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Commissioning Services from Voluntary Organisations

Ward(s) All

Reason for scrutiny: To provide information to members about the process for commissioning services from voluntary agencies.

Portfolios: Councillor McCracken

Executive Summary:

Walsall SC&I Directorate commissions a range of services from voluntary agencies and other community based or charitable organisations (collectively known as the 'third sector'). Some services commissioned from third sector suppliers are amongst those registered with CQC as care homes or home care/supported living services, and these are commissioned as core social care services via block contracts or Framework Agreements with the support of the Council Procurement Unit.

Around £2.5 million of services per annum are commissioned by the SC&I Directorate as prevention services on the basis that a small amount of support received via local charitable, voluntary or community agencies will help people to remain independent in their own communities. The Supporting People Programme is a process of commissioning a further £6.5 million per annum of housing support services, largely from Housing Associations, that are commissioned to achieve the same aim.

As a result, many people are receiving low level support that prevents them from losing their independence to the point where they need intensive home care services or residential placements.

The commissioning of these services is conducted on the basis of a set of principles known as the Compact, which operates at both national and local level. The key features of the Compact are that there is a Service Level Agreement which is proportionate in scale and complexity to these small amounts of funding; they cover a period of three years to provide some continuity for the provider agency (and thus overcome the sense of 'hand to mouth' funding that annual grants can give); and there is an agreed set of monitoring information with which commissioners can ensure the Council is achieving Value for Money against a predetermined set of objectives for the service.

There is a need for Walsall Council to continue to support third sector agencies to become more business like so that they are able to respond appropriately and in a professional manner to the Council's commissioning and procurement processes.

Recommendations:**That:**

Scrutiny notes that there is a robust commissioning process that ensures Value for Money is achieved from third sector services.

Background papers:

None

Resource and legal considerations:

Resources: Approximately £9 million of prevention services are purchased from third sector suppliers each year by the SC&I Directorate. It is important that the Council is achieving Value for Money from the commissioning of these services.

Legal: The commissioning and procurement processes operated by the Council must meet with the legal, financial and procurement frameworks of the Council.

Citizen impact:

Many people are being supported by these low level prevention services, as a means of minimising the number of people who need intensive home care services or residential placements.

Environmental impact:

There is no environmental impact.

Performance management:

The commissioning process ensures that all third sector agencies that receive funding from the Council are required to return a set of agreed performance monitoring data on a regular basis, proportionate to the scale of the activity.

Equality Implications:

The commissioning process ensures that all third sector agencies that receive funding from the Council are required to take account of equality and diversity issues in the way they provide the service.

Consultation:

A half day conference was run by the Joint Commissioning Unit in partnership with Walsall Voluntary Action for third sector suppliers of health and social care services in July 2010. The aims of the conference were to provide information on how the commissioning and procurement processes of NHS Walsall and Walsall Council operate; the broad commissioning intentions of Walsall Council and NHS Walsall for the next three years; and the support available to third sector agencies to participate in the commissioning and procurement process.

Report Author

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