

# **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-041-2014/15  
**Date of meeting:** 3 November 2014



**Portfolio:** Leisure and Community Services  
**Subject:** Essex Voluntary and Community Sector Framework  
**Responsible Officer:** Chris Overend (01992 564247).  
**Democratic Services:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) That the District Council formally sign up to the Essex Voluntary and Community Sector Framework.**

## **Executive Summary**

The Essex Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Framework represents a new approach for public sector partners in their relationship with the VCS. It sets some expectations that the public and voluntary sectors can have of each other and how they can work together to achieve the vision of 'strong and resilient communities supported by a thriving voluntary and community sector'. It is sponsored by the Essex Compact Steering Group which is responsible for implementing the Essex Compact, the written understanding between the various partners about how they will cooperate. A copy of the full framework document is attached as an appendix to this report.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

At a time when funding for all public bodies is reducing, the need for resilient communities that can support themselves and the need for radical innovation in service design and delivery has never been greater. The sector already supports communities in areas as diverse as health and social care, the environment, sports and the arts and is an essential component of a strong and vibrant society.

## **Other Options for Action:**

Other options are to approve the Framework subject to amendment or reject the Framework.

## **Report:**

1. Essex partners (in both the public sector and the VCS) have worked together to develop a framework that supports effective working between the public sector and VCS organisations. It builds on the work of the Essex Compact but aims to go further in setting out a number of actions that will help achievement of the shared aim of strong, resilient communities supported by a thriving VCS.
2. In signing up to the Framework, public bodies would be committing to develop their own organisational strategies and policies to meet its requirements. The Framework includes

the following headings and expectations of public bodies:

- That they will respect the independence of the VCS sector;
- That they have a clear approach to commissioning and how the VCS can engage;
- That they aim to ensure a 'level playing field' for VCS organisations in their procurement processes;
- That they are clear about their joint commissioning arrangements and seek to collaborate with other public bodies where possible;
- That they have a clear and transparent approach to grant funding;
- That they are clear about how they will implement the requirements of The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012;
- That they have a single point of contact for each policy area and each procurement process;
- That they consider how they can support and strengthen the VCS and encourage tenderers to employ local residents, use local volunteers and develop sustainable partnerships with local VCS organisations; and
- That they have a clear approach to the promotion of volunteering.

#### **Resource Implications:**

There are no budgetary implications although signing up to the Framework involves commitment to a set of principles of which funding forms part. The Framework is concerned with the transparency of process rather than the allocation of funding.

#### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

Local Government Act 1972 Section 137. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

#### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

There are no specific implications in terms of Crime and Disorder or Environmental issues.

#### **Consultation Undertaken:**

Internal discussions involving Members and officers.

#### **Background Papers:**

No specific background papers.

#### **Risk Management:**

No formal assessments carried out.

# Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

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The Framework will help partner agencies achieve the right balance in terms of service provision whilst recognising the particular characteristics of some organisations. It will help guide appropriate provision to enable the community as a whole to remain active and healthy as possible, within our resources.