

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Executive Board Sub Committee on Thursday, 12 October 2006 at Conference Room 1, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chairman), Harris and Nelson

Apologies for Absence: Councillor (none)

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor (none)

Officers present: G. Ferguson, A. McNamara, D. Perchard, J. Potter, J. Tradewell and A. Williamson

Also in attendance: (none)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

ES39 APPROVED MOTOR TRADER SCHEME

Action

Strategic Director
- Environment

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

ES40 SOCIAL SERVICES OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM

At present the Social Services Out of Hours Service Emergency Duty Team (EDT) was provided through firstly a call reception and assessment service, which managed all the out of hours emergency calls for Halton's Social Services. This was delivered through a contract with Cheshire County Council at a cost of £115,000. Secondly, a front line contact service, to complete urgent assessments of need and risk consisting of daytime staff from Children's and Adults Services, who volunteer for an out of hours rota and receive enhanced payments. An additional £88,000 was allocated to the Budget for this purpose, making a total overall budget of £203,000.

The Sub-Committee was advised that there were significant problems with these arrangements, and as a result the service was not fit for purpose.

These problems stemmed from two key issues:

- the contract with Cheshire was significantly above the market value and the per capita expenditure on the service was much more than neighbouring authorities; and
- there were not enough volunteers to cover either of the rotas, and there were significant gaps on these rotas. For Adult Services, over 50% of the rota could not be filled, whilst for Children's Services this was approximately 35%.

The Contract with Cheshire required that they should cover for Halton if gaps arise, but this had been difficult to enforce.

Both Halton and St. Helens Borough Councils had separately reviewed their EDT Services and had concluded that a different service arrangement should be put in place. Officers of both authorities had met and had developed proposals, details of which were outlined in the report. These proposals had been supported in principle by the Senior Management Teams of both authorities.

It was proposed that Halton would pay St. Helens Borough Council £170,500 annually to manage the service for three years making a total of £510,000. The Sub-Committee was requested to consider waiving Contract Standing Order 3.1 – Relating to Contracts between £50,000 and £1m, on the grounds that there was only a very limited potential supply of the providers of EDT Services in the region. In addition, there would be a clear financial and operational benefit to the Council - a potential reduction in the overall budget of over £30,000 annually, allied to the delivery of a consistent service.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposals to develop a formal partnership between St. Helens and Halton Borough Councils for the delivery of the emergency out of hours social workers service as identified in the report be approved in principle; and
- (2) the waiving of the Contracts Standing Order 3.1, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

ES41 PROVISION OF SHORT-TERM RESIDENTIAL RESPITE
CARE FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The Sub-Committee was advised that the need for short term residential respite care for adults with disabilities was met through an in-house resource at Moorfield Road, Widnes. This resource required modernisation in line with Valuing People. Halton PCT also had a residential resource that was accessed through the partnership working arrangements.

Currently the Bredon resource was closed whilst capital work was undertaken to enable reconfigured services to be delivered at this facility. Work would be completed by the end of 2006, and would include four fully accessible respite beds to meet the needs of those with severe physical disabilities as well as challenging behaviour.

The report proposed that the service based at Moorfield be closed and the new service based at Bredon be tendered out. In view of the significant budget pressures, the high cost of in-house provision and the Council's duty to ensure value for money and service delivery, it was proposed to transfer provision of care and support at Bredon to the independent sector through a process of competitive tendering. The proposed contract period was three years and the estimated value over this term, based on the independent sector English Average unit cost, uplifted to 2006/07 prices, was £1.03m. This represented a potential saving of £340,000 over the term of the contract.

It was noted that current staff at Moorfield would be eligible for transfer to the new providers of the respite services but currently there were insufficient vacancies within the supported housing network service to offer redeployment and it was likely that this would be an attractive alternative.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposal to tender for a 4 bed short stay unit based at Bredon be accepted;
- (2) the proposal to close the 4 bedded unit at Moorfield be accepted; and

- (3) further work would be undertaken in partnership with the Primary Care Trust to seek further investment in more innovative respite services rather than traditional bed based services.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community
Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

ES42 LONG TERM PROCUREMENT OF SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICES

On 19th September 2002, the Executive Board gave approval for the award of interim contracts to existing supported housing providers in order to afford protection to vulnerable people in receipt of services. The report proposed that the interim contract would be replaced by full Supporting People (SP) contracts, subject to the findings of a rigorous review to be conducted on each service which would evaluate value for money based on cost, strategic relevance and quality. In Halton there were 107 services for vulnerable members of the community at an approximate cost of £8m per annum.

