**IP19, Local authority strategy officer for VSO supply chain(F)**

**Speaker Key:**

CM Interviewer

IE Interviewee

CM What’s your job role and your experience with the commissioning for social value?

IE  So, my role, currently, is a supply chain officer, which means pretty, is a new role; so has been recognized that as a local authority, I think a lot of local authorities, try to open up their approaches to supply chain to small businesses and to Voluntary Sector and third sector organization. So the decision we made that in our corporate procurement commissioning team, we needed a team to be dedicated to creating a sustainable supply chain and to that includes leading on social value, but also kind in a wider working with the suppliers that we already have, making sure that they are small suppliers you know, they might struggling financially or have other barriers for them to deliver services or maybe less sustainable small business and so, is about making sure that all small suppliers that we have, including VSOs suppliers, and we have a lot of voluntary sector organization and social enterprises delivering services, that are sustainable and then they continue delivering the services. So, then you know, we commission and decommission those service in a way that doesn’t hider those providers basically, and they don’t go …to the administration pretty much [unclear] so that’s the role.

I have been in working in the commissioning and procurement for a while, at the strategy point of view rather than procurement. Yes, over the last year I worked on kind of the local council refreshed approach to deliver social value so I have lead on the evaluation that we have done to date. So that’s in 2017 we kind of evaluate everything we have done from 2012 and the approach, and from that, we had basically an Action Plan come out, about all the improvement we can do to embed social value further and kind of became a leader in social value. So, that that’s my role pretty much.

CM The evaluation report is an internal report or public?

IE It is an internal report, but we have used the external, you know SVP? You came across, they have a couple of tools and one of them is the maturity index. So, we kind of roughly used the maturity index, we kind of adapted it little bit to what we needed but in general they have like 10 areas you know, were social value to assess, if you deliver good social value, you talk about leadership, we talk about [unclear] you talk about commissioning, so they kind of have goals for each area that they do. You find evidence for your organization how well you are doing, are you mature, or you are a follower mature or are you a leader or an innovator, right? So we have done that exercise and to basically show us where we are doing well, were embedded and were we still need things to happen. It wasn’t very surprising. I mean what we realized is that we do have some good practice were social value is way ahead but there are also, you know, barriers in other areas because you cannot apply the same type of social value across the organization. So, for example, is quite developed in the kind of infrastructure construction type, with large corporate organizations when we have partnerships, we have big contracts with the national organizations and they do quite, what you define a social value which is quite you know, KPIs around employment, supply chain, work in the community, so is quite defined, you can actually quantify it and you can say oh, they created X, Y jobs and that’s very easy for them to do because they are way ahead in CSR so they are just applying it to the contract and seeing it how they can design the service to deliver that way in fact. So that’s quite embedded and we are doing that. But what we are beginning to learn/notice is for example, how people centred contracts so, any sort of social care, adults and children services, housing, anything to do with acute needs and the providers are very different, they are usually smaller providers, they are usually not for profit, they are usually local and they usually don’t have the capacity to be delivering what’s specific, the kind of additional, very kind of defined quantifiable benefits but they are doing a lot of good staff you know, they are working for communities, they are networking, they are providing a lot of support but they just don’t define it as social value and they don’t record it. So there are different sets of challenges in working with these providers and different approaches, so you cannot approach….

So, once with the contractors, the big contractors we just push for more and to maximize and to make sure that we can see that they do a lot of good things, so that we can see that they are very good at employment and we push them to do more of that and will be just about figuring out what the strengths are, and then deliver social value in those areas and pushing them more for it. With those providers is more about, you know, helping them to define social value, helping them to actually record it and see it as - you are doing way beyond than what you were contracted to do, you just not… And you will find it, it is a lot more kind of unique and quirky social value delivery, there will be things that they will do that it is quite unique to the service that they deliver, they are quite unique to the support of client group or the wider community that they support and maybe quite specific to that community group. So, it is very different, so that’s a kind of thing that come out from the evaluation [unclear] that shows the approaches

