

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

20 June 2017

Re-Commissioning of Housing Service Support Contracts Rapid Scrutiny Exercise

Purpose

1. To report to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Housing the outcome of the rapid scrutiny exercise established by the Environment Select Committee and held on 09 March 2017 to consider the approach when procuring new services.

Background

2. The Housing Service is currently reviewing all housing related support contracts with a view to re-commissioning Housing Service Support contracts (current value £1.9m per year) early in 2017 to ensure new arrangements are in place by April 2018.
3. At the 22 February 2017 Environment Select Committee meeting it was resolved to establish a further meeting of the Re-Commissioning of Housing Service Support Contracts rapid scrutiny exercise.
4. The aim of the exercise was agreed to discuss the approach when procuring new services under Option 3, and to help shape the outcomes required and the substance of what to commission.

Evidence

1. The following papers were made available prior to the meeting:
 - Final Report of the 23 January 2017 Re-Commissioning of Housing Service Support Contracts Rapid Scrutiny Exercise
 - Procurement of Housing Related Support Contract - draft report to 07 February 2017 Cabinet
 - Supported housing summary presentation – 22 January 2017
 - Supported housing summary presentation – 09 March 2017
2. As requested at the meeting the following report was subsequently circulated to members of the rapid scrutiny:
 - Procurement of Housing Related Support Contract - Timeline
3. Janet O'Brien, Head of Housing Strategy & Assets, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding, and Cllr Richard Clewer, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Libraries, provided the

background information and explained that historically the commissioning of the services had not had a good enough rationale and now required a consistent approach across the county. It was noted that some areas were receiving a different service to others, and that the various providers were delivering their services under different contracts.

4. The Task Group noted that Option 3 as recommended in the draft Cabinet report was the best option to provide a balance of housing related support services, but that more work needed to be performed to shape what this approach would be.

Deliberation

5. During the ensuing discussion, the scrutiny members expressed their concerns about a number of issues including:
 - a. There had been no overall management structure in place previously to monitor the support services. This had led to a low rate of turnover in the system.
 - b. The low rate of turnover was also noted as in part caused by a lack of any incentives for contractors to move people who were ready out of the schemes.
 - c. Improving the turnover levels was important, especially given budget constraints, so that the number of people supported by the service could be increased. However, it was also important to ensure people were not rushed through support processes by contractors. This should be carefully considered and avoided, especially if any financial incentives are to be offered to contractors.
 - d. The following proposed changes to the Housing Support Services were noted:
 - i. High risk offender locations should be retained, as they are well used and accommodate various types of crimes. Keeping the locations local would also prevent probation officers from having to travel out of county.
 - ii. Temporary accommodation with attached support should be reduced and converted into more relevant support types to make the best use of funding whilst not losing the housing available.
 - iii. Domestic Abuse services should be recommissioned together with Public Health Outreach services.
 - iv. High Risk Offender services should be recommissioned separately.
 - e. Clarification was sought regarding the reduction in supported temporary accommodation. It was noted that the accommodation units would be retained and that it was proposed that only some of the support be withdrawn. This would be a reduction from 44 supported units to 38. There would still be 44 units of accommodation available. In total, there are approximately 150 units of temporary accommodation, of which 44 currently have support funding attached. The number of units would remain the same overall, with less units having support attached.

- f. It was noted that the new service model should be able to react to a change in demands. This would be to avoid a recurrence of imbalances in the services provided. There should be a regular review of the resource demands to meet this need.
 - g. Specialist and high level support in the service terms refers to mental and drug issues. It was noted that many people in receipt of services had primary needs such as homelessness, and secondary needs such as substance abuse problems.
6. It was noted that lead officers and the executive were keen to continue working with scrutiny input following the Bidder's Day scheduled for May 2017. It was suggested that a further meeting be arranged before the tender goes live in June 2017.

Recommendations

The rapid scrutiny group recommends that Wiltshire Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Housing note the following recommendations when considering the development of the re-commissioning of Housing Service Support contracts:

- 1. To implement a system of monitoring and management of housing related support contracts.**
- 2. To investigate offering contractors suitable incentives to move people on from the Housing Service Support process once they are ready.**
- 3. To regularly review resource demands on the service to ensure that the service is meeting up-to-date needs and reacting to any changes in demand.**
- 4. To retain the current high-level offender locations in Wiltshire.**
- 5. To re-commission high-risk offender services separately to other support services.**
- 6. To reduce the amount of temporary accommodation with support attached from 44 units to 38.**
- 7. To re-commission the domestic abuse services together with public health outreach services.**

That the Environment Select Committee:

- 1. Continues scrutiny engagement in some form with the re-commissioning of the Housing Service Support contracts process up to 1st April 2018.**
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Cllr Bridget Wayman, lead member for the rapid scrutiny exercise

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Background documents

None