The Supporting People Service Reviews in Halton had been completed and in general services were found to be offering a fair to good service. The report highlighted the number of service improvements instigated by the Supporting People Team during the review process.

The Service Reviews also highlighted potential to reconfigure existing services in order to meet gaps in local needs and to improve value for money by reducing the cost of services. Initial discussions regarding the findings of the Supporting People Service Reviews had taken place with approximately one third of providers. These discussions had indicated a potential gross annual saving of approximately £700,000.

The report sought approval to extend interim contracts for a period of up to 12 months and to enter into full contracts, following a period of consultation with providers and subject to the following provisos:

- services were configured to meet an agreed local need;
- services were of good quality, reaching a minimum of level C against Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework and meeting all Quality and Performance Standards to the entire satisfaction of the Supporting People Commissioning Body;

- services were reviewed as offering Value for Money in terms of the quality and cost of the service; and
- expenditure could be met within existing budgets.

It was proposed that Standing Orders would be waived due to compliance with Standing Orders not being possible as:

- (i) The SP Interim Contract set out an intention to enter into long term contracts subject to the satisfactory outcome at service review;
- (ii) It would result in a clear financial detriment to the Council in that, a mass procurement exercise would be prohibitive in terms of cost and time;
- (iii) it was not practicable as a mass procurement exercise could destabilise the provider market and place vulnerable people at risk of loss of service;
- (iv) an extension of the interim contract would allow officers additional time to undertake further value for money assessments, which would be used to inform negotiations with providers on reduced levels of funding; and
- (v) an extension of the interim contract would afford the authority the flexibility not to renew contracts, should this prove necessary, to contain expenditure within budget.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in the exceptional circumstances detailed above, for the purpose of Standing Order 1.6, that Standing Orders 2.2 – 2.6, 2.8 – 2.13, 3.3 -3.6, be waived on this occasion because compliance would result in a clear financial detriment to the Council and would result in a market imbalance, placing vulnerable service users at risk of a loss of service;
- (2) the Council extends interim Supporting People Contracts for a period of up to 12 months and enters into negotiations with existing service providers to ensure the continued provision of services to vulnerable service users, subject to the providers being able to demonstrate, to the entire satisfaction of the Supporting People Commissioning Body, that

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

Strategic Director

services are of good quality, are strategically relevant and offer value for money;

- Health and Community

- (3) Contract Standing Orders 2.2 – 2.6, 2.8 – 2.13, 3.3 – 3.6 are suspended to implement a retraction plan for the re-configuration of 24-hour Supported Living Services in order to minimise the risk of loss of service of some of the most vulnerable members of our community;

- (4) delegated powers be approved to enable the Strategic Director, Health and Community, in conjunction with a Portfolio Holder for Community, to award contracts to existing providers subject to the conditions set out above on the varied terms set out under Sections 3.10 – 3.13 of the report;

Strategic Director
- Health and Community

- (5) subsequent to the expiry of full Supporting People Contracts, granted under a waiver due to the exceptional circumstances set out in the report, Supporting People Services will be procured through a competitive tendering process; and

Strategic Director
- Health and Community

- (6) the Strategic Director, Health and Community, in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Community, be authorised to take such action as may be necessary to implement the above recommendations

Strategic Director
- Health and Community

Strategic Director
- Health and Community

ES43 DEVELOPMENT OF SHORT TERM PILOTS FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND WELFARE SERVICES

The Sub-Committee was advised that in 2003, Halton received a £8.5m ring-fenced grant for the provision of Supporting People (SP) Services. The grant had since been reduced each financial year. The Department of Communities and Local Government had confirmed the Council's levels grant up to 2007/08 and had confirmed that as an Excellent Authority, the Council retained the right to roll-forward any underspend.

However, the level of funding committed to the SP Programme on a national level had been the subject of

considerable review since the programme was introduced in 2003. In October 2006 the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was expected to publish its plans for the long term funding arrangements for the programme. In addition to the risk to Halton of loss of funding, all Excellent Authorities faced the risk of loss of flexibility to roll-forward any underspend. DCLG had indicated an intention to require the return of underspend from 2008 onwards.