And in general, we kind of found out you know, in procurement if embedded it across, is pretty, you know, is still kind of, you can make it better by being more structured about what we ask, so is kind of asking for a plan or a draft plan ahead, of mobilizing, before we were asking for commitments. As we will ask questions – so, you will commit to something, and then providers will say, I will commit to this and that – but wouldn’t be quantified in a way at that point top off mobilization, and then will be left to the contract manager to figure out how to program social value. What we found is probably easier with big contracts is to ask them for a draft plan, ask the provider what they can do, so then become automatically in the mobilization it would be taking on by contract manager and is something to work from, rather than just commitments. But in general, were the procurement is embedded, what we found that one of our focus now is to work closer with the contract community, to make sure the contract manager understands what social value is and how to deliver it and what we want to do is to provide contract managers with more information about the local resources and local contacts where they help deliver social value, obviously is the provider that needs to deliver so is not on the contract manager to come up with ideas, but what we found is that were providers are given local contacts for example, creates further works, which you know, delivers more employment if have more contact there; we have contacts that goes to schools and do engagement, you know, we have supply chain which sits with us about making local businesses. So, if they have those contacts and if they get in touch with those contacts is a lot easier for them to deliver and the contract manager is just really there to challenge them- oh, have you been in touch? If they don’t haven't been delivering you know, it is on the provider to actually deliver against what they promised to deliver.

CM The contract manager profile role where sits within the overall process? What is his responsibilities?

IE So, we have a centralized. So, for anything that we will buy that’s above 100K it will go at a centralized procurement team which we and I sit within, and we have category managers and procurement officers who basically do tendering to go through the process. But the point of appointing a successful bidder that than goes back to the service, which is decentralized, so it is almost, we have different departments that they will come to us for example, let's say, we have let’s say, highways service and our category manager will say that we need to be commissioned and procured various contracts and then the centralized actually would go for the process, compliance, procurement regulations than should everything happens in line with the procurement regulation, but then it goes back to the service, that's where the contract manager sits, it sits with the service. So, while we will have some, our category managers, which basically they have a sector where they work, for example Construction is one, so they deal with all the projects for the construction, to provide support to the services, to commission services and they would have some oversight, you know, of the big risks, the big contracts were we are spending a lot of money where there is a risk, and they will see that and will have that strategic contract management responsibility to being able to knowing the provider and how the provider does. And essentially, we have scorecards that shows us how the top tier, the biggest spent contracts are doing so we see that, but in general the day to day delivery of the contract, including social value, falls into the service, and the contract manger that sits within the service or the service leads budget holders they have commissioned, and again it will be more of, in case the contract managers will have full time jobs doing contract management in other areas it might be kind of commissioner's or managers that partially outsourced, or partially have a theme, so it depends, but usually doesn't sits within the corporate. And that’s where we find kind of that, the commitments not necessarily/always translate into the delivery, because sometimes the contract managers have not been involved necessarily for the process, or they might not understand what it means to deliver social value, they might not see it as a priority, they might have issues with the core delivery of the service and is difficult to talk about. So, it is about, now from the evaluation, is about, internally having those conversations, more with the contract mangers, with the community, and basically spreading the word and really delivering because we do have commitments and contractually agreed or more and more contracts, you know [unclear ...is Monday to the cross] but how do we know that it's been delivered? So, the next step is to actually see some of that delivery in an aggregated app so it is about, you know, engaging with contract managers and then at the end of the year so hopefully at the end of the year to getting a more aggregated information, a quantitative – the big ticket bins [not sure], so getting from the supply chain, understanding you know, how many people are employed locally, what kind of issues [unclear] so the kind of reporting. I think, all of the, you know, if you been to an kind of conferences or networking event where social value is discussed across the UK, the big thing 1 -2 year ago was about how you quantify, how do you actually see the impact that you make it, not only in kind of returns but also actually in the wider positive change that you create by social value, how do you actually measure it and how do you do and have you, and there were very few reports that actually were showing that, there is the CSR which you know is very similar, but you kind of show for this specific contract you created that value is very difficult, and I don’t think there is an answer to it yet. What will be doing, is trying to import those, you know, we have a framework of KPIs, so report on those KPIs, aggregate it up, and hopefully subsides those numbers with case studies from providers to tell us about initiatives, projects they too part, that they found, you know, that are the most proud of, just example to kind show that behind the numbers there is a real impact, that's is a very kind of simple way, you know, it is still very simple. Yes, so I think it is more important to break these relationships between the contractor expertise and what they could offer and actually local needs and strategic priorities, as obviously the local council will have priorities, so we want to support projects and initiatives in organizations with those priorities. It is more about how you link that to make sure that they deliver social value strategically then it really is trying to get the path of reporting on that to them. As long you can show that is making impact obviously our senior officer will be interested in monitoring value; 2 million contract what is the value that they added above and beyond, our politicians will be interested in the stories, will be interested in the impact, will be interested in the communities I hope as well will be interested in that. But in general, it is about the bulk of work that we are now trying to do is more about how we do map out the need of the community, how do we map out what was offered and link it together to help to create a sustainable supply chain.

