

## **CABINET**

<b>DATE</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Councillor Fenty, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Clive Tritton – Director of Economy and Growth
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Housing Related Support Procurement
<b>STATUS</b>	Open
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF NO.</b>	CB 09/20/02

### **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS**

The delivery of Housing Related Support (HRS) contributes to the Council's key outcomes of Sustainable Communities, Health and Wellbeing and, Feel Safe and are Safe by enabling access to safe and affordable housing options. HRS provides individuals and their families access to a range of support packages within the community to equip them to live independently and to secure and sustain long term housing tenancies within North East Lincolnshire. In addition, the support provided to older people promotes independent living in the community, reducing social isolation and the demand upon other public and welfare services, such as Adult and Children services. The accommodation and support packages provided through the delivery of HRS provides a best value in reducing the demand upon other public services across our communities.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Housing Related Support programme has provided accommodation-based support and support within the community, known as floating support to our most vulnerable individuals and families across our community.

The current contracted terms and conditions cease on 30th June 2021. We therefore intend to undertake a full and robust procurement exercise to enable HRS to be delivered post July 2021, under revised contracted terms and conditions.

The existing HRS contract sum is £2.1 million.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet:

1. Authorises the Director for Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing, to undertake a procurement exercise, for the delivery of HRS services in North East Lincolnshire.
2. Requires the Director for Economy and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing, to seek Cabinet approval, before formally awarding the HRS contract(s) with a commencement date of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.

3. Authorises the Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer to execute all documentation arising.

## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

The current Housing Related Support programme was commissioned in July 2016 for a period of 2 years with the option to extend for a further 3 x 1 years. The final 1-year extension will cease on 30<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

### **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1 Housing Related Support (HRS) has been delivered across North East Lincolnshire since 2003. This was funded through an un-ringfenced grant which allowed contracts to be awarded to commissioned providers to enable the delivery of the HRS programme to vulnerable individuals and families across the borough.
- 1.2 The aim of the HRS programme to support individuals and families who are at risk of becoming homeless and provide support to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- 1.3 All present contracts with providers came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 for a period of 2 years, with the option to extend for a further 3 x 1 years.
- 1.4 The HRS programme is currently split over nine contracts relating to the delivery of:
  1. Accommodation and floating support for offenders
  2. Accommodation based support for multi and complex needs
  3. Accommodation based support for over 25's
  4. Accommodation and floating support for victims of domestic abuse
  5. Accommodation based support for young people
  6. Floating support for young people
  7. Floating support for singles and families
  8. Floating support for older people
  9. Floating support for adults with mental health
- 1.5 Since delivery commenced in 2016 a total of 7514 referrals have been received to access support via HRS up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. A total of 2,596 support plans have been successfully completed.
- 1.6 All of the current contracts are fully utilised all year round. All contracts are now at full capacity with some providers now being over subscribed to access HRS support. A total of 1295 open support plans remain active and open to access HRS support as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

- 1.7 The numbers of people presenting to the Council for housing advice and assistance has remained consistently high.
- 1.8 Despite the support being provided, the Council continue to face increasing challenges to meet the needs and demands of those who present as homeless and have high or complex support needs. This include key client groups such as Care Leavers, those fleeing Domestic Abuse and those with substance misuse issues.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1 Unsupported ex-offenders may be more likely to reoffend if they are homeless or not receiving this support. By commissioning services to meet the complex and intersecting needs of this client group and other vulnerable people it is envisaged this will impact positively and reduce instances of cyclical homelessness.
- 2.2 No human rights or equality and diversity issues are impacted.
- 2.3 The contracts currently deliver HRS across the Borough at competitive rates. Investment into this area has proven to reduce the demands, both physical and financial, on other local authority, social care and health services. Through the procurement process, Value for Money will be tested as pricing forms part of the evaluation of the tender. All procuring will be in line with public contracts regulations.
- 2.4 The delivery of HRS across the borough enables the Council and its key partners to support our most vulnerable residents to access accommodation and support to prevent homelessness, rough sleeping and sofa-surfing. Additionally, the support provided is aimed to improve individual's financial resilience, supporting their ability and confidence in maintaining tenancy arrangements. Alongside the housing support being provided, providers are also offering and delivering support to improve individual's health and wellbeing. This holistic approach is particularly important for those suffering social isolation and loneliness, as without the support the risk of them being left unsupported would increase.
- 2.5 During the period in which Covid-19 restrictions where implemented there was a directive from Central Government to accommodate and support rough sleepers, classified as a vulnerable group, to ensure they were not left at risk of contracting the virus. Following the easing of lockdown arrangements, services have worked together to support those who were accommodated to ensure they did not return to rough sleeping. The information collected during this period will help the Council to shape the future provision of HRS and develop further the holistic, person-centred approach to supporting those with complex needs, which we believe is important to prevent homelessness and reduce the demand on other public services and outlets.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 Do nothing

To do nothing, would result in the delivery of HRS ceasing, with no planning or

preparations in place to ensure ongoing support is provided to those who currently access both accommodation and floating support packages funded via HRS. This would lead to a significant increase in the number of people approaching the Council for further assistance in relation to their housing and independence needs, potentially also resulting in some people losing tenancies, placing them at increased risk of becoming homeless. Additionally, by removing floating support arrangements a significant number of households may quickly reach crisis point, requiring the involvement and support of welfare and public services. We would anticipate an increase in sofa-surfing and rough sleeping across the borough.

### 3.2 Explore options to extend the current contract

The current contract is due to cease on 30th June 2021. As it will be 5 years since the last HRS programme was procured, the needs of those accessing HRS have continued to change over the delivery of programme. Thus, the current specifications for service delivery are not meeting the needs of those who need support. There are no contract extensions available as the procured contractual term was 5 years, to extend beyond this is against Procurement legislation and would leave the Council open to legal challenge.

### 3.3 Explore options to deliver an in-house programme

The Council does not have the resources to deliver an internal programme of HRS. Additionally, the time and resources required to develop an in-house programme is not achievable.

### 3.4 Explore options to terminate delivery of programme

The Council has maintained its commitment in funding the support offered to individuals to access HRS. The removal of such a programme across the Borough would create a significant increase in demand on services in the public and welfare sectors for those most in need. Removing the HRS would remove the frontline face to face / direct services for those residents who may be at risk of heading into crisis. HRS's frontline service reduces demand and the cost burden on key council services, including Adult and Children Services. Removal or significant reduction in HRS funding would also add additional pressures on the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, who deal with debt, budgeting, health, welfare, education and housing issues, which are already stretched due to current levels of demand.

### 3.5 Seek permission to procure a revised HRS service, which is the preferred option.

## **4 REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

4.1 There are potential positive and negative reputational implications for the Council resulting from the decision. An action plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service, covering the following issues:

4.2 The procuring of HRS will cause customers and partners concern about whether they will continue to receive or provide the services as they did before.

- 4.3 The decision could create media interest in the procurement as homelessness in particular is high profile and of interest to the public and media locally and nationally.
- 4.4 The continued commitment to the funding of HRS is important to demonstrate to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government that it is a priority for the Borough.

## **5 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 The options outlined within the report will support the Council's key financial objective to shift our financial resource to support delivery of the Council's vision.
- 5.2 The delivery of the contracts will continually promote a change in culture and lifestyle behaviour, and as the right conditions are being created and the environment changes, then the numbers in need should reduce.
- The HRS contracts will be funded through the Council Core Budget as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan
  - There will be no effect on revenue and capital expenditure.
  - There is no call on Council reserves
  - Value for money will be demonstrated by reduced numbers of those who face repeat homelessness and improved social capital. By focusing on those vulnerable people most in need of support, pressure on other Council and partner statutory services will reduce.

## **6 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The procurement exercise does not have any implications upon climate change or the environment.
- 6.2 To enable HRS to be delivered across the borough there is a need for support workers to travel to people's homes and for those accessing support to travel to provider sessions, where hosted within the community. A variety of transportation methods are used including the use of personal cars, bikes, public transport, and walking.
- 6.3 As part of the HRS delivery providers support and encourage clients to access and use public transport to build their independence skills. Where health and wellbeing are highlighted as a key area requiring support, plans are also developed to encourage clients to walk and cycle to appointments they have within the borough.
- 6.4 Where clients are accommodated within shared housing or hostel settings, providers have continued to develop their recycling programmes and raise awareness with client groups regarding the importance of recycling and how to recycle properly, in line with local collections.

## **7 CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

7.1 Portfolio Holder have been consulted and prior to award the cabinet report will be subject to Community scrutiny.

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The procurement exercise will aim to obtain value for money for the respective services and support. Tenders received will be subject to evaluation and due diligence.

## **9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The procurement of a Housing Related Support provision within North East Lincolnshire is consistent with the stated aims and objectives of the Council underpinning its strategic objectives of Stronger Economy, Stronger Communities.

9.2 The procurement exercise will be conducted so as to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and supported by relevant officers.

9.3 The delegations sought are consistent with an exercise of this nature.

## **10 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no direct HR implications

## **11 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Housing Related Support can be accessed across the borough impacting upon all wards.

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 There are no background papers for this report.

## **13 CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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