

Report for: Cabinet

Item number: 10 March 2020

Title: Request to vary and extend contract under Contract Standing Order (CSO) 10.02.1(b) for 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 seeks approval to vary and extend the Council’s contract for the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance services, held by Haringey Citizens Advice Bureaux, for up to 15 months from 2nd April 2020 to 30th June 2021, in accordance with the Council’s Contract Standing Order (CSO) 10.02.1(b).

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, maximise income and benefits, provide employment support and legal advice and support the health and wellbeing of a wide range of Haringey residents. They have 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 important that the support offered by the service continues whilst a new service model is designed and commissioned. It is for this reason that I recommend the extension of the contract for up to a further 15 months.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that, in accordance with Contract Standing Order (CSO) 10.02.1(b), Cabinet approves the variation and extension of the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Contract with the Haringey Citizens Advice Bureaux by extending the life of the Contract for a further period of up to 15 months with effect from 2nd April 2020.

3.2 That the total cost for extending the Contract across all four geographic lots for the period 2nd April 2020 to 1st April 2021 is £816,000. That approval is granted

for extension for up to a further 3 months if required, from 2nd April 2021 to 30th June 2021, at a total of £204,000. The value over the full 15 months, if used, would therefore be £1,020,000.

- 3.3 Cabinet to approve the underwriting of a £55,000 contribution made to the IAG contract by the Better Care Fund, which as yet remains unconfirmed, due to administrative delays beyond the Council's control. This contingency is recommended to ensure the contract extension is promptly completed and service delivery is maintained, however it has been strongly indicated that this funding will continue into the next year of the contract. If necessary, the contribution will be secured from within the Council's Housing Related Support budgets.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1 The provision of high quality and widely accessible information, advice and guidance for local residents, across a range of topic areas and with direct benefit to local communities, is of primary importance to the Council. It is therefore in the Council's overall interest to agree to an extension of the current contract whilst redesign and commissioning of a new service are completed, which will continue to deliver beneficial outcomes for those residents who need additional support and information.

- 4.2 It is proposed that in order to continue to provide the best service for Haringey residents, the extension period will be used to develop and commission a new model of IAG delivery with service users and stakeholders. Whilst performance of the existing service is good, it is recognised that there is always room for adaptations particularly in light of a number of other developments across the borough including the implementation of the Council's Community Wealth Building Policy and Welcome Strategy, the expected roll-out of Universal Credit and the impact of Brexit for Haringey. In addition, there is work to build upon and incorporate relevant aligned projects, including that of Connected Communities, the developing network of navigation services and further integration of health and community services. Remodelling will also be able to provide for a shift in service delivery, to ensure a variety of routes of access and modes of advice delivery, and a service which works to support and improve the broader Information, Advice & Guidance offer across the borough.

- 4.3 Performance has been evaluated as good throughout the contract period. Performance returns are completed and submitted on time and targets are met. There is a demonstrable need for IAG in Haringey and the service is evidently delivering positive outcomes for residents.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 In-house provision was considered and was found not to be suitable for full delivery of this service, as there is a need for an independent advice offer for residents. IAG services frequently provide support to residents in ensuring that

statutory decisions are robust and holding statutory authorities to account, and therefore an independent offer is required.

- 5.2 Procurement of new contracts was considered, however this would not allow enough time to conduct a sufficient redesign and remodelling of the service, or the necessary market engagement, to deliver best value and practice.
- 5.3 Ceasing the current contracts was considered, however this was deemed not to be in the best interests of Haringey residents or the Council. The decision to extend will ensure continuity of Information, Advice and Guidance provision in Haringey whilst remodelling of the service takes place. This IAG provision contributes to the delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities under a range of legislation.

6. Background information

- 6.1 The IAG contract commenced on 1st April 2016 for a period of three years to 31st March 2019, with an option to extend for up to one year. The extension option was exercised by way of a Deed of Variation dated 4th July 2019 which varied and extended the life of the Contract to the 2nd of April 2020.
- 6.2 The contract distributes service delivery across four geographic lots: North East, South East, Central and West Haringey.
- 6.3 The IAG service provided by Haringey Citizens Advice Bureaux delivers three key outcomes:

Delivery of IAG - Haringey residents are able to access information, advice and guidance at the time they need it.