CM What are the top barriers for the VSOs to define and deliver effectively the projects embedding social value?

IE Ehm, that’s the thing, I don’t think that the delivery of social value when you are a VSOs is very different, and they always tend to be at the receiving end of social value, if that make sense, our local communities. So, when we want to build the capacity of the voluntary sector we can utilise the commercial expertise of big contractor to help them to be more commercial. Yes, I think that they are struggling, and the biggest barrier is that VSOs are not set up as businesses, so they don’t necessary understand you know, how to bid forwards and what they need to have in terms of financial, or what they need to have as an organization, and how need to work as a supplier for us to be confident that they can deliver; and you know, if they don’t have the basics of what it takes to be a supplier, how we can talk to them about the added benefit? I think the conversation, so what we are trying to do is to focus on the basics of being more transparent about - our procurement processes are taught to VSOs. I think the biggest issues is that the councils are not very good at communicating externally about procurement rules which can be quite daunting into what actually means. So ya, I have been in meetings with VSOs where you know, is very difficult to explain social value and social value is so abstract. Even if they are doing it on the day to day basis, is about maybe also not using the word social value (smiling) and trying to really simplify the conversation about you know, understanding what they are delivering and maybe on examples of what they done, show them well actually this is delivery beyond what we expect as a supplier, you know you have been commissioned to deliver what you are doing wider, you know the connection that you making, the volunteering that you are delivering, that’s the way beyond the what you have been contracted, given money for to be running. So, but I think the biggest barrier is that no understanding the procurement regulations and not being set up as a business basically, and I think is changing but still I mean, the VSOs still relies heavily on grants and well we know that they always relay on grants. As a council, we are moving to trying to set that the VSOs are not the only grant funder, they are not the only player there, so we are investing in online portals and places where they can see what other funding is available and we have at least an officer that helps them bid for funding or giving links to where the funding is available. They are more sustainable if they are going with grants, if they are ready to go for contracts and commissioning, then again it is about the understanding of what being the supplier means. But again, it is on the contract manager community entirely, to be able to work with the supplier and see if they are struggling or I don’t know, is on procurement officers and the commissioners to create a specification that meets the needs and to assess the suppliers, the bidders to make sure that they choose the best, the most sustainable, the best value for money supplier. But obviously, when you have hundredths and hundredths of suppliers there will always be the once that do struggle with this....The Council as an organization is a risk, you know, the business continued you know that, [unclear] so the more we open up the opportunities for the voluntary sector and the more risk there is, they are not used to, maybe not necessarily. That said, we had very successful transitions from the kind of grands to become a more social enterprises to providing services across the council. The local organizations are doing that and they are adapted to that, it is just about learning from the good that is happening and trying to support the wider suppliers to open up. I do think when you open up the more opportunities to small business and VSOs, it is the risk, the resources should be there to support them to actually deliver, and to not just actually support them, but to support the commissioners and contract managers to know how to interact and to have the right communications and to be, I mean simple thing like invoicing, they are really struggling with VSOs on how to invoice properly and [unclear] and obviously for small business the cash flow is not great, so that’s the most important, so you know, we would/ we are working with our finance department to understand how to make it easier. We have been creating leaflets and things and say this is the things you need to do which is simple, and language to help the cash flow to make sure that payments do happen but still is very difficult if you never invoiced you know, there is a lot of financial barriers and yes, I think, mostly those.

CM In this process, have you tried to shape an understanding with the VSOs on the meaning of social value and to raise more awareness or to shape the service specifications?

IE Yes, in general we do have a VC website still a kind of, we have done the website and we want to improving it with resources from there, as a kind of first point of contact because we are unable to talk to everybody about this, but the approach usually is, when we know that there is a commissioning coming up and we know that opportunity is suitable for smaller organizations and local organizations and are able to deliver, then will be pre-tender engagement so there will be briefings, there would be workshops then will explain the specification of what's is actually expected, the process and on top of that we will talk about our policies and one of them is the social value, but we will talk more widely, you know about our process, you know we will talk will be, how we contract manage. We definitely want to do more on those, but we know that when the commissioning is coming up we will come along with the commissioning to do a mooc [unclear]

But I think in general, is juts of kind of providing general information not related to a specific commissioning is something that we do more off, you know online or using wide bigger events [unclear] there are so many events across the council.... related to employability or other, so we just being present and answering questions really. I think we have pretty good idea of what some of the barriers are, the things that we should be translating into simpler language and putting the information out there, but obviously the capacity is very scars in local authority so, in terms of quickly doing it and it is very difficult.

