

Dear County Council Cabinet Members,

Healthwatch Leicestershire Review and recommissioning

As the current provider of Healthwatch Leicestershire we support elements of this paper presented to the Cabinet. We agree there should be greater collaboration and joint working as we recognise that, in particular, the 'Health community' crosses local authority boundaries. In fact this is where we started with Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL) successfully winning the tenders for the set up and delivery of all 3 local Healthwatch schemes.

We believe, however, that the County Council Cabinet should **not** limit itself to only procuring a freestanding social enterprise as a future provider in recommendation C (i) for the following reasons:

- VAL, who currently provide the very successful scheme, will be excluded from the procurement process. The current arrangements have provided an excellent Healthwatch Leicestershire using a managed, 'arms-length', model for the last 3 years. In our view this model isn't broken.
- At this point there are no identified 'freestanding social enterprises' to procure from – especially as the Cabinet paper adds the caveat the future provider should have a "...remit focused on delivery of Healthwatch services."
- The financial climate is severe and the extra costs of maintaining a freestanding organisation will impact on frontline delivery of Healthwatch functions.

Although we are asking for this recommendation to be reconsidered you can be assured that VAL will support the next phase of Healthwatch Leicestershire whatever the decision of the County Cabinet. As we did with the setting up of Healthwatch Leicester as an independent organisation, we will ensure there is as smooth a transition as possible.

Yours sincerely

Kevan Liles

Chief Executive, VAL.

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