Building capacity - having received information, advice and guidance from the provider, people feel equipped and knowledgeable to manage their needs better in future, to live independently and well.

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 Alongside Haringey Citizens Advice Bureaux as the lead organisation, two sub-contracting organisations contribute to service delivery by offering specific, tailored and locally based 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).
- 6.5 Public Voice have a focus on supporting the older community, identifying isolation and loneliness as a key concern for this community. They therefore run opportunities and activities to tackle isolations as well as link clients in to opportunities hosted elsewhere. Public Voice also run projects responding to digital inclusion, including volunteer led computer training which incorporates a strong peer support element. They also run workshops aimed at older people around a variety of wellbeing themes, most recently focusing on depression and

nutrition, and information stalls to provide a flexible point of access to information.

- 6.6 In their delivery for the HAP, Vibrance work with those living with mental ill health. They run information stalls enabling access to information, advice and guidance as well as running workshops for their target client group on subjects including financial capability, mindfulness and Universal Credit. They run regular wellbeing sessions which include activities such as yoga. In addition, Vibrance manages the website and social media for the HAP and have been successful in developing a strong brand and presence within Haringey over the four years of the contract.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 The service provides multiple access points and channels including:
- Drop in services
 - Telephone support
 - An email service
 - Flexibility of times and access points; including pop-up provision
 - A range of signposting and referral systems for specialist needs
 - A network of venues taking into account public transport, opening hours and Equality Act (2010) compliance
 - IAG services from local community locations, including children's centres, GP surgeries, libraries and other settings
- 6.9 As well as employing a service delivery model based on easy access to effective information and advice, the service also aims to build capacity in individuals, families and communities to access their own information, advice and guidance in the future where appropriate, using a range of channels and approaches – supporting clients to live independently and achieve their vision of a 'good life'.
- 6.10 The service provides information, advice and guidance on issues including housing, social care, finance and debt, welfare and benefits, health related services including wellbeing and staying well and employment. This provision enables early intervention and frequently results in preventing the escalation of issues. For example, the service frequently supports clients in dealing with cases of rent or Council Tax arrears. Without the service's intervention, arrears could result in eviction and therefore homelessness. Clearly this is a highly negative situation for the client which may then require a statutory response from the Council as well as other negative outcomes, including an impact on the

client's health. The service delivery therefore has a significant positive impact in supporting residents to live independently and well in Haringey.

- 6.11 The cases which the service handles most frequently relate to benefits and tax credits, including Universal Credit, accounting for 37% of advice cases according to the annual report for year 3 of delivery. 16% of advice cases relate to debt and 16% to housing. It is noted that this data only accounts for a client's main presenting issue, and case studies show that the service is often very effectively responding to multiple overlapping issues beyond the initial presentation. Without the support provided by the service to resolve these issues, they are likely to escalate and have a greater impact on the individual's wellbeing, independence and financial position.
- 6.12 Service level data for the most recent quarter shows that 47% of clients receiving advice are aged 50+. 59% of clients identify as female and 50% are living with either a disability or long-term health condition, of which 10% identify as disabled. 41% of clients describe themselves as White, 40% as Black and 7% as Asian.
- 6.13 The service achieves excellent financial outcomes with service users. Citizens Advice achieved a total income gain for clients of £725,397 and £29,064 of debt being written off during the six months from April to December 2019.
- 6.13.1 The below case studies provide two examples of the wide-ranging support the service provides to clients.

Case Study 1: A sole carer for three young children, a client had insufficient income and was seeking advice on access to welfare benefits and making changes to a Local Authority tenancy. As an EEA national, they had been refused access to some welfare benefits and had rent, Council Tax and utilities arrears.

The HAP worked with the client to:

- supply them with an immediate food bag via the Crutch Project, and food vouchers to access further supplies
- identify eligibility and requirements and successfully apply for in-work benefits
- negotiate an affordable repayment plan to secure their housing and advise on further follow up actions around the tenancy
- obtain free nursery childcare
- refer them to a local immigration law service for specialised advice on citizenship and Settled Status.

