

**Annual Report of the Major Contracts Task Group 2009-10**

**Purpose of report**

1. To present to the Committee a summary of the reviews carried out by the Major Contracts Task Group over the last 12 months.

**Background**

2. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2009 the Committee formed the Task Group with the purpose of holding contractors to account in providing Wiltshire's services.
3. It was agreed that the review of major contracts is not best done at the level of a main committee. It was recognised by leading members and contractors themselves that much more could be achieved by way of partnership working if the performance information in the annual report and comments from client departments were reviewed in a smaller dedicated setting.
4. As a result the Task Group was formed with the following terms of reference and membership:
  - (a) To hold contractors to account for the delivery of public services – in relation to those contracts which fall within the remit of the Children's Services Select Committee
  - (b) To carry out mid year and annual reviews of major contracts
  - (c) To investigate areas of poor performance and concerns arising from contract reviews and to make recommendations for improvement as appropriate
  - (d) To establish links with the relevant procurement boards so as to ensure appropriate involvement in the build up to contract renewal
  - (e) To periodically report into the Children's Services Select Committee on matters arising from the task group's activities during the year
  - (f) To produce an annual report for the Children's Services Select Committee on the main findings and recommendations arising from the work of the task group.

**Membership:**

Councillor Bill Moss (Chairman)  
Councillor Carole Soden  
Councillor Jon Hubbard  
Councillor Jacqui Lay  
Councillor Peter Colmer

## **Main considerations for the Committee**

5. Since the Task Group was created and a new approach to contract scrutiny undertaken, a number of new contracts were identified and added to the forward work plan. This capacity has allowed more providers to be held to account in an individual meeting dedicated to their contract.
6. Through individual meetings Councillors, Officers and Providers have valued this approach as it allows greater time to understand the complexity and background of contracts. It has also allowed greater time for questioning and holding contractors performance to account.
7. Below is a summary of the four contracts reviewed by the Task Group and the main highlights.

### White Horse Education Partnership

- This contract is responsible for the accommodation at 3 North Wiltshire Schools (these being Abbeyfield School, Wootton Bassett School and Malmesbury School).
- The number of chewing gum related issues (e.g. chewing gum sticking to carpet) previously considered as a concern at the last review, was acknowledged as improved. To further aid improvement a recommendation was made to involve the young people in creating solutions.
- The use of school facilities by the wider community were discussed as being important, particularly in light of the extended schools project. It was acknowledged that whilst the lead must come from the individual school, further work could be undertaken to increase usage.
- It was agreed that a visit to schools would be undertaken before future reviews in order to better understand the contract.

### Sodexo School Catering

- Sodexo supply a number of schools in Wiltshire with school meals. In addition to School Catering Sodexo supply facilities management, building cleaning and grounds maintenance. These fall outside the remit of the Task Group and are covered by the Overview and Scrutiny Organisation and Resources Select Committee.
- This contract was extended in light of the move to the unitary council. Councillors highlighted the continued levels of performance and the flexibility during a time of transition for the authority.
- As work has progressed towards extending the contract for a further year the Task Group have been concerned at the low number of schools wishing to remain in the corporate contract. Many have decided to provide meals

themselves or through other suppliers. This will continue to be monitored by the Task Group.

### Sure Start Children's Centres

- The Sure Start program provide Children's Centres over 30 sites in Wiltshire. These services provide early learning and childcare for babies and children until they are five years old , support for parents and children, child health services, information and advice, and links with job centres for those wanting to go back to work.
- The overall aim of Sure Start Children Centres is to :
  - o Reduce inequalities and narrow the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.
  - o Support vulnerable groups.
  - o Gain parental and community engagement.
  - o Form multi-agency teams around the child.
  - o Integrate the delivery of shared initiatives, e.g. reducing childhood obesity.
  - o Make better use of human and capital resources.
- The Task Group acknowledged the continued good performance of the contracts and the work undertaken by Officers to use as much of the funding as possible to provide services for children.
- As the current contracts are currently being retendered and the new arrangements due to come into effect in March 2011 recommendations were made on the Task Groups preferred option. It was noted that this will not affect the front line service, purely how centres are managed.
- The commissioning of Sure Start Children Centres was discussed at Cabinet on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2010. Cabinet's decision was to tender clustered areas under the following:
  - o Cluster the three children's centres in Trowbridge under one contract
  - o Cluster the three children's centres in Salisbury under one contract
  - o Cluster the three children's centres in Chippenham under one contract
  - o Cluster the two children's centres in Melksham under one contract
  - o Cluster the two children's centres in Devizes under one contract
  - o Cluster Marlborough with Pewsey under one contract
  - o Cluster Mere, Tisbury and Wilton under one contract
  - o Cluster Wootton Bassett with Cricklade under one contract
  - o Cluster Amesbury with Bulford under one contract
  - o Offer Tidworth, Corsham, Malmesbury, Westbury, Warminster, Downton, Bradford-on-Avon and Calne as single sites, but through the selection process, commissioners to look positively on proposals to combine individual sites and the named clusters together within a hub area of the County; Chippenham hub, Devizes hub, Salisbury hub and Trowbridge hub, in order to align services.
  - o to provide a co-ordinated specialist service for children under five with difficulties and disabilities based in the four Council hub areas of the

County with outreach services delivered across the hub area, providing a range of support between 9am and 3 pm, Monday to Friday all year round.

### Quarriers

- Quarriers provide residential foster placements for young people with complex needs. This is over two homes, The Orchards in Salisbury and The Paddocks in Melksham.
- During discussion a number of issues came to light particularly around education provision and aftercare. The newly appointed Head of Children in Care will be carrying out a review which education has been suggested to be included. A report on this review will be received by the Task Group in September.
- In addition, a recommendation has been made to the Select Committee to receive a report on aftercare provision in Wiltshire and the work towards independent living.

### **Conclusion**

8. The Task Group has achieved a great deal in the last twelve months particularly as many of the providers had not been through the Scrutiny process before. In most cases this has been outside of the contract requirement.
9. As this is a standing Task Group the contracts register provided by the Corporate Procurement Unit is regularly monitored so that any new contracts can be added to the forward work plan. Where contracts are due to be retendered Scrutiny has contributed to the process by giving their views based on discussions Officers.
10. As the Council moves towards jointly commissioned contracts with our partners there is an opportunity for the Task Group to be involved in monitoring the performance. This is currently being investigated by the Scrutiny Officer who will liaise with the Task Group in developing this further.

### **Proposal**

11. That the Committee:
  - a) Note the work of the Task Group in reviewing Major Contracts over the last year.
  - b) Endorse the membership of the Task Group to continue over the coming year and report back in 12 months time.

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