So, currently, we definitely focus on providing support to commissioners on specific projects early on so that they understand what social value is, and then when they speak to the potential bidders that they are interested, because there will be a notice going out, and it will say you know, this call is coming up if you are interested to hearing more about it, briefing and then tendering that.

And in the same, you know, we have frameworks, for small providers and there will be forms for our suppliers already, exiting forms, so we are just going along with these forms. So, we have been invited by category managers, contract managers, to attend the forum with suppliers to talk a little bit about social value, just recently, we had one that we went in June. And that was a kind of bombastic kind of exercise, interactive, with like 30 suppliers under that one framework which was quite interesting where you can see the different levels of understanding within even that group, where maybe the biggest suppliers in that group would have a much better understanding but then because in the forum they can share their experiences and hopefully also influence the smaller suppliers, so definitely we are doing more of that type of activity.

CM So is a process where local council gets input....

IE Yes, so helping them...yes, obviously to be able to apply for a contract with the council you have to answer the questions, so you have to understand the questions to be able to do that, so I think those sorts of pre-tender engagements will go through forums but also explain you know, there will be a questionnaire on social value and will say what the council means by social value, what the priorities are for them to even start thinking even before the questions comes out and then you know, the approach the council is taking is – we want that the social value questions to be formulated by the commissioner in line with what the commissioner and the wider market engagement tells them is possible. So, ideally, what is happening, on one project more than another depending on how early is starting, how engaged the commissioners are, as it is up to them. You know, there are situations where commissioners might not know, the project might not fit with the generic employment, you know, then you might think then this is not actually appropriate because they are very small organizations or sole traders they are bidding so we cannot ask them to give us employment opportunities or things. So those kinds of pre-tender, so when you look to the Social Value Act, I mean, all it talked about is social value should be happening at the pre-tender, that’s all it talks about, early commissioning conversations and talks about engagements with markets, so the best practice is to go for the commissioner to ask the market – what you think would be the councils priorities, how do you think we can deliver and to shape the questions so it doesn’t discriminate any of the providers, as there are situations, especially on those frameworks where you have multiple providers and lots of people that can bid. There are very big organizations that have established CSR and they have done lots of staff and maybe very little little organizations that are local. So you have this national organization that is established, and they have very kind of definition of social value examples and then you have a lot one two person micro persons that is bidding and to go to ask them – give us example of how you do social value, is not fair, you know.

So that means to be recognized by commissioners early on, to make sure that questions do not disadvantage the low local organizations, because they don’t only create social value by asking questions, but they also create social value by engaging and getting those little organization on in our supply chain. So that’s another way to create social value.

But you know, the understanding for commissioners and contractors is still varies and some of them, when I talk to them, as we provide advice on projects, and I tell them – do you know that this is social value if you manage to engage, and mobilize, and kind of encourage the local businesses to bid for your framework or your provision, then you opened up opportunities for the local businesses, therefore you delivered social value, you don’t have to engage with them, you could have just gone for the big provider and you know, whereas, and on a lot of those, when you look at how much value it brings, and lot of the time, the local providers are creating jobs you know, who bring a lot of more value than actually do a national organization that doesn’t necessarily have roots in the community and its ticking the box, you know. So, but, we are trying to give all of the suppliers' kind of more information about what local organizations exists to give them like, you know, we don’t expect that, so now, is kind of only for the big big projects are only big organizations. A good answer is actually an answer that refers back to C so it is not only a generic CSR, but we are also doing all those things like an organization, it is about, how you apply those things to the contract and is about how you link up, how do you, are you aware of all the links that you need to go.

So, the answer is, so for example if the bidder said, oh we wouldn’t have the works, we understand that there is a lot of, you know, if they do the research and they kind of try to apply the C, try to show us what exist in C that give us a lot more confidence that they actually, the numbers that they are putting against – you know, we are going to create x amount of jobs they are actually backed by a strategy, that are backed by a method to actually delivery it. Because we actually had situations before when the providers would give us, ridiculous, not ridiculous but they wouldn’t have given us…just up the offer in terms of how many jobs they will create in the budget, and that was not sustainable, because they were not able to show to us…they basically said to us, oh we are going to give you all those great things but they didn’t had a method behind it to actually to it, they didn’t had a programed way, they didn’t think who will actually do it in terms of what research do they need to deliver that and actually to be going to make those local connections, just not,… they wouldn’t be able to deliver those, because they didn’t though through how that actually is happening on the grounds. So now, we do, not only expect to kind of say, give us your draft offer plus the method by which you will deliver that offer so that we can see the planning, that makes sense, so basically the – they have the resource, and they have the links and they thought through how they will do it on the kind of periodic basis, and how they are going to improve on the targets. And it works pretty well recently even before on the big commissioning …recently we awarded a contract and it really did a difference and you know and gave to the contract manager a lot more information.

