

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

19TH JULY 2012

SUBJECT:	<i>SUPPORTING PEOPLE CONTRACTS FOR PROVIDERS OF SERVICES TO PEOPLE AT RISK OF OR EXPERIENCING SOCIAL EXCLUSION.</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>BOROUGH WIDE</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>KEVIN ADDERLEY DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, HOUSING AND PLANNING</i>
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	<i>GEORGE DAVIES, HOUSING</i>
KEY DECISION	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform Members of the decision of the Director for Regeneration, Housing and Planning to extend a number of Supporting People contracts for a period of twelve months. These extensions have been awarded under the Directors powers of delegated authority. The full details and values of the contracts are listed in the appendix 1.
- 1.2 Further it seeks Members approval to extend a Supporting People contract awarded to Forum Housing Association. Forum Housing Association delivers housing related support services to up to 223 young people who are homeless or at risk. The proposed contract extension is for a period of twelve months, details listed in Appendix 1
- 1.3 Appendix 1 of this report contains commercially sensitive information regarding contracts, the disclosure of which is not considered to be appropriate. Accordingly, Appendix 1 is deemed to be exempt from disclosure under paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12A of the local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Supporting People funding is a key resource for ensuring that vulnerable or disadvantaged people with housing related support needs are appropriately supported to maintain their tenancies and achieve/maintain greater independence.
- 2.2 Supporting People funding was previously ring-fenced and the criteria for its use was clearly set down by Department for Communities and Local Government, as was the structure for Commissioning and contracting. The ring fence has now been lifted however the Council must continue to ensure that vulnerable people with housing support needs remain able to access appropriate support services and accommodation,

such as hostel for the homeless, women's refuge, supported housing for people with mental health problems.

- 2.3 Whilst Supporting People is not a statutory duty, investment in preventative services delivers cost benefits to the Council and other statutory services such as Health and the Criminal Justice System.
- 2.4 The Supported and Special Needs Housing Commissioning Strategy 2008-2011 outlined the basis on which contracting and commissioning of services would occur. The overall aim being to create stability for service users and providers of supported housing services, by awarding three to five year contracts whilst also achieving efficiencies and economies of scale.
- 2.5 The award of contracts for the services and providers listed in the Appendix was approved by Cabinet on 25th June 2009 and, for four floating support services that had been commissioned through a competitive tendering process, on 4th February 2010. Cabinet approved the award of contracts, to each of the organisations, for a period of three to five years. Contracts were subsequently issued for a three year period with an option to extend further.)
- 2.6 The original contracts were awarded either following a rigorous regional benchmarking process or following open tender. No inflationary increase has been awarded since the commencement of the contracts, and in addition this process realised efficiency savings to the Council of over £400,000 per year.
- 2.7 During the intervening three year period information has been gathered regarding the performance of the services and the outcomes achieved by service users. In addition a full review of the services and organisations has been carried out to ensure that quality standards are being maintained and that value for money is achieved.
- 2.8 The initial three year period of the contracts expire between July 2012 and April 2013. During the past three years the providers have effectively demonstrated that the service delivery has achieved positive outcomes for clients and they have delivered cost benefits for Council Departments, Health and the Criminal Justice System.
- 2.9 All providers have been able to meet the requirements of the national Quality Assessment Framework, in many instances being assessed as attaining level A. In addition evidence from performance returns identifies that there is ongoing, in some instances increasing, demand for the services due to the current economic downturn. In addition the forthcoming changes to the Welfare Benefits system may also have a significant impact on the increased demand for services.
- 2.10 Members will also be aware that the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning is required to carry out a Homelessness Review, to inform the Wirral Homelessness Strategy. The Wirral Homelessness Strategy will be instrumental in identifying the commissioning priorities with regard to services for vulnerable people experiencing social exclusion including: homeless hostels; domestic violence services; young people at risk/care leavers and teenage parents services; mental health services; drug, alcohol and services for ex offenders.
- 2.11 In order to ensure that Supporting People funded services are aligned with the priorities identified within the Homeless Review and Strategy, (due to be completed December

2012), it is recommended that extensions to existing contracts be awarded. This will facilitate consultation, negotiation and/or tender exercise once the Homeless Strategy is completed.

2.12 Having considered all of the influencing factors listed above, the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning has agreed to extend all of those within his delegated authority, and request approval to extend the contract with Forum Housing Association.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 A loss of services to vulnerable people.

3.2 Potential litigation arising from the expiration of contracts without formal, agreed notice periods being given.

3.3 Potential financial implications for other Departmental budgets.

3.4 Increased instances of rough sleeping and homelessness arising from tenancy breakdown.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 No other options were considered viable.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 As part of the Homelessness review all relevant stakeholder, partners, providers, service users and advocates have been fully consulted, with regard to service for the most vulnerable and socially excluded Wirral residents.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 Many of the providers awarded a contract for supported living services are Wirral based voluntary organisations. These organisations are reliant on appropriate funding for their services in order to remain financially viable.

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

7.1 The value of the contracts, as detailed in the Appendix to this report, will be met within existing resources.

7.2 Members will be aware that, for those contracts under £500,000.00, the Director for Regeneration, Housing and Planning can award under delegated authority. However, for the Forum Housing contract, which exceeds this sum, Members are asked to approve the award of the contract extension.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Legal and Member Services have determined that Supporting People services are provided as Part B as they maintain clients' health and well being by assisting them to remain independent within the community. Therefore there is no legal requirement to undertake a formal competitive tender for the commissioning of these services.

8.2 The services have been reviewed and demonstrate that they comply with UK Procurement policy for Local Authorities: which is to seek and demonstrate value for money in all public procurement.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The potential impact of the proposal has not been reviewed with regard to equality.

9.2 The needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups have been considered, and are central to Supporting People Services. It is a key objective of the services provided under contracts to ensure that vulnerable people have equal access to opportunities and to promote social inclusion.

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Carbon reduction implications arising from this report.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Planning implications arising from this report.

11.2 The extension of these contracts supports policies and programmes that will have a positive effect on the safety of communities.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 That Cabinet note the decision of the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning to extend Supporting People contracts for socially excluded groups (as detailed in appendix one) in order to allow for the completion of and alignment with the Homelessness Strategy.

12.2 That Cabinet approve the extension to the contract with Forum Housing Association as detailed in the appendix to the report, in order to allow for the completion of and alignment with the Homelessness Strategy.

13.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 This action will ensure that the Council continues to protect vulnerable individuals whilst ensuring continuity of support for vulnerable residents currently in receipt of support services.

13.2 The delivery of housing related support services reduces the financial burdens on other Council Departments and partner agencies and assists the Council in continuing to meet strategic priorities.

13.3 This action will avoid potential challenges that may arise from the expiration of contracts without a formal notice period and as a result of the subsequent withdrawal of support services.

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APPENDIX 1

Details of provider organisations, client groups and services affected.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

Cabinet report of 25th June 2009 - WIRRAL'S SUPPORTED AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING: NEGOTIATED CONTRACTS

Cabinet report of 4th February 2010- WIRRAL'S SUPPORTED AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING: TENDERED CONTRACTS – FLOATING SUPPORT

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	25 th JUNE 2009
	4 th FEBRUARY 2010