

Report for: Cabinet Member Signing – 28 November 2022

Title: Variation and Extension of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategic Partner Contract

Report authorised by: Gill Taylor, Assistant Director for Communities and Housing Support

Lead Officer: Zahra Maye, Commissioning Manager Housing Related Support

Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/ Non Key Decision: Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1. This report seeks Cabinet Member approval to implement Contract Standing Order 10.02.1b, to vary and extend the current contract for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategic Partner Service with the Bridge Renewal Trust.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing is recommended:

- 2.1. To approve, in accordance with Contract Standing Order (CSO) 10.02.01(b) and CSO 16.02, the variation and extension of contract with the Bridge Renewal Trust for the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategic Partner for a period of 12 months from 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023. The value for the extension period of twelve (12) months is £166,800.
- 2.2. To note that the aggregated value of the full contract from 1st February 2020 to 31st December 2023 is £653,300.

3. Reasons for decision

- 3.1. The VCS Strategic Partner contract with the Bridge Renewal Trust ends on 31st December 2022. A contract extension for a period of 12 months will allow sufficient time to review and redesign the service in line with the Haringey Deal and the emerging VCS Strategy, which will be co-produced with the Voluntary and Community Sector before and carrying out a procurement process for a new service. Service re-design is needed to ensure the service is innovative, responsive, flexible and strategically aligned with our approach to working alongside the voluntary and community sector in Haringey to provide improved outcomes for residents and communities.

- 3.2. The VCS Partner provides the sector with capacity building and fundraising support, networking and partnership development opportunities and runs the Volunteer Centre in Haringey which provides guidance on recruiting and managing volunteers. The service also acts as a medium for communication between the Council and the voluntary sector.
- 3.3. Support for, and development of, partnership working arrangements with the voluntary and community sector in the borough is a key strategic priority for the Council and the Cabinet. Approval of this extension period will support the delivery of these strategic objectives.
- 3.4. The Bridge Renewal Trust's performance has been evaluated as good throughout the contract period. Key Performance Indicators and methods of measurement are integrated within the service specification and are monitored through contract monitoring meetings and reports. Given the above reasons, it is beneficial to extend the contract to allow sufficient time for a smooth transition and mobilisation of a new contract in 2024.

4. Alternative options considered

- 4.1. Insourcing: Direct delivery of this service was robustly considered but found not to be suitable at this time due to the capacity and resource required to manage the transfer of staff and the specific role this contract plays in brokering and bridging relationships between the voluntary and community sector and the boroughs statutory partners. An extension of 12 months will provide sufficient time for the Council to complete a review and refresh of the service model and reconsider the viability of insourcing.
- 4.2. Do nothing: Consideration was given to ceasing the contract in December 2022, in lieu of the redesign and commissioning process. However, ending the contract would have an adverse impact on delivery of strategic and operational outcomes for residents, as well as on those organisations in the voluntary and community sector who benefit from the support of the VCS Strategic Partner. Furthermore, ending the contract would result in staff redundancies and provide no option for redeployment. This option would therefore have a significant detrimental impact on the voluntary sector and on staff and the residents they support. The option to do nothing was therefore considered and rejected.
- 4.3. Full tender: To commission this service now would require a full tender process, which is lengthy. Conducting this process now would not offer sufficient time to refresh the service model or to identify opportunities for improved financial and strategic value. The provider market would also be unlikely to have sufficient time to deliver an innovative, financially viable proposal within the timescales required. Therefore, this option was disregarded, and an extension of the existing contract is considered the most advantageous option.

5. Background information

- 5.1. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategic Partner provides capacity building and fundraising support, networking and partnership development opportunities and a range of communication and engagement opportunities to the borough VCS. In addition, the Strategic Partner service hosts the boroughs Volunteer Centre.
- 5.2. In February 2020, Haringey Council awarded a 14-month contract for the Voluntary Sector Strategic Partner service to the Bridge Renewal Trust until March 2021 for the value of £194,600, with provision to extend for 12 months from April 2021 until March 2022 at the value of £166,800 and then for 9 months from April 2022 until December 2022 at the value of £125,100. The aggregated value for this contract period is £486,500.
- 5.3. An open tender process was planned for Spring 2021 once a refreshed service design had been developed. However, the service re-design and tender processes were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, as resources were diverted towards supporting vulnerable residents and critical services delivered in the community, including by the current VCS Strategic Partner.
- 5.4. An online survey has been launched to seek insights from stakeholders about the current VCS Strategic Partner approach and the support priorities of the VCS organisations it serves. The survey closed at the end of August 2022 and its feedback will inform a series of online and in-person workshops, stakeholder meetings and options appraisal work to establish a new model for the Strategic Partner contract. Although the VCS Strategic Partner contract is not a resident-facing service, we intend to bring together a small co-production group of local residents to work alongside us through the redesign and commissioning process.
- 5.5. In addition to engagement and co-design work, the Council's Communities and Housing Support division will conduct benchmarking exercises with neighbouring boroughs, explore best practice in VCS capacity building and strategic partner approaches and identify options for joint commissioning with statutory health and other partners to maximise the reach and impact of the redesigned service.
- 5.6. A service specification will be drafted during the Autumn of 2022 with a full procurement exercised planned for spring 2023. The newly commissioned service is expected to commence operation on 1st January 2024.
- 5.7. Timetable of Re-Commissioning Process

