

Contract for Information Advice and Guidance Services Lot 2 – The Provision of a North Yorkshire Welfare rights, Information and Guidance Service

REPORT TO Corporate Director of Health and Adult Services (HAS) in consultation with Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration and the Executive Member for Public Health, Prevention and Supported Housing, including Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

DECISION DATE 11 February 2022

SUPPORTING ANNEX

This report includes a supporting Annex which contains exempt information as described in paragraph 1, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Authority extend and vary the contract for up to 2 years from 1st April 2022 to the 31st March 2024. It is also recommended to vary the extension clause from 2 years to 4 periods of 6 months. It is proposed the contract will be reviewed and extended at 6 monthly break points.

BACKGROUND TO SUPPORT THE RECOMMENDATION

The Welfare Benefits Unit (WBU) provides second tier welfare benefits advice and information to benefits advisers from North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC), district councils and City of York; plus other organisations including but not limited to Carers Resource, Citizens Advice Bureau's and Housing departments. The Provider does not offer direct support to members of the public.

The WBU offers specialist welfare benefits advice to those who work with members of the public. They aim to maximise benefit entitlement, helping to reduce the incidence and impact of poverty and in doing so improve health, well-being, financial and social inclusion.

The WBU has experienced advisers who provide independent support through: advice line, publications, training, consultancy and projects

The service was an initial term of 5 years from 1st April 2017 to the 31st March 2022. There is an option to extend the contract for 2 years from the 1st April 2022 to the 31st March 2024. It is proposed to vary this extension clause from being straight 2 year period to 4 periods of 6 months.

The Provider conforms to all relevant contractual responsibilities. The provider has provided a continuity in service throughout the pandemic with creating new ways of

working. The WBU meets all KPIs, attend all contract monitoring meetings and provides all relevant reporting in relation to its performance and service offer overall.

The proposed extension and variation has been through the council's governance and a gateway 4 report has been submitted and approved by the Procurement Assurance Board. The report is included in the annex and appendix one

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE

Initial legal advice was sought regarding the proposed changes to Lot 2. Appendix A confirms that the term is 5 years with the "option to extend for a further 2 years". We were advised that the existing clause could be interpreted in two different ways, either we can only extend for 2 years or not at all, or we could extend for a number of periods and the Provider was in agreement.

Clause F3 of the contract allows for variations to the contract as long as they are agreed in writing and signed, with an adjustment to the Agreement Price accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Authority to extend and vary the contract for up to 2 years from the 1st April to the 31st March 2024, with the contract being reviewed and extended at 6 monthly break points.

REPORT AUTHORS

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