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## Background

With councils focusing on their role as Place leaders, they have been developing new ways to partner with providers of service and infrastructure projects.

The aim is to develop economic and social infrastructure and to ensure not only that economic growth in each area is encouraged, but that the equitable distribution of growth is hardwired from that start.

That means all stakeholders working together, including large and small companies and the voluntary sector, driven by the needs and wishes of residents.

above £100,000. The Council looked for contractors who were innovative and proactive in offering relevant, achievable social value commitments - covering areas like employment conditions, apprenticeships and training, support for young people and work with SMEs.



## An Inclusive Economy and Partnership Working

*The BSA, in conjunction with Associate Member Bevan Brittan, held an event at the end of June for some 40 public and private sector representatives to discuss how economic growth can be developed in each area of the country which benefits all sections of society.*

David Hutton introduced proceedings by emphasising the topical nature of the discussion. There was new momentum behind local government's role as Place leader, encouraging inclusive growth in partnership with others.

Jen Rodvold and Bali Rai began by introducing their partnership work in Harrow.

Bali explained that social value was built right into the procurement process, responsible for a minimum of 10 per cent of the overall score in all contracts

## Speakers

Andrew Carter, Chief Executive, Centre for Cities

Nathan Goode, Director, The Social Value Portal

David Hutton, Partner, Bevan Brittan (facilitator)

Bali Rai, Economic Development Officer, London Borough of Harrow

Jen Rodvold, Sustainability and Social Value Leadership, Sopra Steria

Faye Shaw, Managing Director Citizen Services, Serco Local and Regional Government

Jerry Stokes, Managing Director, The Work Company

Mark Upton, Head of Policy and Research, Prospects

Jen emphasised the genuinely collaborative nature of discussion, and joint working, on social value. The 10 per cent score really helped. Sustainable service delivery (encompassing community and social, economic, environmental, and workplace) was the basis of partnership working for social value.

Faye Shaw and Jerry Stokes focused on the vital role of SMEs and the voluntary sector in driving local economic growth, and of collaborative working between companies of different sizes - with each playing to their strengths.

Larger companies could help small businesses win contracts, transition quickly and deliver consistently. Finding the right partner was key. Transparency and, once again, good commissioning was at the heart of successful partnership working.

Jerry also spoke from experience in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to emphasise the critical importance of localism to inclusive growth.

Floor discussion highlighted significant differences in the extent to which different areas used the Social Value Act as a tool for encouraging inclusive growth, and the ways in which they used it. Some didn't give social value a formal weighting; others had decentralised procurement functions and practice varied.

There was also comment on the effects of the apprenticeship levy, and whether the social value focus would now shift elsewhere as a result. There was a need for 'patient employers' to help those further away from the labour market; job carving; and greater attention given to health needs, including mental health.

When asked what more central government could do, real devolution to encourage integrated local commissioning, especially of employment support and skills provision, was the reply. There needed to be more trust in local leadership. Particular issues facing large rural areas were also raised.

When asked about the attributes of successful commissioning for inclusive growth, open and honest dialogue before market, a common approach across the council, and a holistic approach across service streams, including integrating existing services, was the response. The commercial sector also appreciated commissioning at scale.

The second session then looked at the way forward.

Andrew Carter began by emphasising not only the further 'asks' of central government but also the tools already at the disposal of local areas. He focused on the ways in which a variety of places were looking to use public sector assets, in light of [recent research](#) which Centre for Cities had conducted with Bevan Brittan and Turner & Townsend. With the right mindset and the right partnership arrangements, assets could be used to deliver and shape local growth, and Andrew set out the factors which led to success.



Nathan Goode added that, although the Act itself didn't cover planning, Section 106 increasingly linked social value with assets. Nathan's presentation then dwelt on the power of data in delivering social value; metrics to enable councils and the private sector use the Act better by measuring and capturing social value; and lessons learnt to date. The ultimate aim was change, improvement and progression. The Act, while having no real teeth, was a useful catalyst, and momentum had increased in the last nine to 12 months. There was a need to work more with communities in designing social value outcomes.

Mark Upton's starting point was community strategies and outcomes. He focused on the importance of quality jobs and who they were going to, and actions that might raise aspiration - including mentoring, work experience, enterprise activity in schools, and helping young people transition into work. Service providers needed to deliver sustainable outcomes which lasted beyond the length of their contract, driven by local need. This might include helping those further away from the labour market, including older groups.



The discussion returned to the issue of devolution. There may not be a huge number of new deals, but local areas had a degree of flexibility within existing frameworks to show local leadership.

There was also discussion of the Green Book, and whether it now needed updating; the importance of transparency; and of significant room for the better use of asset bases, context being all-important.

Finally, it was commented that councils could be great champions of social value but that all partners had only just begun to scratch the surface of what could be achieved in social value for an inclusive economy.