CM So, now you are evaluating the delivery periodically and see how the project is embedding social value?

IE Yes, so social value is one of the…, in contract management, so when they moves to contract management and those commitments are either translated into plan or already were in plan for the bigger ones, then, so for the big big ones, we do have a scorecard which is quite a new thing but we basically have a contract management hub centrally and all the contract manager that manage the big contracts need to fill in a scorecard around how the supplier is performing, so there is five things they needs to tell us about, which is, financial performance, risk, one more I always forget, and social value, so they have to tell us how the providers performing on social value so we have an overview on how they are doing but also it means that they have to had a conversation with the provider on social value before it is was actually, you know, now is kind of elevated into one of the five the most important things to show us how the providers are doing, which also makes this provider want to go out and do more, because obviously they want to get a good score and they want to be seen us delivering the contract in its entirety, once before the social value was seen as an add on now by default (?)… (Over talking)

CM What weighting you are giving to social value in contracts?

IE So, the guidance that we are giving to commissioners is 5 to 20%, depending on if there is one or two stage process. So, if there is a two stage process it will be selection so there is lots of suppliers, they want to select five to go to the next stage, there will be …I don’t know how much you know about the procurement processes. So, for the bigger one we will have a selected process if there is of lot of interest, so we kind of ask a selection questionnaire, the social value question is less, the scoring will be less will be around 5% because is mostly about asking about the previously experience and just to see that they have some experience, just to see if they meet the requirement of the council to, because to deliver the social value is a requirement so they need to show us that they will be able to meet that requirement at early stages before they go to the second stage where actually they give us their offer and they say – this is what we will deliver on this contract and this is all we will do for you, where the weighting of social value will be probably higher than in the first stage, and it really depends on the projects, so we don’t mandate currently, it might change, if we review the policy, we are to looking to reviewing the policy with the new administration being elected in May-June this year and the new corporate plan coming in force in September this year, so very soon we will be looking at aligning the social value policy with that, reviewing social value policy… where the conversation might happened around the scoring, and if we should putting it at 10%, because currently we don’t have a mandated value and it does depends, I mean it will be more of a, I think it works better than kind of mandated 10% across, what we would like to mandate is kind of having a record of why you put 5% than 10%. So currently in our strategy reports, so when you go for the process and you have to write a procurement strategy report to our board to say this is what we are procuring and this is what social value would be doing… you need to give a reason before why you wouldn’t give less than 5% for the social value, and sometimes there are legitimate reasons where quality is very very important and is very tight and maybe the market doesn’t understand the social value that well, or maybe the market is not matured enough, you know, there might be legitimate reasons why you don’t put a lot of emphasize on social value ..

That’s why it shouldn’t be mandated but it’s more about recording why. And then the board challenging the lead that is coming to the board and say this is the strategy, and the board seeing it and saying, this is make sense you know, or actually you should review, you should do more on social value. And it is not just social value you know, we are talking about different things you know, we talk about how the module, the strategy, the specification, the budget, things like, but social value is one of the commissioner might put up on, kind of, to explain to the board their approach to deliver social value it is not deemed, if it is looked that they actually didn’t thought about it.

So I think we are less, I think like C council, we are less worried about the percentage score and more about the quality of questions and the thinking behind it and the confidence that the commissioner has thought it through and so, it is very difficult, because it is still [unclear] a lot of thought for the commissioners, there is still kind of, you know … someone is coming and say a generic think about the how the social value will be delivered so is about changing that culture though those governance, you know for the governance that we have and for the recording, though having social value in the reports and templates and having guidance entirely on social value, providing advice, also though engagement. Yes, so we developed recently a kind of refreshed training on social value so is supposed to be kind of slides [unclear] basics on social value and how C does social value so kind of, as an introduction to the new colleagues that come to C (On VC there is a framework that is published that we are reviewing). It is basically an entire guidance that just gives an overview, is a guide around, you know – how to ask, who are the social value questions, how to ask them, how to embed it, how to think about it, how to think about weighting. It is very basic things and very basic introduction to you know, social value is important for C Council, this is how you do it, this is how you evaluate it social value, you know, so there are basics. We have some examples of questions, which are again very generic but, you know, the idea is, the generic questions needs to be thought, by each to adapt to each commissioning project and we have some wording to standard, appendix wording that explains to the bidders that you can put in your tender documentation and you can again adopt and kind of use different paragraphs, depending of what the project is, to say this is what the social value requirement is, this is what the council means, this is what you will be expected to do, as the projector of social value, which is very new, we didn’t had that wording before that we flashed out [unclear ] so, in a kind of defined way, we did have organizations [unclear ] as part of social value but now we are quite putting a clear kind of – this is what it means into the tender documents, they also give the bidders the ability to read through and understand, you know, before they actually apply, before they actually bid and hopefully they know, more they are linked to Value C. and you basically say this is important it is an requirement, it is not something that you may or may not do, you need to show us how you are going to add value. And it has been working, at least it was much better and the culture internally is shifting.

