

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

22 February 2017

Re-Commissioning of Housing Service Support Contracts Rapid Scrutiny Exercise

Purpose

1. To report to the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding the outcome of the rapid scrutiny exercise established by the Environment Select Committee and held on 23 January 2017 to consider the draft Re-commissioning of Housing Service Support Contracts report prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 07 February 2017.

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 13th December 2016 Environment Select Committee meeting it was resolved to investigate the establishment of a Re-Commissioning of Housing Service Support Contracts rapid scrutiny exercise to look at the approach to procuring these new services.
4. The aim of the exercise was agreed to discuss the approach to procuring new services 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:
 - Procurement of housing related support contract draft report to Cabinet
2. As requested at the meeting the following report was subsequently circulated to members of the rapid scrutiny:
 - Supported housing summary presentation.
1. 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 the existing contracts expire on 31st March 2018. To secure new contracts from 1st April 2018 it was necessary to commence a procurement exercise in early 2017.

2. 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

3. During the ensuing discussion, the scrutiny members expressed their concerns about a number of issues including:
 - a. Some of the needs for customer groups were being met at an acceptable level, such as offenders and refugees, whilst others were under-provided for, such as young people. Others groups were also identified as being over-provided for, such as temporary accommodation.
 - b. Approximately 50% of all customers within supported housing schemes were in the 16-25year age group. However, only around 25% of current services are targeted at young people.
 - c. The direct linkage between accommodation and support tended to lead to the creation of inflexible arrangements which prevented the accommodation usage from properly reflecting the demand from different user groups.
 - d. It was recognised that it was appropriate for some user groups to be provided with specialist accommodation linked to tailored support packages. However, for other groups, separating accommodation from support would allow some accommodation units to cater for more than one user group, allowing for greater flexibility and improved usage.
 - e. There was an insufficient throughput of customers, which required better monitoring.
 - f. It was noted that whilst Option 3 in the draft report was the best option to re-commission under, it was not yet possible to know what form this option would take.
 - g. It considered that further scrutiny input was required from Environment Select, possibly from a task group, during the formulation Option 3.
4. It was noted that lead officers and the executive were open to scrutiny input to help ensure that Option 3 provides a balance of housing related support services across all customer groups reflecting the up to date needs.

Recommendations

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

- a. **That Option 3 as described in the draft report to Cabinet is progressed as the preferred route to re-commission the housing related support service contracts.**

- b. That continued input be sought from scrutiny in the development of Option 3 to help ensure that the new model of support services reflect the up to date needs of the customer groups.

That the Environment Select Committee:

- a. Set up a Task Group to investigate the form in which the recommissioning of housing support service contracts under Option 3 will take.

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Background documents

None