

**Report for:** Cabinet

**Item number:**

**Title:** Request to Waive Contract Standing Order 9.01 as allowed under CSO 10.01 Housing Related Support – Information, Advice and Guidance Services

**Report authorised by:** Charlotte Pomery – Assistant Director for Commissioning

**Lead Officer:** Gill Taylor – Strategic Lead, Single Homelessness & Vulnerable Adults

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Key Decision

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1 This report requests approval to implement Contract Standing Order 10.01.1.(a) and Contract Standing Order 10.01.2 (d), which provide that a waiver may be agreed if the value of the contract is below the applicable threshold pursuant to the Public Contracts Regulations, and: (ii) it is in the Council's overall interest to do so.
- 1.2 This report also requests approval for the implementation of Contract Standing Order 9.07.1.(d) to award a contract valued at £612,000 to Haringey Citizens Advice Bureau.

## **2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

- 2.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that residents who need information, advice and guidance have access to high quality services. The services within this contract help to prevent homelessness, manage debt, provide employment support and legal advice and support the health and wellbeing of Haringey residents. This service has a real impact in supporting people to live independently and well in Haringey.
- 2.2 The Information, Advice and Guidance contract is therefore strategically important, and it is essential that the support offered continues whilst a new service is designed and commissioned. It is for this reason that I recommend the award of the contract for up to a further 9 months.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that, in accordance with Contract Standing Order (CSO) 10.01.1(a), Cabinet approves the award of a contract for the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Service to Haringey Citizens Advice Bureau for a contract period of 9 months with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.
- 3.2 That the total cost of the Contract for the period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 is £612,000.

### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1 The provision of high quality, accessible and locally relevant information, advice and guidance for Haringey residents is of primary importance to the Council. It is therefore in the Council's overall interest to award this contract whilst thorough recommissioning of a new service is completed.
- 4.2 The Covid-19 pandemic delayed a planned recommissioning process in 2020, as Council officers and local service providers channelled all available capacity into the provision of support to residents. The recommended contract period will allow sufficient time to complete the tender process for a new contract, which will continue seamlessly from the end of this one, ensuring the best service for residents. The recommissioning process has already begun, with the tender process starting in June 2021 with a market engagement event. The process will be concluded, with a new contract starting from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.
- 4.3 The time to conduct a full recommissioning and service reshaping exercise will ensure the recommissioned service is responsive, flexible and strategically aligned. The newly commissioned Information, Advice and Guidance service will strengthen a range of Council priorities and work areas, including our commitments around housing, domestic abuse and employment, as well as the work of the Fairness Commission and Welcome Advisory Board.
- 4.4 Remodelling will also provide a shift in service delivery of IAG in the borough, drawing out learning from the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure broader access to the service and varied modes of online and face-to-face delivery.

### **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 Do nothing. It would be possible to let the current contract run to its end and not renew it, as there is no statutory requirement to provide information, advice and guidance in this way. However, there is a demonstrable need for Information, Advice and Guidance in Haringey, which the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated. As such it would not be in the best interests of the Council or our

residents to have a gap in service delivery whilst the new contract is commissioned.

- 5.2 Insourcing. The provision of this service as a directly delivered service was robustly explored. This was not found to be suitable as the provision of independent advice and casework around statutory decision-making and other issues directly related to the Council's work is a key element of this service, therefore creating potential conflicts of interest and reducing resident confidence in the service.

## 6. Background information

- 6.1 There is a demonstrable need for Information, Advice and Guidance in Haringey. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in areas such as overcrowded housing and homelessness, precarious employment, mental ill-health and social exclusion. These have been felt most acutely by BAME communities, low-income households, disabled people, and children and young people. The consequences of the policy response to the virus have not been felt equally and although the long-term effects of the pandemic are unknown, they are expected to be significant and lasting for many Haringey households.
- 6.2 Alongside Haringey Citizens Advice Bureau as the lead organisation, two sub-contracted organisations contribute to service delivery by offering specific interventions within their areas of expertise: Public Voice and Vibrance (formerly HAIL (Haringey Association for Independent Living)). Together the three organisations form the Haringey Advice Partnership (HAP). Public Voice have a focus on supporting the older community and Vibrance work with those living with mental ill health.
- 6.3 The IAG service delivers three key outcomes:
1. **Delivery of IAG** - Haringey residents are able to access information, advice and guidance at the time they need it.
  2. **Building capacity** - having received information, advice and guidance, people feel equipped and knowledgeable to manage their needs better in future, to live independently and well.
  3. **Quality of information** - the information, advice and guidance is of high quality and those accessing the service feel their issue or query has been handled well and resolved.
- 6.4 The service provides access to quality Information, Advice and Guidance for all Haringey residents, as well as ensuring that up to date, locally relevant information is available about a range of community, voluntary and peer-led

initiatives. The service is responsive to the needs of local communities across all four lots of the contract, for North East, South East, Central and West Haringey. This minimises the need for residents to travel to access support and ensures information and advice is locally relevant and easily accessible.