CM This approach evolved overtime from 2012 or it has been taken up by the new administration?

IE No, is evolving I mean is evolving in the same area; in 2012-2013 that was a conservative administration that brought you know, under which we have created the commissioning strategy and the social value toolkit but I would say that in 2014 the labour administration came in, in 2015 Value C. was created, so that’s where the more emphasizes was put on social value and labour administration actually had social value mentioned it in the manifesto which was quite a the big thing, that’s were, since then I will say, and now we are in Labour administration as well. In general I don’t think the social value is a kind of Labour or Conservative, I think they both, is one of those areas, very few areas, where I think both labour and conservative agree it’s a good thing and we need to do it but we need to improve it so the journey has been learning, slowly developing.

I mean, I would say, in the 2013- 2014, before my time, through the evaluation, I have been involved how these projects, the first projects, the big happened and obviously we have pilots first of all, and we went in very cushion, you know, it definitely changed from that. So, 2013 when we put the social value in the first contract it was 1% value and it was a little bit, you know, it was kind of, we have to talk to our legal, and convince procurement and this is actually, you can’t actually do this, and how to do this and it was very uncertain times on how you actually do it ….and I think there was a lot of conversations about the risks and challenge and things like, because it was new, so you know, the 1% and then it went back up to 5% and then we cut it in a more structured, ask the KPIs and kind of grow from that and then we had kind of few pilots that kind it fed into the overall, how were are going to roll it out and do it, so now we are at the point that we roll out, I think pretty clear, to all the providers and bidders that social value is very important; so yes, now we are evolving in maximising and how do we actually strategically deliver social value, so, not only show other benefit in areas where there is the greatest need or the greatest priority, how we actually use, align social value that incorporate priorities as the organization and the needs of the communities, which is very difficult while doing it, broke into relationships and understand what [unclear ] and what need exists, and in that space we try to be more strategic, but to make sure we ask the right question, we not only ask a question but also ask the right question, that actually will deliver the best impact and how do we report on them, how do we celebrate successes and makes sure that we can show the achievements because we have not been actually doing that on a kind of regular basis and we would say to all the providers attending an event is great and we would of kind of create but hope to create more of a library of case studies that can be shared and showed the breath of social value, that is not just the regular things, from the smallest initiatives to kind of big employment initiatives, it is everything in between. So, it definitely evolved over time, there were definitely times were it was like any local authority where the resources are very tight and there has been restructures and some restructures moved resources in other places, so it has not been easy and I think social value [50-60s unclear] has been slightly forgotten a little bit but that was due to the disperse resource. Previously exited an old VC. So, it is about now having a strong business case and not doing that again and learning from the path you know, you need some resources in place to be able to coordinate, provide advice and that function needs to exists but it needs to be embedded, so I think before you know, now we are in a mature place where you know, the contracts and tenders are being reviewed and embedded more into data, templates have been review and have been embedded, and the scorecard its being embedded so it doesn’t disappear, basically so it doesn’t, so it is kind of mandated across. So, definitely a lot more mature, a lot more confident with, you know, having 5 so years of no challenge, also made it easier to be a little more risky about what you can ask you can do, because before it was pretty much a new thing, how do you, you know, there was a legitimate worry, you know, that this will be challenged and the providers will not be happy about it, there will be disadvantages and things like that, but it is not the case and it’s been very positive.

