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Dear Philip Barnes

East Kent Coastal Teaching Primary Care Trust - Response to the SEERA commissioned report for the Select Committee on Regeneration and AIFs.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the SQW report into Area-based regeneration strategies (SRB and AIF) – A context and issues paper to the SEERA. This response will take the form of more general comments as well as responding to some of the discussion points raised in the paper.

Generally I thought the report reflected the current state of play of the development of the Area Investment Frameworks via Area Strategic Partnerships. However, whilst the AIF is seen by SEEDA as *“a tool to determine the most effective way of aligning and deploying all public, private and voluntary resources throughout a particular area”* this is not necessarily reflected on the ground, as partnerships are not at a stage to deliver this. This statement reflects the current issues around the roles of the AIF's and LSPs (highlighted in the report). This relationship will be further confused as the new Local Area Agreements and Local Partnership Boards are developed at county level (in two tier authorities) and the further development and expansion of Public Service Agreements.

Specific Comments:

Discussion point 9:

I believe that there should be flexibility between funding streams to focus on different areas of activity such as providing for community related activity. Whilst we need to move away from the grant dependency culture that has been a by-product of the SRB process, we cannot ignore the need to continue to develop the community so that it is enabled to support the economic growth required. The pressures on Local Authority budgets are such that community development work is often only undertaken if it is externally funded, with local authorities themselves often becoming reliant on SRB and other external funding streams to deliver some of their responsibilities under their duty of well being.

A potential development that could support the need to deliver on Tier 3 objectives as well as positively impacting on Tier 2 objectives would be the support and expansion of the Community Enterprise Trust Model. There is currently some innovative work being undertaken in East Kent to look at the formation of an ASP wide Community Enterprise Trust Model to support the voluntary and community sector infrastructure. SEEDA funding would be well used in pump priming the establishment of Community Enterprise Trust Models. This would lead to the development of a sustainable voluntary and community sector infrastructure

that would become, over time less grant dependent, whilst at the same time supporting the link between community infrastructure and economic development.

Discussion point 11:

The report confusingly refers to the Community and Voluntary Sector as the CVS. As the CVS stands for the Council for Voluntary Services a body which represents most but not all voluntary and community sector partners in a particular area, it is not advisable to refer to the voluntary and community sector as the CVS, perhaps referring to them as the VCS would cause less confusion.

The VCS should be more involved in AIFs and are currently represented through their representatives from the CVS (Council for Voluntary Services). Whilst the CVS is a representative body, it does not represent all of the voluntary and community sector in that particular area. The AIFs need to engage more widely with the VCS, however, the VCS itself may not always have the capacity or the understanding to engage with AIFs. To enable the VCS to be more influential in shaping and delivering services in line with the regional and district Compacts, there needs to be a reinvigoration of VCS as well as the development of a support infrastructure (many VCS organisations are wholly grant reliant, and these grants do not cover the core costs of running the organisation). This in part could be supported by the development of a network of Community Enterprise Trust models (please see my last point).

We assume that the VCS want to be involved in influencing, developing and delivering services in an AIF area – however this assumption may prove to be incorrect. Many in the voluntary and community sector are involved in delivering services in very small niche areas, whose only concern is gaining access to sustainable funding.

I hope these comments are useful, if you require any further information; please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Davis
Head of Partnerships