Learn the local language of place to boost community benefits of social value, Localis report urges

Thursday 16 April, 2020

The lives of residents must measurably improve as a result of how councils commission and provide local public services, a report by the think-tank Localis has recommended.

In a report issued today entitled **'Brighten All Corners – maximising social value in place'** the think-tank calls for a standardised approach to evaluating social value which would give communities a greater say in the benefits received in the commissioning of local public services from commercial suppliers.

The report calls for the public sector to adopt **Community Value Charters** as a standard framework for setting place-sensitive local outcomes that build on inherent strengths such as social and natural capital as we enter the second decade of the ground-breaking Social Value Act.

Localis chief executive, Jonathan Werran, said: "During the Covid-19 pandemic everyone in society is having to drastically reorient how they go about their everyday business or deliver public services.

"In this spirit, our report calls for a greater sense of human values, trust and relationship in how we generate value for our communities from the commissioning process.

"Providers must be accountable to residents, tenants and local people for both the services they deliver and the benefits agreed to when business contracts are signed.

"And these must be explained in a clear way – not through complex targets and opaque mechanisms.

"As we start to move in the coming months from lockdown to economic recovery, a depleted private sector will, as is always the case during economic recessions, naturally drive more intense competition when bidding for government contracts.

"To preserve social value, we must see strong actual proof in the improved lived experience of people in our communities as a tangible outcome of public service commissioning."

Localis head of research, Joe Fyans, said: "We need a standardised language and set of clearly defined terms in social value to get the most from the legislation as it enters its second decade.

"For example, rather than focusing on what firms can offer off the shelf without much thought, such as training and employment, providers should have scope to provide a more locally-relevant offer that focuses on the strength of people and place in an area."

Alan Long, Executive Director of Mears Group, said: "If we can't get social value right for our communities now then we never will. It has been said that the Covid pandemic could further highlight the divide in our communities. The housing sector, alongside local and national commissioners, have a golden opportunity to use the resources of the private sector for the public good.

"I commend this report for providing a clear platform for demonstrating social value to communities and will be speaking to colleagues in central government about how we can take these recommendations forward immediately.

"I will also be writing to senior colleagues across the housing sector to encourage them to join us for sector wide agreement – this is the time to take action – together."

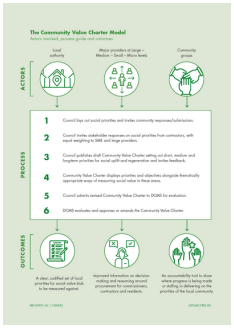
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Notes to Editors:

1. **A full copy of the embargoed report can be accessed here: "Brighten All Corners – maximising social value in place"**

1. **About Localis**

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Localis is an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to politics, public service reform and localism. We carry out innovative research, hold events and facilitate an ever growing network of members to stimulate and challenge the current orthodoxy of the governance of the UK.

About Mears Group

Mears is a housing and care company. We provide and manage some 12,000 homes for local and central Government and is also responsible for keeping 750,000 of all social housing in the UK in good repair and cares for 20,000 elderly or vulnerable residents. Mears has 11,000 employees and a footprint all across the UK.

Mears Group has been recognised for its outstanding environmental, social and governance practices by gaining a place in the FTSE4Good Index – and places Mears in the top 9% of companies in the index. Social value runs through everything we do. We were one of the first companies to launch a social value board, chaired by our Executive Director Alan Long and made up of independent experts to scrutinise all of our social value output.

Our latest social value report is available here

1. **Report Recommendations**

The Government should revise the Social Value Act with a local element requiring councils to produce **Community Value Charters** to define goals and priorities for residents.

Community Value Charters should be publicly available and define where social value offers would be best targeted as an aid to both commissioners and contractors placing bids.

As with Local Plans, Community Value Charters should be open to public consultation and review.

Community Value Charters should also be consulted on with a representative number of stakeholders from SMEs as well as large partner businesses.

The Government should define a list of approved social value metrics for quantifying the social value element of a tender.

Community Value Charters should be approved by DCMS into the broader Civil Society Strategy.

- Councils and contractors should set out a timeframe and measure for a re-evaluation of a social value initiative, with the possibility to break the contract if it is not being delivered.

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Additional Assets:
Brighten All Corners - maximising social value in place - final report

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