Even kind of delivering, only contracts actually, but also I think, my personal perspective is that, really is not the contractors that have the most contractual, the more social value written into their contract, they deliver the most necessarily, it’s the ones that are actually working as a partner and wants to collaborate with the council and see it as a work in the community and want to actually be embedded and might not necessary have it in their contract to deliver specific KPIs they just want to go out and do good things. So doesn’t necessarily mean you have to have it written into your contract to do good things, we have big suppliers that have delivered a way beyond on social value and is nothing in the contracts about social value, but the partnership is good, the contract is doing well and they see that it is a natural thing to deliver the wider benefits, and its benefiting them to have a skilled workforce and its benefiting them to make those links and you know, so, I personally think, you know, the way forward is to show case that and to helpfully shape, not shape, but hopefully though positive [unclear] and celebration and make other providers aware that way that this is actually important that only, that is not only important but actually is good for them, and it is kind of win-win situation rather than kind of mandate, and put the percentages on it and make it rigid and not flexible, and you know, because I think, like I said, before we would have estimated what we want and we would kind of – that’s what we want, maybe not necessarily took account the models that the provider had in that fact that has to be [unclear ].

So, for example, when we think about different bidders coming in and some of them outsource, some of them would have a model that’s pretty much outsource and they would have a lot of subcontracting opportunities, and another one who would have in house provision.

*(So I think we need to evacuate soon (from the room). Still 2 min)*

But, basically, would be very different social value opportunities for those two, we can’t be very, you know, we have to be able to say, this is our strengths this is what we are able to deliver that way we are moving towards and the same with like being in the first year contract and reviewing what they delivered and actually having an honest conversation saying, actually we promised this but we maybe we cannot deliver this but actually we do very well here so can we use that resource to be more flexible basically on social value.

CM What does it mean social value in your own words and understanding?

IE I mean, to me, it can mean literally anything, you know, you start from a very procurement definition and what the acts says, so the kind of application of social value in procurement and in that, obviously, for me is about how do you work with your contractors to design services and get goods and deliver works in a way that is sustainable and that takes account and creates more positive additional benefits over the community. So it is about how you actually from the start - design it in a way to maximise that benefit, so is the benefit that opportunity creates. In the wider sense, I think the council has also a role to play in influencing the wider businesses and it can be anything to do with, you know, campaigns, to buy locally and employ locally and work with communities and do volunteering and how we as an employer and a buyer showcase that and how we promote it to others to show look this is a sustainable way of doing business. It is about creating responsible business, you know in the wider sphere, in our planning, is about our leverage that we have over our developers and how they employ, whether they employ local or they have, you know, so it can be anything. I think what important is defining what you mean for a specific thing that you are doing, you know- so, like we are trying to do with X and the social value there is pretty much about our supply chain, our contractors and relationships of our contractors with the local communities, it needs to be defined in that way. So I think while it can be, you know, anything from the sustainable development, is based on the sustainable development – through the economic, social and environmental staff, right, is based on that, so it can be as broad as that, it can be linked with CSR, it is all the same idea, of how do you maximise the positive, right? So, I do think it is very important to define it with the audiences you work with to make it very clear what you mean in that specific instance that you are trying to do something because otherwise it is very confusing.

CM What do you think about the wider relationship between the VSOs and local authority? How has been affected the commissioning between those two because of the austerity and cuts?

IE So, social value definitely, not only social value but also the procurement regulation changes has meant that the procurement can be all flexible and that the priority is to open opportunities up so, through social value, social *value is one of the mechanisms by which*, the public bodies can open more opportunities up to VSOs, so it is *one of mechanisms but it become more visible and become more* a priority under social value, it is just a natural link, you know, with the, how do you create, what are the organizations that would create the most value beyond they what deliver? I think that everybody will agree that really the charity organizations, you know the TSOs, social enterprises that live into the community and are very embedded in the local communities, they are, they deliver the most beyond, so if you want be working with those organizations therefore I think really the social value really helped to open that opportunity up to kind of say, well actually – if we want to deliver social value we need to work with the voluntary sector because that’s where the social value exists. And in general I think, there is more shift in C definitely, towards preventative provision, and locality based provision to go out to communities to utilise strengths within resource, within the district centre and with all that, social value is at think is one of the, it is *just a tool to help to do that*, one of the tools to help to do that, you know. So while, obviously we have the community esteem, and they do the wider capacity building and they do wider networking but, we as a kind of commissioning procurement team within the council, we can provide some opportunities, we can provide some advice and we can feed into making sure that more organizations do work with the council, not only as a contractor but as a partner, as an advocate in the community serving. So, definitely positive impact of the Act, just a natural link, you know, just as whereas social value

CM It changed the commissioning process, after the SV Act was introduced?

