

Driving Social Value in Southend

Introduction

Southend is a vibrant, modern seaside town cared for by a forward thinking Council committed to ensuring that the borough continues to be clean, safe, healthy and prosperous. In practice this means supporting local people to reach their full potential by creating excellent and accessible opportunities for everyone to live, work and play.

In particular we recognise the vital role that Council procurement and commissioning plays in enhancing the quality of life and outcomes for local people. We know that we need to be at the top of our game when spending around £150 million of public money every year purchasing services, supplies and works contracts. Ultimately we are accountable to our residents for ensuring that the services that we commission deliver the widest, and most sustainable, value possible.

Social value is about maximising the impact of public expenditure to get the best possible outcomes. It recognises that local people are central to determining how these outcomes can be achieved. Through our approach to social value we aim to integrate economic, environmental and social sustainability into our procurement and commissioning process. This Policy outlines that approach and sets out how we will ensure that our resources are used wisely. It also commits us to continuing to strive to make Southend a better place whilst delivering the most efficient use of resources and best value for money. An accompanying **Social Value Toolkit** has been created (*in progress*) to support colleagues across the Council, particularly commissioners and procurement officers, as well as potential provider organisations ('providers'), to embed social value in our ways of working.

There is no 'one size fits all' model for achieving social value; it is an area where providers and commissioners nationally are learning about how best to achieve and evidence it. The aspirations of this Policy and the guidance within the Toolkit will continue to be informed by national developments and our local learning.

What is Social Value?

The **Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012** requires for the first time, all public bodies in England and Wales to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their respective areas. It asks that public bodies consider the ways that they could most benefit society as part of each decision made.

Social Value can be defined in a number of ways; including;

- the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives

- the wider financial and non-financial impacts of programmes, organisations and interventions, including the wellbeing of communities, social capital and the environment
- a tool for smarter procurement in a world where value for money really matters.

Social value requires commissioners to think about how they achieve outcomes in a more integrated way. Rather than thinking about services in isolation or in the short term, this approach requires commissioners to consider long term costs and sustainability and how inclusion of additional social value outcomes can potentially reduce pressures in other areas. At its heart it asks a simple question: "If £1 is spent on the delivery of services, can that same £1 be used to also produce a wider benefit to the community?"

In practice this could mean that a learning disability service is commissioned to be delivered by an organisation that actively employs people with learning disabilities to help deliver the service. Social value outcomes are achieved as a result of the person with a learning disability;

- having a job where they may otherwise have been unemployed;
- becoming more socially included, and;
- having a say in how learning disability services are run.
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In this example we can appreciate how supporting residents with a learning disability can work towards delivering wider benefits, boosting local productivity and fostering social inclusion. This way of working promotes an integrated and coherent approach to delivering Southend's aims and priorities.

Aims and Objectives

The overarching intent of this Policy is to ensure commissioning activity maximises social, economic and environmental benefit for Southend whilst delivering value for money.

Our **Aims** are:

- To embed a sustainable procurement procedure, protecting Southend's interests and enhancing the environment.
- To involve local people, organisations and beneficiaries in how we meet the needs of communities via the commissioning cycle.
- To promote our local economy and ensure that new, developing and existing enterprise is nurtured and supported.
- To improve the life chances of Southend's residents by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities.
- To work with, listen to and strengthen our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all.

Objectives

To achieve these aims we will:

1. Involve local people and organisations in determining social value outcomes by beginning engagement and/or consultation at the earliest possible opportunity in a commissioning process.
2. Raise awareness of, make clear our stance and champion the principles of Social Value.
3. Agree proportionate and relevant social value outcomes with the marketplace at pre-procurement stage, and ensure that they are linked to the strategic priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan.
4. Work with internal staff, the marketplace and communities to improve understanding of social value, our Policy and evaluation methods.
5. Take account of the social and economic benefits of buying locally, particularly through local supply chains, such as reducing unemployment and raising the skill level of the local workforce.
6. Promote social inclusion by targeting contract opportunities at voluntary and community groups and social enterprises where permitted under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. This includes assisting and facilitating the capacity of these organisations to tender competitively for contracts with the Council and beyond.
7. Encouraging corporate social responsibility amongst the supply chain and contractors.
8. Create employment and skills and training opportunities for local people, especially in target areas.
9. Contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of local people, with a focus on reducing inequalities.
10. Commit to protecting the environment, and built environment, minimise waste and energy consumption and maximise the use of resources efficiently.

Principles of the Policy

The following principles underpin our Policy:

Leadership

To ensure key messages are effectively communicated and progress is monitored with strong leadership, guidance and co-ordination, making sure the Council delivers an effective social value policy, that is straightforward and simple to understand.

Creativity

To use social value as a platform to encourage innovation, both within and external to the council. Also to recognise that that anybody, or any organisation, has the potential to add social value no matter their size or make up.

Flexibility

To embed flexibility and a 'can do' approach to social value to secure the best possible outcomes by opening up the commissioning and procurement process to a broader range of organisations and businesses.

Collaboration

To develop a shared vision for social value between the Council, local communities, stakeholders and other organisations and businesses.

Also to promote collaboration within the Council so that procurement processes impact on the shared corporate priorities.

Equality

To ensure that groups with protected characteristics participate in shaping, delivering and monitoring our Social Value Policy.

Sustainability

To recognise longer-term social value outcomes over quick wins.

