

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

15 MARCH 2012

SUBJECT:	VOLUNTARY SECTOR CONTRACTS: VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY FAITH SECTOR SUPPORT AND GENERAL ADVICE SERVICE
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ALL</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</i>
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	<i>COUNCILLOR IAN LEWIS</i>
KEY DECISION?	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to award two contracts: Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Support and General Advice Service. This follows a full tender process conducted in accordance with European Procurement Legislation. It is proposed that the contracts are awarded to the most economically advantageous tender
- 1.2 Tender details are provided in the Appendices to this paper which are not for publication by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Following a review of Voluntary Sector Contracts commissioned by the Communications and Community Engagement section the decision was taken to tender the contracts for the Voluntary Community Faith Sector Support Service and General Advice Service. Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) Sector Support is currently delivered by Voluntary Community Action Wirral (VCAW) and General Advice Service is delivered by Wirral Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). These grants terminate on March 31st 2012.

3.0 SERVICES

- 3.1 The Voluntary Community and Faith (VCF) Sector Support Contract will provide specialist support services to the VCF sector in Wirral. The service will support groups to engage in activities that will improve their neighbourhoods, deliver services to meet the needs of Wirral residents and take a more active role in design and delivery of local services.

The service provider will actively engage with underrepresented groups and ensure that they have an opportunity to develop and contribute to service delivery in Wirral.

- 3.2 The General Advice Contract will provide a free and independent information and advice service open to all Wirral residents but specifically targeted towards meeting the needs of families living in poverty. The service will be responsive to those in greatest need, providing a package of information, advice and support in relation to welfare and benefits, debt and financial management, employment and housing.
- 3.3 The total value of the VCF support contract is £306,000 for a period of three years and the total value of the General Advice contract is £780,000 for a period of three years.

4.0 PROCUREMENT PROCESS

- 4.1 In accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Procedures and European Procurement Rules a full tendering process has been undertaken via the Council's e-tendering portal, The Chest.
- 4.2 For the VCF Sector Support Tender 159 expressions of interest were initially received and 8 completed tenders were submitted.
- 4.3 102 expressions of interest were received for the General Advice Service tender with 6 submissions received, indicating a highly competitive market in these service areas.
- 4.4 The tender evaluation panel, comprising officers from the Communications and Community Engagement section and the Corporate Procurement Unit, applied a cost/quality evaluation model based on 40% price and 60% quality to determine the most economically advantageous tender as set out in the exempt appendix.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 A risk would be the contract holders being unable to fulfil the contracts due to financial instability. Experian risk reports of financial stability were commissioned for the suppliers of both contracts that scored the highest in the evaluation. The report revealed the suppliers as being low risk for financial instability.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 To continue the existing service without tendering. This option was not considered as the Council is committed to reviewing VCF service provision and wishes to move from service level agreements to outcome based contracts to open up this market to competition, ensure compliance with procurement rules and to ensure best value from the service received.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation with the Voluntary Community Faith Sector took place via on-line survey, focus groups, and one-one telephone interviews with VCF organisations and discussions with VCF infrastructure providers in Wirral. The online survey was

disseminated through a Wirral Council database and VCAW's database. VCAW and Wirral CVS were informed of the tendering opportunity and distributed it through their networks. An advertisement was placed in the Wirral Globe for both tender opportunities.

Consultation for the General Advice tender took place through discussions with the current provider, a review of needs based on monitoring reports and discussions with Knowsley Council who have undergone a commissioning process for their General Advice Service. An on-line survey and focus groups with service users was not deemed appropriate due to the variety of issues presented by service users. The needs of families in poverty were incorporated into the specification in-line with the Child Poverty strategy for Wirral.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 The awarding of the Voluntary Community Faith Sector Service Contract will provide continued support for the sector and increase the likelihood of small community groups and residents associations being able to make a contribution to their neighbourhoods

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 The funds in relation to these contracts have been allocated from the Communication and Community Engagement section budget

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The process has followed Legal/Procurement requirements.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 E.I.A's have not taken place as negative impacts were not identified during the review process of the existing contracts, and the new contracts are a continuation of services. The service specifications have been written to incorporate the needs of protected groups.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no carbon reduction implications

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no planning and community safety issues

14.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 That Cabinet approves the award of contracts for Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Support and General Advice Service to the highest scoring tender.

14.2 The results of the evaluation are set out in the Appendix 1, 2 which is not for publication as it contains commercially sensitive information.

15.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

15.1 These two tenders performed best against the agreed evaluation criteria and therefore the most economically advantageous. There is a need for both of these services.

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EXEMPT APPENDICES:

Voluntary Community Faith Sector Support Service Evaluation Appendix 1.
General Advice Service Evaluation Appendix 2.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

N/A

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – item 42 Extension of Voluntary Sector Grants	23 June 2011