**Notes from Soft Market Testing Workshop 10 January 2018**

**Essex context for systems leadership**

Systems Leadership and investing in leadership development are important to achieving our ambitions for Essex set out in our vision for the county; *The Future of Essex*. The Future of Essex sets out seven long-term ambitions for our county and it is important that the leadership programme is set in the context of the Vision and supports its delivery.

We know that the main issues we face – promoting prosperity for all, supporting strong and safe communities, helping people stay healthy and independent, supporting our most vulnerable people – cannot be tackled by individual organisations acting alone, or indeed by public services acting alone. They require deep collaboration – between public services; with the voluntary sector, businesses and universities; and with communities.

We also know that for a county of its size and importance, Essex has often underperformed in terms of system leadership. Whilst we have done some great partnership work as a county – for example in tackling domestic abuse – we also know that too often we have punched below our weight; and that opportunities for collaboration were not maximised.

We know that many of our senior staff have been schooled in a traditional way of leading, based around organisations, hierarchy and positional authority; rather than having developed the skills to operate across organisational boundaries. Ethical leadership is about the sustainability of the services we in the public sector deliver. With this leadership programme we’re investing in the future generation of leaders for the public sector across the county not just our individual organisations. It’s an exciting endeavour; potential suppliers will need to challenge us to get a deeper level of collaboration and to think as broadly and deeply as we can across the whole public sector.

It is really important that the programme is tailored to our specific ambitions as a county and is not an off-the-shelf, generic product. The programme also needs to reflect the diversity of Essex. We are a large and very diverse county – with areas of deprivation alongside areas of affluence; close links to London, but also rural communities.

**Sustainable leadership programme**

Our leadership programme is about bringing on the next generation of leaders in Essex – so that when they get to the top, they do not find themselves sometimes fighting a system that doesn’t support collaboration. Instead they will progress with the confidence, skills and relationships that enable them to be natural leaders of systems and places rather than just organisations.

We want to build a sustainable leadership model that builds effective partnership working for us and leaves a legacy; as such we’re looking for a bespoke product that understands and is tailored to our needs, not a generic, off-the-shelf product. We’re interested to know if there is an opportunity to secure an academic qualification for the programme.

As well as achieving a stronger shift towards collaboration across the system we want to inspire a change movement; we can’t achieve new things without new methods of working. We will put our best and brightest people on this leadership programme to build their skills and their network. This means that the programme has to be very valuable to their development and presents an opportunity for them to work on practical issues that matter to the Essex system.

**Creating a convergence space**

We want to provide a development opportunity for our potential future leaders to work collaboratively; they are currently used to silo working and vertical structures. We want to create a space where they all bring their skills and expertise into a room and have the opportunity to share with others.

We must do this in a way that is mindful of their leadership experience so far; they may need support, and we may need to provide tools to enable them to share their experience with others. We need to unlock their leadership history in a non-judgemental way, early in the process, so we add value to the learning process.  We want to create what Matthew Syed calls a growth mindset.

**Support network**

Chief Officers are committed to being present throughout the programme, and creating an authorising environment to enable participants to bring their learning back into their organisations.

We would like to consider the role that senior mentors could play in this programme to offer additional support and learning to participants, we are open to considering mentors at Chief Officer level, from the previous alumni and outside of the sector. The voluntary and community sector participated in the first programme but now have their own development programme ASPIRE, so we need to consider how to involve them in this programme.

The programme is for around 50 participants however we want participants to feel more networked across the system, and we’d like to consider additional opportunities to develop networks across the public sector.

**Selection of participants**

Our criteria for selecting participants for the first programme included participants’ leadership potential, their existing understanding of system-wide collaboration, and personal commitment to development. We're interested in human behavioural traits as much as technical skills.

Having completed a successful first programme there is already a good level of interest from public sector organisations. We welcome any suggestions regarding a framework for selecting participants, we’re keen to ensure the programme participants are decision makers, the next generation of leaders doing the most important work within their organisations, with a degree of seniority that makes them credible in the environment, but we welcome any thoughts on influencing our thinking.

**Project work**

In the first leadership programme we let participants self-select their project; projects were linked to the critical issues facing Essex, and no delivery time was set, we’d like to rethink our approach to project selection in this programme ensuring that it delivers tangible outcomes and contributes to personal development.

We’d like participants to collaborate on projects that are linked to delivering the seven ambitions set out by the Essex Vision; shifting the system towards collaborative working but we don’t want to be too task orientated.

We’d also like to ensure that these projects are linked to the strategic priorities across public sector organisations and their own change programmes. We shall be selecting people on the basis of them being the right leaders for the programme, and we recognise that there will also be benefit in getting people to work outside of their work areas to bring fresh learning and perspective.

This programme should provide an opportunity for participants to bring both their project, and system leadership learning, back into their individual organisations as well as. In this programme we’d like to consider setting a project delivery timescale of 12-18 months, and the projects will be sponsored by Chief Officers.

**Indicative Budget & Timescale**

Our indicative budget is around £100,000 for a cohort of 50. Our planned timetable is to go to tender March, complete the tender by the end of April, with the programme to go live by the end of May.

**Measuring outcomes**

We’re looking for the selected supplier to define how we can best measure outcomes of the programme; taking into consideration the development of the individual, the change that is effected within organisations, and how the projects demonstrate success. The Essex Vision sets out our ambitions for the county for the next 20 years, but we need an indication that we're moving in the right direction at the right speed, so we must balance short-term and longer-term success measures – i.e. we need the programme to deliver some tangibles but also build longer-term change, so we need to capture both in how we measure success.

**Supplier solution**

We want the best solution to deliver this ambitious programme and are open to a flexible supplier solution, including supplier collaboration and multiple supplier provision, as long as supplier accountability is clear.

**Feedback from Frontline**

**Frontline was the first programme supplier**.

“We note the context has changed with the implementation of the Essex Vision. Previously there were issues of sponsorship and stronger support from individual organisations would have benefited participants. NHS were absent friends and it was difficult to engage with health, it is good to hear that Health partners have now given their commitment for this programme, as it felt too Local Authority last time. Some of the challenges participants faced, are like the same they will face during their daily work loves, engaging people, gaining senior buy in, influencing others.

There are five people here today from the first cohort, they will tell you the programme had big impact on them and their confidence and network, then their organisation and then the system. Participants chose what they wanted to work on but that was tricky. We built a logic model for the first programme and we're happy to share in this forum or outside.”

**Feedback from past participants**

Consideration should be given to how to sustain the ‘movement of change’, I came back off the course and back into my organisation; an organisation that doesn’t understand system leadership and is in its own state of change.

How do you make what we’re learning on the programme more relevant to what we are doing in our day to day job and not a “bolt-on”. Some sat on the sidelines as they were focused on their day job and so were less committed to the programme; what we’re learning on the programme could also contribute to achieving our objectives at work.

The best value that I got from the programme was meeting other individuals from other organisations; understanding their priorities and challenges and making contacts in other organisations to support me to resolve issues.

And who do we hand the baton of the wicked issue onto? Can we build the onward learning by enhancing the alumni approach, or virtual learning, currently it’s limited to the connections made on the programme and we need to consider how to maintain the collaborative approach. The alumni can also support the second programme with project work.