The Public Services Act requires public bodies to consider social value in service contracts – alongside contracts for goods and works with a service element – above a prescribed financial threshold. However our implementation of the duties in the Act will be as wide as practicable so that we can achieve maximum impact.

Our Policy does not set out a single approach to the creation of social value in Southend. However, social value will be considered during the commissioning cycle and procurement process of all contracts, including those that are below the EU procurement thresholds. Proportionate and relevant social value requirements will always be included in contracts.

Engagement with people and communities is vital to encourage innovation and ensure services are well-designed for the people who use them. Engaging and consulting at the earliest opportunity will enable us to find out what the potential social benefits could be and learn about benefits that we may not have considered.

Commissioners, through engagement with residents and communities, are required to determine social value outcomes in discussion with providers at pre-procurement stage. Outcomes should be proportionate and relevant to a contract and linked to the strategic priorities in the Council’s Corporate Plan. This ensures that social value is:

- Relevant to our strategic objectives.
- Valuable in terms of meetings specific needs that we have identified and supportive of wider strategies to meet these needs.

The Council’s strategic corporate priorities, outlined in our **Corporate Plan**, are:

Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a safe environment across the town for residents and visitors • Work in partnership with Essex Police and other agencies to tackle crime • Look after and safeguard our vulnerable children and adults
Clean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote the use of green technology and initiatives to benefit the local economy and environment • Encourage and enforce high standards of environmental stewardship
Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promote healthy and active lifestyles for all • Improve the life chances of our residents, especially vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities • Work with the public and private rented sectors to provide good quality housing

Prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise opportunities to enable the planning and development of quality, affordable housing • Ensure continued regeneration of the town through a culture led agenda • Ensure residents have access to high quality education to enable them to be lifelong learners and have fulfilling employment • Ensure the town is 'open for businesses' and that new, developing and existing enterprise is nurtured and supported
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with and listen to our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all • Enable communities to be self-sufficient and foster pride in the town • Promote and lead an entrepreneurial, creative and innovative approach to the development of our town

Social Value and Equality

Where Social Value is considered as part of a commissioning exercise, the public sector Equality Duty will continue to apply. This means that equality will continue to be considered at every stage of the commissioning cycle, including consultation and pre-procurement. The Social Value Act and the Equality Act thus complement each other.

The public sector Equality Duty is defined by the Equality Act 2010. It requires public bodies to respect the needs of all individuals when shaping policy and delivering services. As part of this, public bodies must consciously consider protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civic partnerships.

The Equality act requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people

These points link naturally to the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. We will promote social inclusion by ensuring our procurement procedures are transparent, accessible and easy to understand. This will be achieved through a Social Value Toolkit that offers practical guidance on developing a partnership with the authority. We will also seek to better understand diversity and how it may offer a more nuanced insight into residents' lives and create potential for innovation in the services we choose to commission. This will be achieved by ensuring our equality principles are clearly stated in the Toolkit and by encouraging providers to develop a proactive approach to diversity.

Implementing the Policy

The implementation of the Policy will require:

- Application of the accompanying Social Value Toolkit. *(to be developed)*.
- Embedding processes for measuring impact on objectives.
- Positive action in respect of specific organisations, equalities groups or groups of people with protected characteristics.
- A programme of training and development for internal staff and the marketplace.

We will take account of the need for positive action in respect of organisations led by, or for, equalities or community groups, and for the development of local small organisations and businesses. We will seek to nurture positive relationships and promote the engagement of these organisations in tendering. This would include actions to ensure that engagement with the marketplace and communities at pre-procurement stage is accessible to these target organisations.

The **Social Value Toolkit** provides detailed guidance on the processes required to embed social value in how we achieve outcomes for local people. The Toolkit will continue to be developed in partnership with stakeholders to ensure it is fit for purpose and accessible for those who wish to work with the Council.

We will communicate the policy to all internal staff, providers and partners to develop a programme of training and development to improve understanding of social value and our approach and practice. This will include a specific focus on reaching out to specific providers, such as small to medium employers, voluntary sector organisations and community enterprises. We will also seek to build social value commissioning expertise within evaluation panels to develop evaluation criteria and best practice.

The Policy will inform the ongoing development of the Council's Commissioning Framework and contracts that include social value outcomes will be managed in line with this framework. this includes compliance with relevant UK and EU statutory regulations and legislation.

Evaluating our Approach

We will evaluate the impact of this Policy to show how we are delivering on our aims and objectives. As part of this, we will conduct a periodic review of the Policy and how it is applied. We will also further develop our understanding and use different evaluation techniques to show which interventions are successful in providing positive social, economic and environmental outcomes in Southend.

Reviewing our Social Value Policy

We will report periodically on the policy's objectives and implementation to a cross-sector group, to include senior council officers, commissioners, contract managers and staff from procurement and performance, alongside representatives from business sector and equality groups. This will provide us with an opportunity to adjust our approach as we learn from current practice, using evidence from providers, and recipients of services, to better understand how the policy directly achieves social value outcomes.

Developing our methodology

Social value evaluation is a rapidly evolving field. Over 1000 different metrics are used around the globe to measure social value. The Council acknowledges that it remains difficult to develop a single, cohesive measurement framework. Instead we aim to develop our understanding of relevant techniques by working with colleagues across the authority and partner organisations in order to share best practice. We will continue to adjust our methods as we learn and involve providers and communities in the procurement process.