- 6.13.2 **Case Study 2:** An older client who cared for their disabled partner attended the service as they were struggling to afford the cost of their utility bills and were not heating their home. English was not their first language and they reported struggling to access the help that they needed.

The HAP worked with the client to:

- identify cheaper utility suppliers, and supported them to change supplier online
 - have the insulation needs in their home assessed and find grants to fund the cost of the work
 - submit a claim for Attendance Allowance and an application for Pension Credit, including an increased payment for caring
 - contact Adults Social Care to arrange a care needs assessment.
- 6.14 Client feedback for the IAG service is positive, with 93% of service users reporting that they were happy with the service that they received and 84% of service users reporting that they had received enough information to help them take the next steps during the most recent quarter.
- 6.15 The provider has consistently delivered against all its targets throughout the contract period. The contract provided for a 'payment by results' component of up to 5% of the contract value to be determined at the end of each 12-month period, based on overall satisfaction with the service. The provider has successfully secured this element of the contract value every year during delivery.
- 6.16 In 2013, NHS Haringey Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG) entered into a contract with Haringey Citizens Advice Bureaux for Welfare Hubs, which provided similar welfare and debt advice services to the IAG contract, but from GP surgeries. The contract value was £78,000 per year.
- 6.17 In January 2018, the Council varied the IAG contract by means of a delegated authority decision to include these Welfare Hub services, which the Haringey Clinical Commissioning Group funds entirely under the partners' joint commissioning arrangements. This variation is for the full value of the Welfare Hubs service, of £78,000 and took effect retrospectively from 1st July 2017.
- 6.18 This portion of the IAG service will continue during the initial one-year extension period.
- 6.19 The contract has included a £55,000 contribution from the Better Care Fund (BCF), from within the Haringey Clinical Commissioning Group's budget, since its inception. This contribution was offered in recognition of the significant health and wellbeing outcomes that can be achieved through high quality, prevention focussed information, advice and guidance provision. In the next year this element of the service's potential will be a focus of service delivery.
- 6.20 As at February 2020, the continuation of the BCF contribution is unconfirmed. This is due to unforeseen delays in the administrative process beyond the Council's control, a result of a broader review and planning for the future of the Haringey Clinical Commissioning Group's budget, including the Better Care Fund. However there has been clear indication that the contribution will continue at the same value for the next year of the contract. In the interests of ensuring the contract extension is promptly completed, the Council has agreed to underwrite the risk that the BCF's £55,000 contribution will not materialise. If

necessary, the contribution will be secured from within the Council's Housing Related Support budgets.

6.21 **Related previous decisions**

This decision to extend the Information, Advice and Guidance contract with Citizens Advice Bureaux is related to the Cabinet decision to award the original contract on 15th December 2015.

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 draft Borough Plan 2019 – 2023:

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

The IAG service significantly contributes to delivery of this outcome by providing information which enables individuals to manage their housing and manage finances, to support their housing. The service also provides advice and tenancy sustainment, supporting clients to respond to issues which may threaten the stability of their housing situation.

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

The Haringey Advice Partnership, led by the lead organisation is made up of organisations with strong foundations within communities in Haringey. Service delivery frequently makes use of peer support in order to achieve positive outcomes. In addition, the services emphasise building capacity within clients, which can then contribute to clients going on to support others around them in responding to challenges they face.

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

8.1 **Finance**

8.1.1 This report is seeking to vary the length and total value of a contract for Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) awarded to Haringey Citizens Advice Bureaux for up to four years from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2020. The total contract value already awarded is £3,406,500 of which £3,152,000 was the original award for IAG.

8.1.2 This report requests to award a further one year plus 3 months from 1st April 2020 at an annual value of £816,000. The value of the contract variation is £1,020,000 which is an increase of 29.94% from the previously agreed contract value. This makes a new total contract value of £4,426,500.

8.1.3 The original contract value for IAG was £788,000 per annum. The contract value was negotiated down to £738,000 for 2019/20 and the annual value is proposed to be held at £738,000 for this extension period. Additionally, the contract includes £78,000 for Welfare Hubs which is funded by Haringey CCG. The combined value of these two elements is £816,000 per annum.

