

From: Mrs Margaret Crabtree – Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance

To: Matt Dunkley – Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

Cc: Ms Sue Chandler – Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services
Peter Oakford – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services
David Cockburn – Head of Paid Service
Zena Cooke – Corporate Director of Finance
Jonathan Idle – Head of Internal Audit
Stuart Collins – Director of Integrated Children’s Services
Christy Holden – Head of Children’s Commissioning
Clare Maynard – Head of Commissioning Portfolio – Communities, Vulnerable and Older People

Dear Matt,

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT REVIEW GROUP (CMRG)

Commissioned Youth Services

I am writing to share the findings of the CMRG meeting held on 1 February 2021 that considered the above contracts. Helen Cook and Matthew Hazelton attended as the commissioners with responsibility for contract management in this area. Stuart Collins attended as the Director with operational accountability for this service area.

The conversation at the meeting was open and honest and we are pleased to say the review showed that effective contract management is in place on these contracts with many positives to be taken from the practice that has been demonstrated.

As always, if there is anything you are unsure about regarding the approach that the CMRG takes or the findings which will be detailed further on in this letter, then please refer to Michael Bridger, Commissioning Standards Manager.

Maturity

It is not for the CMRG to question the individual ratings put forward in the assessment, but the group felt that the overall current ratings were likely an accurate reflection of the current maturity of the contract management in the service area.

On the whole, the group was pleased to learn that the management of these contracts is comprehensive in its maturity, with the commissioners also able to demonstrate their expectations and plans for further continued improvement. The CMRG felt that much of what was presented to the group represents best practice.

Particular strengths include robust planning and governance arrangements, collaborative and transparent working relationships with the various providers, and the comprehensive oversight of commercial, financial and operational performance.

The CMRG was also impressed with the clear visibility and understanding that the commissioners have of the risks associated with these contracts.

Organisation

The CMRG was impressed by the substantial experience and in-depth knowledge that those present demonstrated of the service area and the commercial arrangements in place. It was evident that there is a strong and well-resourced contract management team in place with the assignment of a strategic lead for these contracts providing additional benefits.

Operational and Commercial Performance

The CMRG was pleased to learn that there is a detailed understanding and regular scrutiny of provider performance in this area.

The group was particularly impressed by how officers worked effectively with providers to ensure that services were flexibly adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure critical service continuity. Officers and providers should be credited for maintaining a high standard of performance despite such pressures.

The CMRG was also satisfied that performance indicators are appropriate and relevant with it clear that these are reviewed and adjusted as and when relevant in order to ensure continued alignment with strategic and operational objectives.

Financial Performance

The CMRG acknowledged that the decision to continue to pay providers the full contract price despite the change in provision was taken to maintain and protect critical service delivery during and after the COVID-19 outbreak.

The group recognised that the commissioners present have a detailed understanding of the financial position in relation to these contracts. There was a clear grasp of committed and forecast expenditure with no variances recorded or anticipated.

Risk and Mitigation

The CMRG was pleased that the commissioners have a well-rounded understanding of the major risks and issues associated with these contracts, which have been clearly identified and are assessed and monitored on an ongoing basis.

The group is also of the view that effective contingency arrangements are in place as mitigations to the risks and issues that were highlighted, including those that have emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Forward Look

The CMRG are of the view that the contract management practice demonstrated in this service area should be seen as an exemplar to be shared with the wider Council.

There is much that can be learned from the arrangements in place and the group is confident that there will be further continued improvements moving forward.

We would like to thank you again for your continued support of the work carried out by the CMRG and your feedback, as always, is welcomed.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Crabtree
Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance