

From: Mr Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader

Mr Paul Cooper, Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance

Dr Lauren Sullivan, Leader of the Labour Group

Mr Paul Stepto, Leader of the Green and Independents Group

Clare Maynard, Interim Strategic Commissioner

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 13 July 2022

Subject: Update from the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG)

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

An update on the work of the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG), following its re-launch on 20 June 2022, and the proposed approach going forward.

Recommendation:

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **note** this update.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Contract Management Review Group (CMRG) was originally convened in September 2016. On 24 March 2022, Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee noted and agreed to updated the Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Group, membership changes, and a new approach to determining contracts for review. This recognised the time elapsed since such matters had been considered.

1.2 This report provides a reminder of those new TORs and, following the first meeting of the CMRG since they were agreed, an update on the work of the Group and the proposed approach moving forward.

2. Update on Changes to Membership

The Deputy Leader previously requested that the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance should continue to chair the CMRG. As such, the Interim Strategic Commissioner and Commissioning Standards Managers met with Mr Paul Cooper on 17 February 2022 to discuss the proposed wider membership. The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance was keen to ensure membership was drawn from across the political spectrum and, after discussion with fellow Members, the following standing membership was agreed.

Members

- Chair – Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance – Mr Paul Cooper
- Member 1 – Labour Group Representative – Dr Lauren Sullivan
- Member 2 – Green Party Representative – Mr Paul Stepto

Officers

- Interim Strategic Commissioner
- Head of Finance Operations or Corporate Accountant
- Commissioning Standards Managers
- Commissioning Standards Programme Officer
- Commissioning and Commercial Assistant (Minutes)

For each meeting, additional invitees would be:

- Presenting Contract Manager/s (mandatory)
- Head of Service for the Contract and/or Commissioning Manager (mandatory)
- Operational Director for the Service (optional)
- Cabinet Member for the Service (optional)

3. Changes to CMRG Process and Contract Register

3.1 CMRG is a “Member-chaired forum to review strategically important contracts”. The three appointed Members met with the Commissioning Standards Managers on 13 June 2022, to agree a range of principles underpinning how the CMRG would work, in practical terms, going forward.

3.2 It was agreed that, to foster the maximum levels of engagement, communication and clarity, the forum would be held in person, where possible, with a minimum of every other meeting (bi-monthly) being face-to-face.

3.3 Members were particularly interested in ensuring that CMRG presentations draw out the lived experience of Kent residents intended to benefit from the contract reviewed, as well as focusing on the achievement of outcomes and qualitative evidence for this over a simple assessment of adherence to KPIs. Members also wish to see an increased focus on how Contract Managers are pursuing opportunities for continuous improvement to maximise value for money for Kent residents, which may include refinements to the delivery model either as part of the current contract, or after the current contract term expires.

3.4 It was also agreed that a forward plan for contracts to be presented at CMRG, including meeting dates, will be developed and agreed with appointed Members at a minimum of six-monthly intervals, but ideally up to one year in advance.

3.5 Contracts will be selected for review by reference to the new Contract Register that for the first time provides a complete oversight of the Council’s contracts. This will be made available to the appointed Members, the Interim Strategic Commissioner and the Commissioning Standards Manager who will meet to agree to the forward plan for the CMRG. Members have access to the Contract Register and can extract contracts of interest based on category, value, and proximity to end date, amongst other criteria.

3.6 The ToRs set out clear criteria on which contracts can be selected for review, including information available in the Contract Register such as value and proximity to end date. Additional considerations include complexity, risk, performance, and overall strategic importance. The Chair, in conjunction with the two appointed Members, may also request contracts of political or strategic interest, or where there are expressed concerns.

3.7 The initial forward plan of reviews for CMRG is in the process of being agreed with the appointed Members based on the above criteria.

3.8 Finally, Members were keen to emphasise the importance of drawing out the common themes and lessons learned from the reviews at CMRG. It was agreed that this will support future policy development, the adaptation of the Council’s commissioning standards, and decisions on where to focus capability initiatives. In line with the TORs, the findings from CMRG will be summarised and reported back to Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee at six monthly intervals.

4. Findings from Initial CMRG Meeting – 20 June 2022

4.1 The first meeting of the revised CMRG took place on 20 June 2022, examining the Council’s contract for the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service. The principles objectives of this contract are to:

- reduce the impact of domestic abuse on families and communities within Kent, and keep people safe; and
- support survivors in coping with the immediate aftermath of abuse and empower them to recover from the long-term effects of that.

4.2 The initial term for the contract was April 2017 to March 2022, with the option for two, two-year extensions, one of which is already in place having been subject to a Key Decision. The total potential value of the contract, including possible extensions, is £18.6 million. An example of partnership working, the contract is funded and jointly commissioned by ten district councils, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

4.3 A robust discussion was held with the conclusion that the contract was well managed and appeared to be delivering its intended objectives. A point of particularly positive note was that the contract had been showcased by the Local Government Association (LGA) as a good example of integrated working.

4.4 There were several key comments, findings, and requests from Members which are summarised below:

Comments/Findings	Action
Members reported anecdotal feedback on the service which did not necessarily reflect reported performance of the service.	The Contract Manager will invite Members to visit the service and speak to the providers.
Members sought reassurance on the public awareness of the service.	The Contract Manager outlined ways in which the service had been promoted. This will be explored in the above invite.

Given the volume and extent of changes to the contract, Members asked about the value for money that the contract continued to represent to the Council.	Clear reasons for the contractual changes were provided, including new requirements in legislation, and it was outlined how such changes would be considered in any re-commissioning exercise.
Members were keen to understand the market and the need for its development	The Contract Manager explained that providers had demonstrated strong collaboration during the pandemic and are supportive of further strengthening the market.
The Contract Manager reported that key learning suggested a need for future contracts/specifications to have an agreed % to sub-contract to widen the market.	
Members expressed an interest in how male survivors are supported by KCC.	The Contract Manager will follow-up with this information.
A request for numbers of service users returning to partners was made.	
More information was requested in feedback of users exiting the service.	
Members were interested to understand the trend in new referrals during Covid.	
The possibility of extending the remit of the contract to cover wider prevention, including addressing perpetrator behaviour and further provision to support children, was raised by Members.	This will be considered as part of future re-commissioning activity.
Members suggested a greater focus on highlighting and understanding links between similar Council contracts.	This will be considered at future CMRG meetings.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Members of the CMRG have provided clear direction on the type of information required from presentations delivered at the forum, to provide assurance as to how value for money and key objectives are being delivered in each contract. This helped inform how the inaugural meeting was structured and will provide a clear focus for the CMRG and the Council's wider contract management and reporting approaches moving forward.

5.2 The initial meeting of the Group found that the reviewed contract was an example of good practice and a satisfactory benchmark against which future contracts subject to review can be measured. The actions identified will provide additional assurance and their completion will be monitored, with outcomes reported back to the Group in due course.

6. Recommendation

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **note** this update.

7. Contact details

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