6.5 The service provides multiple access points and channels including:

- Drop in services
- Telephone support
- Email services
- IAG services from local community locations, including children's centres, GP surgeries, libraries, and other settings
- An interactive chat box on their website to help those looking for more general advice find the correct information online
- Zoom consultations

6.6 The IAG service provides advocacy and case work for residents who seek to challenge a wide range of statutory decisions, including eviction notices, child protection decisions and social care assessments. The intention in these cases is to resolve issues informally and without legal action, reaching fair and transparent conclusions that ensure residents rights are upheld and statutory bodies are accountable and confident in their decision-making. This is an important element of the IAG service both for residents and for statutory agencies, enabling improvements in practice and preventing poor individual outcomes resulting in long-term human and financial costs for all parties.

6.7 The core funding for the Information, Advice and Guidance service is funded through the Council's revenue budget in Commissioning, £78,000 is funded by North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (NCL CCG) and £55,000 from the Better Care Fund (BCF).

## **7. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

7.1 The provision of Information, Advice and Guidance services contributes significantly to the Council's strategic outcomes under the Borough Plan 2019 – 2023:

Priority 1: Housing, Outcome 2: *We will work together to prevent people from becoming homeless, and to reduce existing homelessness.*

Priority 2: People, Outcome 9: *Strong communities where people look out for and care for one another.*

**Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)**

**8. Finance**

- 8.1 The new contract to be awarded to Haringey Citizens Bureaux for period of 9 months starting from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 is estimated to cost £612,000.
- 8.2 The cost of the contract will be funded from approved general fund budgets with contribution from the Better Care Fund and the NCL CCG as indicated in paragraph 6.12.
- 8.3 Hence the contract should not present additional financial burden to the Council.

**9. Procurement**

- 9.1 This service would fall within the remit of Schedule 3 of the Public Contracts Regulation 2015 if at threshold.
- 9.2 The request to waive the requirement to tender is permitted under Contract Standing Orders and the Procurement Code of Practice
- 9.3 This short-term contact should provide sufficient time for commissioning to devise its strategy and tender to meet future need which it hitherto was unable to achieve due to disruptions caused by the pandemic. It, therefore, would not be in the Council's overall interest to tender at this stage whilst still in the throes of the pandemic and the reverberations thereof without a clear direction travel for future provision
- 9.4 The IAG provision will be led by Haringey Citizens Advice Bureau. It is a strategic provision that will provide vital support, advice, and guidance to often vulnerable members of the community ensuring that they have timely accessible advice and information on e.g. debt, welfare benefits, and housing, as well as building capacity for self-reliance. It will ensure the Council is held to account and its decision making robust. Importantly, with its delivery partners Public Voice, and Vibrance the elderly and mentally ill will be able to access provision that reduces the incidence of loneliness, isolation and improves wellbeing, which were such prevalent issues in the covid pandemic.
- 9.5 Commissioning will monitor the contract throughout its duration to ensure outcomes and key performance targets are met.

## **10. Legal**

- 10.1 The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of the report.
- 10.2 Pursuant to Contract Standing Order 10.01.1(a) Cabinet has authority to waive Contract Standing Order 9.01 on the basis of Contract Standing Order 10.01.2(d)(ii) (it is in the Council's overall interest).
- 10.3 Pursuant to Contract Standing Order 9.07.1(d) Cabinet has authority to award the contract which this report relates to.
- 10.4 The Head of Legal and Governance sees no legal reasons preventing Cabinet from approving the recommendations in the report.

## **11. Equality**

- 11.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
  - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
- 11.2 The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status apply to the first part of the duty.
- 11.3 The decision to award contract for the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance service is necessary to allow for review and recommissioning of services in the longer term.
- 11.4 Those most likely to be affected by the decision are potential service users of Information, Advice and Guidance services, amongst whom there are a substantial number of residents with protected characteristics. These services provide support to ensure that individuals are able to make informed choices on decisions that affect their lives and build resilience to prevent issues from deteriorating or reoccurring.
- 11.5 This decision to award this contract will help ensure that the Council continues to address known inequalities that affect individuals with protected characteristics relating to age, sex, race, and disability. Accordingly, the

decision represents progress to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

## **12. Use of Appendices**

Not applicable.

## **13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

### **13.1 Background papers:**

Haringey Homelessness Strategy (2018)

<http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s100152/Appendix1HomelessnessStrategyv24.pdf>

Haringey Borough Plan (2019-2023)

[Borough Plan 2019-2023 | Haringey Council](#)

13.2 This report contains no exempt information.