IE Well, I wouldn’t, I wasn’t working for the local government before so I can’t say before, but internally I think the – we asked in the begging – have changed, we do have commissioners come up and say – but what about communities, what about VSOs, what about our partnerships within community and that comes up lot more in that early stages, just for commissioning, what about consulting, in general, just – the residents and community, and then saying- and again through the changes of the regulations you know, looking at the procurement is a lot more flexible now and go for partnerships, it is a lot more focused on innovation and alternative delivery models so there is a lot more talk about the alternative delivery models and how you can cooperate – you know, cooperation, collaboration, all those things that now are a thing and you can actually do that, there is a lot more – you know, you have light touch, you have restrictive tenders and – and you go and can say, oh this a restrictive tender, just the VSOs, because we know that this is the best market to deliver that sort of provision – and there is a lot more opportunity to do that, and because there is more opportunity to do that the question is getting more earlier and I think we should distinguish harder, you know, do we go with the same provision that always meant to, or we can do something different. Can we split things into lots, we can do you know– we have one big contract, can we actually split in smaller bids and then have smaller providers to bid for those bits independently rather than – you have to get, you have to have all the capacity across, you might just have capacity for one bit and you might win that lot, you know, so I think, ya, I wouldn’t say is all attributed to the SV Act, but this is general in the procurement regulations and drivers and the fact that this is happening, and the fact that is not feasible to slamy size anymore, is just that the services are at the point of breaking, the traditional way of doing services you cannot cut and cut the budget, we have done that for a number of years and we now, what is happening is that, actually we are realising that this model doesn’t work, we can’t do that anymore, we need to find alternative ways to doing staff, we need to look at efficiencies with outcomes and how that interacts with, so it is by necessity, but again I do see social value has been one of the tool to do that and to help to do that but not the only tool, it is the wider kind of way, how we commission, the way how we think about services, the way how we engage with market and ask for solutions and come up with solutions together, and the way that we even working across the council and talk to other teams and say, well actually – we do have so much spend and so decentralised that sometimes there are different 3-4-5 teams that they are delivering the same outcome, if they come together, they can really make a difference, you know, there it isn’t duplications, so is about finding those things, but again social value just adds to it, kind of one way to contribute rather than kind of the main factor of why things are changing. Yes, I think there was a kind of talk that social value is the response,.., social value will help to deliver, you know, help local council to survive under the cuts, you know, through social value that you can, but is not really the capacity to say that, it is a small part. I mean it is becoming more and more important and there is a lot more we can do with social value but in the end, it is currently, with our contractors is about you know, there are services that are needed, and these services are needed in the communities and our contractors can support it. And it becomes important with our costs in the council to provide simple things like peer kind of mentoring, attending events or providing some resources that is supposed to share but we cannot rely on that, we need to be able to strengthened the VSOs and do more preventative work and kind of set up services so it’s kind of catching people before it goes to the crises point, because it is very difficult but you do that for the VSOs, you do you know, they are great to catching the issues early, so it doesn’t go, you know [unclear ]. You know, that’s the greatest shift I think, just understanding that you cannot have your assessments based on, when there is an acute need to receive the support[unclear], because people will come to the council and there are not, you know the assessment is, at such a late stage, that they have to go away, go away until they go to the crises point and then their assessment and then they gets support. But if actually if engaged at the beginning and we utilised the resource and what we do in communities, we have so many great organizations that can support, they may never get to that point. So, it is the wider conversation you know, about, how we do and that’s a big challenge itself.

CM There is a plan in place to strengthening the relationships with VSOs, in the next months?

IE Yes, the corporate plan will be, I mean that will be all public document, it will be a very different way of doing business I think. It will have that kind of preventative, how do we deliver our big ambitions, one of them will be that of working with the voluntary sector locally through doing business differently, and our kind of – I think social value will be one of the ways that we will do that.

CM There will be any workshops with the VSOs in the next months?

IE Yes, so we do have, I mean there is lots of plans, not in the next few months, but we definitely, I mean Y. probably talked to you about the Community Fund they are like the core of what we commission to several organizations to VSOs, the kind of commission to provide capacity building and provide services, so that’s the core and that’s kind of disseminates into other grants and other. So definitely though that we have done events and we have been involved community groups, and boards and you know there is a lot of … Which I think has been reviewed as well, but I think there is a community boards there, there is already forums through which this is, you know, ehm, in the process of delivering the corporate plan what would have happened we would have gone out to partners and say oh, these are our priorities what do you think, one of these areas will be the VSOs as well as the partners will be the VSOs, so, to be honest, I think in C is very, the VSOs is very lovely and is very engaging, rich and is very informed and is very thriving and I think the number of the organizations that we have here it is absolutely ridiculous, how very many community focus, how many initiatives there are in, so I think, and there are very strong politically, they are very strong a communities as well. It is all happening. It is not going to be one event or, it is more just using the existing forums, the existing partnerships.

CM Thank you.