

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

**DECISION OF: DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES
WITH ADVICE FROM: HEAD OF COMMISSIONING, HEAD OF STRATEGIC
PROCUREMENT AND INTERIM HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY
DIRECTORATE: PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**



DECISION NO: PC44 (2019/20 scheme)

SUBJECT: Director's Decision to make an exception to standing orders for a short-term direct award of contract for the provision of Community Connect Support Services.

KEY DECISION: YES

REASON: The contract provides support to vulnerable residents in more than one ward.

BACKGROUND: The contract for delivery of Community Connect Support Services is currently provided by Curo Choice Ltd– Industrial and Provident Society, registration number – IP24208R. The contract was for an initial four-year period from the 1st January 2015 – 31st December 2018 with an option to extend for a further period of one year. Approval to extend the contract was given in Director's Decision PC62 (2018/19 scheme) and the current contract arrangements therefore end on the 31st December 2019.

The contract is for the provision of Community Connect Support Services for older people in North Somerset. The service is to help meet the information, advice and support needs of the older population.

The Community Connect service objectives are;

- Case finding and supporting individual older people
- Developing individuals' capacity to take up services through further structured support
- Reducing social isolation and loneliness
- Taking an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) to working with communities.
- Fund raising and resource finding
- Recruiting, training, supporting, supervising and sustaining a volunteer base.

This is one of a range of contracts and grants North Somerset Council has which have close links to the delivery of the Council's priority outcomes for supporting people in the community.

As part of their long-term plan, NHS England have committed to building an infrastructure for social prescribing in primary care. This plan includes the development of Primary Care

Networks (PCN's) social prescribing link workers, the first of which will be in place by 2019/20. These link workers will be an integral part of PCN's. The funding for this work came into effect from the 1st July 2019. In North Somerset this will mean the initial creation of resources for three social prescribing link works in the primary care networks i.e. one for each PCN.

In North Somerset our Strategy and Development Officer with responsibility for Social Isolation, Loneliness and Social Prescribing is working with partner organisations and other stakeholders, regionally with NHSE and locally across BNSSG and within the North Somerset Social Prescribing Co-production group, to understand the role of new link workers in relationship to local authority responsibilities. This work needs to be completed to fully understand the future commissioning requirements for current contracted Community Connect Services in North Somerset.

Other issues that will inform North Somerset's future commissioning requirements for these services are the development of one provider for Community Health Services across the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) local authority areas and the development of an Anchor organisation across BNSSG and an Anchor organisation locally for North Somerset, to work with the community sector.

While the wider social prescribing landscapes are being established and the resulting commissioning requirements understood, approval is sought to issue a short-term contract to the same North Somerset Council contracted provider for a further year. This will allow adequate time for this strategic work to be finalised and a commissioning and procurement process completed.

DECISION:

To approve an exception to Standing Orders to award a short-term contract with Curo Choice Ltd for Community Connect Support Services for the period 1st January 2020 to the 31st December 2020.

REASONS:

Under the Council's Standing Orders, 6.3 Exceptions, where a contract is below EU procurement thresholds the relevant decision maker may approve exceptions to standing orders where it is considered there are acceptable reasons to do so. The contract is within the Light Touch procurement regime thresholds and under Standing Orders a decision of this value may be made by the Director.

The direct award of a short-term contract with the current provider until the 31st December 2020 will enable the Council to complete a review of the local authority's service requirements and a full commissioning and procurement exercise to be carried out.

A short-term award will also provide time to consult with the community about future service provision and to complete an equalities impact assessment to inform commissioning.

Seeking this alternative route to a tender process ensures that the most appropriate, efficient and cost-effective services are identified, and these can then be commissioned from the 1st January 2021. Under the Council's Standing Orders 6.3.1 a valid reason for

exception is where a quantifiable and significant cost and efficiency savings can be achieved through seeking an alternative route.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

- The option of tendering for a new contract to deliver the same services as commissioned now, with a contract beginning 1st January 2020, was considered. This option was not the best route forward as it would not have allowed us to consider all the necessary evidence and strategic options available. Procuring a contract ahead of other programmed works with partners, may result in an inappropriate service and unnecessary costs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The current annual value of the Community Connect Service is £290,000 per annum. The North Somerset Council cost for this 12-month short term award remains at this value and the contract costs to the Council are contained within the current budget.

LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

None.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The contract will include a condition that the provider will use working methods, equipment, materials and consumables which minimise environmental damage.

NSC will use where possible, public transport, or other sources of sustainable transport including electric pool cars, rather than individual staff cars when attending regional meetings. The use of video and teleconferencing are also encouraged for meetings if they do not need to be attended face to face, however sometimes this is important for networking and market engagement events.

CONSULTATION

The current provider Curo Choice Ltd have confirmed their interest in a short-term award based on the previous contract for Community Connect Services.

RISK MANAGEMENT

A direct award of contract would ensure continuation of Community Connect Services while an appropriate commissioning process is completed.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An equalities impact assessment will be completed prior to the recommissioning of Sensory Impairment Services.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Directors Exception to Contract Standing Orders Decision PC42 (2019/20 scheme).

Contract one-year extension - Director's Decision PC62 (2018/19 scheme).

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER:

Signed: Lucia Smith

Title: Director of People and Communities

Date: 2.10.19

WITH ADVICE FROM:

Signed: Geraldine

Title: Head of Commissioning

Date: 2.10.19

Signed: [Signature]

Title: Head of Strategic Procurement

Date: 2.10.19

Signed: [Signature]

Title: Interim Head of Finance and Property

Date: 2.10.19