- 8.1.4 The original contract award was made after a formal tender process and Haringey Citizens Advice Bureau was awarded the contract as the most economically advantageous tender. The contract price has since been reduced by £50,000 per annum. The monitoring information contained in this report shows good and satisfactory outcomes. Therefore, the award of this contract extension demonstrates value for money.
- 8.1.5 The IAG element of the contract is currently funded by £688,000 council core funding and £50,000 Better Care Fund (BCF) contribution. The Welfare Hubs element is funded by a £78,000 HCCG contribution. The Welfare Hubs will continue to be commissioned whilst the CCG agree to pay for the service on a year by year basis.
- 8.1.6 Whilst the BCF funding is expected to continue the allocations are not yet agreed and need to be reconfirmed on an annual basis. This report is seeking for the Council to underwrite the BCF contribution to enable the contract award to be made.
- 8.1.7 The 2020/21 budget and MTFs have adequate provision to cover the core funding cost of the contract for the duration requested in the report.

8.2 Procurement

- 8.2.1 The provision comes under the 'Light Touch Regime' of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and was duly advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union at inception and tendered as required.
- 8.2.2 This requested contract modification would usually necessitate a further competitive process unless it meets one of the several requirements under s7 including that 'additional works, services or supplies by the original contractor have become necessary and were not included in the initial procurement, and a change of contractor would, cause significant inconvenience or substantial duplication of costs for the contracting authority providing the increase in price is not more than 50% of the original value' (72(1)(b)(ii)).
- 8.2.3 Work is underway to remodel and commission a new Information, Advice and Guidance service. Therefore, modifying the existing contract to allow time for this work to be completed prevents significant inconvenience and substantial duplication of costs for the Council as a new provider would take valuable time to set up, identify contact/partner organisations, establish itself with and gain understanding of the vastly diverse Haringey resident 'market' in order to deliver an effective service.
- 8.2.4 The cost of the proposed extension is within 50% of the original cost and is therefore permitted.
- 8.2.5 This request also meets the requirements of CSO 10.02 and the Procurement Code of Practice. The Contractor is providing a good, responsive, accessible service which demonstrates it meets set targets in a payment by results contract model. Almost 40% of service provision is utilised by older residents

who are disabled or who have long term health related issues and require advice to help them stay out of debt and importantly continue to live in their own homes.

8.2.6 During the contract extension service will continue to monitor the contract to ensure it continues to meet service outcomes/targets and mitigate against any service delivery or performance risks.

8.3 Legal

8.3.1 The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance notes the contents of the report.

8.3.2 Regulation 72(1)(b)(ii) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 allows the Council to vary a contract on the ground that additional works, services or supplies which were not included in the initial procurement have become necessary and a change of the contractor would cause significant inconvenience or substantial duplication of costs to for the Council, provided that the increase in price does not exceed 50% of the value of the original contract.

8.3.3 Pursuant to CSO 10.02.1(b), Cabinet may authorise the variation and/or extension of a contract if the value of the contract is £500,000 or more and as such Cabinet has power to authorise the variation and extension of the Contract in this Report.

8.3.4 The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance sees no legal reasons preventing the approval of the recommendations in the report.

8.4 Equality

8.4.1 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.

8.4.2 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.

8.4.3 The decision is to extend the existing contracts for the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance services. Extension of the contract is necessary to allow for review and recommissioning of services in the longer term.

8.4.4 Those most likely to be affected by the decision are service users and potential service users of information, advice and guidance services. The nature of the broad range of service delivery methods of these services means that the range

of service users is also broad, with service engagement ranging from accessing information on a service website to longer term casework, for example appealing a disability benefit decision.

8.4.5 Information, Advice and Guidance 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. Service level data from the existing service shows that service users reflect the demographic makeup of the borough of Haringey.

8.4.6 This decision to extend 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.

9 Use of Appendices

Not applicable.

10 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 Background papers:

Haringey Homelessness Strategy (2018)

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

Award of contract for Information, Advice and Guidance, December 2015

<http://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s82604/Cabinet%20Report%20-%20IAG%20-%20Open.pdf>

10.2 This report contains no exempt information.