The on-going reduction in funding, coupled with concerns over the government's intention to introduce an SP distribution formula within the first two years of the programme, had lead to an effective freeze on the commissioning of any SP services. This restriction on the commissioning of new services and delays in the completion of on-going developments had lead to a year on year underspend on Halton's SP Programme Grant and subsequent concerns that Halton was failing to meet gaps in service identified in the SP Five-year Strategy and in meeting the Government's new preventative agenda for adults social care.

It was proposed that in order to maximise use of the grant and to ensure best use of resources for vulnerable members of the community, an expansion of services on a temporary basis, within the confirmed grant allocation up to the end of March 2008 be agreed.

Halton's SP underspend in 2005/06 was approximately £1.4m. This was rolled-forward into the 2006/07 budget which was also currently projected to underspend by £1.4m. Bids had been invited for short-term funding of services to support vulnerable members of the community. Under the flexibility afforded to the Authority after achieving Excellent Status, bids were also invited for the provision of welfare services, which were only eligible for funding within the SP Grant conditions for Excellent Authorities. All services were to be viewed as pilots, attracting funding up to the end of March 2008. An outline of the services approved by Supporting People Boards and the indicative costs were set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in the exceptional circumstances detailed below, for the purpose of Standing Order 1.6, Standing Orders 3.3 – 3.6 be waived on this occasion. Compliance is not practicable for reasons of urgency, in that undertaking tender exercises would reduce the time

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

available to spend the time limited funding on vulnerable members of our community and compliance would result in the Council having to forego a clear financial benefit, in that the Council could be required to return any under spent Supporting People Programme Grant from April 2008 onwards;

- (2) delegated powers be approved to enable the Strategic Director, Health and Community, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Community, to award short-term contracts to the parties listed in the report, at a cost not exceeding that listed and subject to the conditions set out in the report; and

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

- (3) the Strategic Director, Health and Community, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Community, be authorised to take such action as may be necessary to implement the recommendations as set out in the report; subject to further information on how the proposals regarding the appointment of the proposed three additional temporary Support Time and Recovery Workers could be developed without long term implications for the Council.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

ES44 TO SEEK A WAIVER OF CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS TO PERMIT THE SETTING UP OF A SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH KEY STAGE 4 PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT PROVIDERS

There was a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide education for pupils who were permanently excluded from school. This was carried out by most authorities through the provision of Pupil Referral Units.

At the end of the last academic year tenders were invited for provision in the following areas:

- Work-based Learning;
- Support and Emotional Literacy;
- Sport, Recreation and Leisure;
- Academic Sub GCSE; and
- Academic GCSE

Specifications for these tenders were widely distributed to organisations in the region who provided

services in these areas, and expressions of interest were requested. However, this year only single tenders were received in each area of provision. This reflected the limited number of organisations who were willing and equipped to work with some of the most demanding and challenging young people within the Borough. All the tenders received were from existing providers who were part of the recent successful Ofsted Inspection and who had met the Quality Assurance Processes administered by the Head of Key Stage 4 PRU.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Strategic Director Children and Young People be given delegated authority to enter into Service Level Agreements with the following providers:

Kids First;
The Alternative Project;
Progress Sport;
Rathbones; and
Riverside College; and

Acting Strategic
Director-Children
& Young People

- (2) a further report be brought to the Sub Committee outlining what each company supplies, where they are based, approximate cost of each and how many young people are involved in each area of provision;

Acting Strategic
Director-Children
& Young People

- (3) the waiving of Standing Orders 3.1 – 3.7 be approved due to the specialist nature of the provision and limited market.

Acting Strategic
Director-Children
& Young People

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES45 SALE OF LAND AT HALE ROAD, WIDNES

The Sub-Committee considered a report which sought approval for the sale of Council land forming part of the site of the former Ball O'Ditton Royal British Legion Branch premises, Hale Road, Widnes.

The whole site (including the Council's land) had been advertised for sale on the open market. 14 bids had been received ranging from £175,000 to £525,000. The offer of £525,000 from Grundy and Co. Excavations Limited was unconditional and it was their intention to hold the site for a period of time prior to making a formal planning application

for residential development purposes. Acceptance of the bid would give the Council a projected capital receipt of £175,000.

RESOLVED: That approval be given for the sale of the site of the former Ball O'Ditton Royal British Legion Branch premises, Hale Road, Widnes to Grundy and Co. Excavations Limited.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

MINUTES ISSUED: 26th October 2006

CALL IN: 2nd November 2006

Any matter decided by the Executive Board Sub-Committee may be called in no later than 2nd November 2006.

Meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.