

North Yorkshire Council
Health and Adult Services
Executive Member Meeting

12 January 2024

Report to the Corporate Director Health and Adult Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Health and Adult Services

**Contracts for Information Advice and Guidance Services –
(Lot 1) The provision of a North Yorkshire Information Advice Service
(Lot 2) The provision of a Welfare Rights information and Guidance Service**

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To request approval to extend the two contracts supporting the Information Advice and Guidance Services currently managed within Health and Adult services. This will allow time for other grant payments, that have been paid by the seven former district and borough councils for a similar service, to be reviewed and consideration to be given on combining these (or parts thereof) with the core funding currently managed by Health and Adult Services, for any future procurement.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Lot 1 covers the current Information, Advice and Guidance Services contract which is delivered countywide by North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre (also known more publicly as the CAB) and was awarded 01 April 2017. The current contract expires 31 March 2024.
- 2.2 The service provides advice and information to the public on a holistic basis, ranging from debt and money management to housing, employment etc. alongside working with over 200 partners. This is in addition to the specialist advice and information provided by services across the Council including IMT, housing, Adult Social Care, planning and Children and Young Peoples' Services (CYPS).
- 2.3 The CAB is a trusted and recognised public facing organisation which provides holistic advice and information covering a broad spectrum of topics including debt, housing, unemployment, benefits, bankruptcy. North Yorkshire Council (NYCC) is the major funder.
- 2.4 The people supported by the CAB are the most vulnerable in our community. They are five times more likely to be on low incomes; many have mental health problems; many are in insecure employment and/or live in rented accommodation.
- 2.5 The CAB meets all KPIs, attend all contract monitoring meetings and routinely and reliably provided quarterly reports and extensive updates in relation to their performance and service offer overall. It is forward thinking, innovative and proactive in relation to the

services it provides, paying due regard to patterns and trends presented by customers. During the pandemic it has successfully created and applied different ways of working in order to ensure service delivery was uninterrupted.

- 2.6 Lot 2 covers the service provided to the Council by the Welfare Benefits Unit (WBU). This consists of second-tier welfare benefits advice and information to benefits advisers from North Yorkshire Council (NYC) and the 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.
- 2.7 The WBU offers specialist welfare benefits advice and training 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, wellbeing, financial and social inclusion.
- 2.8 The WBU has experienced advisers who provide independent support through: advice line, publications, training, consultancy and projects.
- 2.9 Both providers conform to all relevant contractual responsibilities. The providers have provided a continuity in service throughout the pandemic with creating new ways of working. They meet all KPIs, attend all contract monitoring meetings and provide all relevant reporting in relation to its performance and service offer overall.
- 2.10 The two contracts ran for an initial term of 5 years from 1 April 2017 to the 31 March 2022. This was extended for two years until 31 March 2024.
- 2.11 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.

3.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND RESPONSES

- 3.1 The current providers have been consulted and are agreeable to an extension for 12 months.

4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The proposal contributes towards key areas in terms of the council priorities including the environment and economy, health and well-being plus local access to local services.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Consideration was given to re-procuring at the end of the current contract but this would not cover the grants previously paid by the district councils which would be considered separately. This would have brought a risk of duplication of effort, including additional cost, and potential confusion over the management of the contracts.

6.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS

- 6.1 The extension will allow time for the legacy grants to be considered and to ensure that any service procured is appropriate for the whole Council.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The annual cost for Lot 1 is £331k and for Lot 2 is £102k. This is within budget.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Legal advice has been provided in relation to this extension.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any equality impacts arising from the extension to the contract. No significant adverse impact is expected for any groups of people with protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010.

10.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no policy implications in extending the contracts for 12 months.

11.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The continuation of the contracts will enable the Benefits and Assessments Officers and other colleagues on a corporate wide basis, to keep up-to-date with changes in legislation and guidance.

12.0 ICT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 No additional ICT implications.

13.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 To allow time for the grant payments that have been paid by the 7 former district and borough councils for a similar service, to be reviewed and consideration to be given as to the possibility of combining the grant payments (or parts therefore) with the core funding currently managed by Health and Adult Services.

14.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Authority extend and vary the contracts for a further 12 months to 31 March 2025.

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