commissioning-process/](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/business/opportunities-to-work-with-the-council/commissioning-process/)**

**A set of questions and answers was developed by Winchester Action on Climate Change as part of their evidence to the ISG and this has been incorporated.**

**New commissions are routinely advertised through local networks of not-for-profit organisations, including WACA's membership list.**

**There is scope to do more on the website, but the focus over the last year has been on raising awareness of these new opportunities through meetings, training sessions and the 'Meet the Funders' seminar which took place in March.**

- e) The Chief Executive should consider a more systematic approach to determining which services, projects and programmes should be subject to new forms of delivery to enhance effectiveness and value for money, rather than the current more pragmatic approach (eg based on end of existing contract, departure of a staff member);

**Following the recent staff reorganisation, a corporate programme of Transformation is beginning, led by the Performance Management Team. This will include a systematic exploration of the Council's current work, and put forward ideas for future change which will meet customer needs but also help to reduce costs in preparation for future budget reductions.**

- f) The Assistant Directors should work with the Head of Finance to strengthen the alignment between 'Expected Outcomes' in Change Plans and the commissioning approach; there should be an additional column in Change Plans providing information about how the work will be done and/or paid for.

**The format of the Change Plans continues to evolve, in line with the requirements of Cabinet. Although there is no single column in the current format which sets out funding sources, the annual Budget Book now sets out budgets against the three Community Strategy and one corporate outcome. In addition, the Cabinet paper seeking approval for the 2013/14 Change Plans included background papers which showed clearly the scale and source of funding for each action (CAB2449, Final Approval of Change Plans 2013/14 - 13 February 2013 refers) and the Change Plans were developed alongside the Budget.**

- g) The Corporate Director (Governance) should give consideration to the role of Members representing the Council on the management committees and boards of

not-for-profit organisations, in terms of disseminating information about commissions, and feeding reports about the organisations back to officers and other Members.

**Following discussion with the Head of Democratic Services, officers worked with WACA to organise a Member Training Session about the role of Members serving on external voluntary organisations. This was very well received, and it was clear that most Members were keen to play a more active role in building the relationship between the voluntary organisations and the Council. The slides have been published on the intranet for all Members, and it is suggested that this become a regular training session (eg once every two years).**

**Officers continue to consider ways to involve Members serving on external bodies in a way which draws on their knowledge. This could, for example, include a more active contribution to the core grant allocation process, similar to the system recently introduced at the County Council.**

- h) Officers responsible for drafting service level agreements should encourage funded organisations to involve and promote their initiatives to Ward Members to increase understanding of their work.

**This is now a standard paragraph within all grant funding agreements for voluntary organisations, and is routinely flagged through monitoring meetings and correspondence during the year. Many organisations are very proactive in this way.**

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