

People Scrutiny Panel – Extraordinary Meeting held on Wednesday, 15th June, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Qaseem (Chair), P. Bedi (Vice-Chair, from 6.36pm), Basra (from 6.33pm), Begum, Brooker, Matloob and Sandhu.

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Gahir.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor R. Davis.

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

2. Re-Procurement of Community Equipment Service

The Panel received a comprehensive presentation detailing the re-procurement of Community Equipment Service. The Group Manager, People Strategy and Commissioning reminded Members that the provision of community equipment enabled individuals with assessed care and support needs to remain living in their own home, therefore promoting independence and reducing the need for more expensive residential care. The service was currently delivered via joint arrangement across the six Berkshire local authorities under the Berkshire Community Equipment Service (BCES) Partnership. The current five year contract commenced in April 2017 and was extended for a further two years to March 2024.

Future commissioning options were being considered to develop a community equipment offer to meet the needs of residents of Slough and were outlined as:

- Commissioning a stand alone service
- Delivering an inhouse service
- Continuing with the current arrangements

It was recommended that the proposed option, of continuing with the current arrangement and develop a model in partnership with Berkshire Health and Social Care Services; was considered to promote best value by delivering economies of scale through collaborative purchasing and was the most time/resource efficient method of securing supply both on system wide and individual basis.

The Panel noted that the budget for the community equipment service was £600k with particular emphasis drawn to the fact that current partnership arrangements meant that the Council only paid for what was required for clients.

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The Panel discussed a number of issues including the loss of expertise within the local authority as outlined within Option 3. It was explained that this referred to potential future loss to develop in house expertise and that there was no loss under the current arrangements. A Member asked whether Option 2 – bringing services in house – was a feasible option and how many other local authorities had adopted this approach. Members were informed that whilst some larger local authorities, such as London boroughs commissioned services in house; this was not recommended as would require significant initial resource investment and loss of economy of scale.

A Member asked about what the process for extending the current contract was and duration of any future contractual arrangements. The Group Manager People, Strategy and Commissioning stated that business case had been submitted to extend the current contract. Work was currently on going regarding the duration of the proposed new contract.

Although there was general consensus to proceed with Option 3, Members requested that further detailed information be provided relating to feedback from users of the service and their experiences in addition to further financial details around economies of scale; to enable to measure and evaluate options objectively. It was noted that this information could be provided to the Panel at a future meeting.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Gahir asked a number of questions which included clarification regarding the costs to the authority for the current partnership arrangement, who was in benefit of any profit and data for usage of community equipment by Slough residents. Members were informed that as the contract lead and host authority, £10k was payable to West Berkshire Council. The contract was held between the service provider Healthcare Pro and West Berkshire Council (acting on behalf of the partnership) and further information would be obtained and reported to the Panel on the specific point relating to profits.

It was confirmed that annual audits were held and that details of these from 2017 would be circulated to the Panel.

The Panel were reminded that Cabinet was due to consider the matter at its meeting in June 2022 with a recommendation to commence joint development of a community equipment model to support the delivery of economies of scale by drawing together the planning and purchasing power of local authorities and health bodies across Berkshire.

Resolved - a) That details of the presentation be noted.

b) That the Panel supports Option 3, as set out in the report, as the preferred approach for the development of an integrated community equipment service.

3. Re-Procurement of Extra Care Contract

The Panel received a presentation detailing the re-procurement of the Adult Social Care (ASC) Integrated Care and Support services in Extra Care Contract. The extra care providers played an essential role within the health and social care system, delivering care to individuals with an assessed need and enabling them to remain independent in their own homes for much longer. This flexible care and support, with help in an emergency, was significantly cheaper than residential care.

The existing contract was ending in March 2023 and various options available were outlined. It was explained that the preferred option of re-tendering via the ASC Dynamic Purchasing System, would ensure best value in delivering extra care services through procuring services following a competitive process and provide services that met Slough's demographic diversity. The risks associated with this option were highlighted and the mitigating factors in place to address them.

Financial implications of the current and proposed revised contract were summarised. It was proposed that there would be a 15% reduction in hours (primarily by reducing the waking night component relating to existing extra care provisions which had been under-utilised) under the new arrangement and whilst it was not possible to confirm a price for extra care provision without issuing a fixed price tender, it was anticipated that some savings could be achieved on the current contract price. Concern was expressed that a reduction in the number of care hours commissioned would compromise the care given. It was explained that an assessment had been conducted regarding user needs and the care hours proposed in the new contract would adequately meet user needs. However, in the event further hours were required there was process in place to obtain those, subject to approval of a business case.

A Member commented on the workforce implications outlined in the report stating that these may need to be revised given that inflation was currently at 9%.

Further details were requested as to what mechanisms were in place if the Council was not satisfied with the service being provided. It was noted that robust contract management would ensure quality assurance. In addition, clauses in the contract would allow the option of exiting the contract should this be required.

A Member asked how safeguarding concerns were identified and monitored and was informed that both announced and unannounced site visits took place by the local authority and the Care Quality Commission. The new extra care model was being developed to include outcomes that could be measured and monitored, with work currently ongoing including benchmarking against neighbouring authorities, user surveys and annual reports to establish a baseline against which future comparisons of service delivery could be made.

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Panel Members were informed that approval would be sought from Cabinet to commence the procurement for a three year contract plus an opportunity for a further one year extension; subject to satisfactory performance and the contract continuing to deliver best value to the Council.

Resolved – That details of the presentation on the re-procurement of Extra Care Contract be noted.

4. Date of Next Meeting - 27th June 2022

The next meeting was scheduled for 27th June and Members were informed that there was a possibility that it was likely to be postponed. It was noted that a scrutiny training and work programming session was scheduled 16th June, following which it would be confirmed whether the meeting on 27th June would take place.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.45 pm)