Process	Timescale
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VCS Online survey	July – September 2022
Engagement and co-design process	September – December 2022
Service Specification Initial Design	December 2022
Market Engagement Events	January 2023 – February 2023
Service Specification Finalisation	February 2023
Tender Go-Live	April 2023 – June 2023
Tender Evaluation Process	July 2023
Cabinet Approval	August 2023
Contract Award	September 2023
Service Implementation	September – December 2023
Service Go-Live	1 st January 2024

- 5.8. This new model will align priorities, and develop the capacity, sustainability, independence and outcomes of the voluntary and community sector in the borough. Which will also improve the sector's ability to partner with the Council on achieving strategic objectives.
- 5.9. Work has commenced to co-produce a VCS strategy for Haringey. This strategy will be informed by the Haringey Deal, learning from the current VCS Strategic Partner contract and the strategic coordination work of the Council's VCS Team. The VCS Strategy will describe a vision for the relationship between statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector, how the Council will support the sector to develop capacity, resilience and reach, and most importantly how organisations will provide coordinated support to improve outcomes for residents. The redesigned VCS Strategic Partner service will be a key mechanism through which the strategy will be developed and delivered.

6. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 6.1. This contract supports delivery of a number of priorities within the Council's Borough Plan (2019 – 2023). Partnership with the voluntary sector is integrated into a number of the priorities.
- 6.2. The Borough Plan's Equality Principles include a commitment to:
- 'Work alongside the wider voluntary sector, statutory partners and local businesses to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations.'

- 6.3. In particular, the People priority includes an objective (8) to build ‘Strong communities where people look out for and care for one another’, through developing:
- 8b) A strong and diverse voluntary and community sector, supporting local residents to thrive.

7. Statutory Officer Comments

8. Finance

- 8.1. The report seeks Cabinet Member approval to vary and extend the contract for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategic Partner Service with Bridge Renewal Trust for 12 months from 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023 at a value of £166,800.
- 8.2. The contract extension will be funded from the approved general fund budget allocated to Grant to Citizens Advice & Voluntary Services in 2022-23 and 2023-24.
- 8.3. The extension of the contract should not present additional budgetary pressure on the council.

9. Procurement

- 9.1. The services to which this report relates would fall within the remit of Schedule 3 of the Public Procurement Regulations (PCR) 2015 if at threshold. Moreover, the contract was let in 2020, prior to the application of vat on contract values which impacts the level at which the PCR threshold applies.
- 9.2. The request for contract variation is permitted under contract standing orders 16.02 and 10.02.2 the reasons for which are set out at paragraphs 4 and 6 above.
- 9.3. The Contractor has been providing a good service throughout the duration of the contract which support small and voluntary sector organisations with capacity building, volunteer recruitment and training, as well as fund raising and partnership development.

10. Legal

- 10.1. The Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) has been consulted in the preparation of the report.
- 10.2. Pursuant to CSO 10.02.1(b) and CSO 16.02 the Cabinet Member with the relevant portfolio responsibilities has authority has to approve the recommendations in the report.

10.3. The Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) sees no legal reasons preventing the Cabinet member for Health, Social Care and Well-being 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 applies to the first part of the duty.

11.3. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

11.4. The contract for the Strategic Partner will require the provider to offer the service to all Haringey based voluntary and community sector organisations who request advice and support. These organisations are working to support a range of groups of service users and residents, including those people who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. This decision to vary and extend the contract for an additional period of four months will enable this work to continue and is therefore likely to have a positive impact on VCS organisations which benefit from the service and therefore on those residents who they support.

12. Use of Appendices

Not applicable.

13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

13.1 Background papers:

Haringey Borough Plan 2019 – 2023

<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/local-democracy/policies-and-strategies/borough-plan>

13.2 This report contains no exempt information.