

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

**DECISION NO:**

16/00003

**For publication****Key decision\***

Expenditure of more than £1m and affects more than two electoral divisions

**Subject:**

**HEALTHWATCH KENT**

**Decision:**

As Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform I agree to:

- a) **EXTEND** the current Healthwatch Kent contract for a further two years from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2018 with an optional one year break clause available at the end of the year one (31 March 2017) and
- b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer, to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The contract was let on 1 April 2013 and is coming to the end of the first three years of delivery. However a contract extension clause is in place that allows for two further years 2016 to 2018. The current provider, Engaging Kent a Community Interest Company has delivered good quality services as Healthwatch Kent so extending the current contract is the preferred option.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The matter was discussed at the Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee on 14 January 2016.

*Mr R Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, was present and Ms E Hanson, Head of Strategic Commissioning, Community Support, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Ms Hanson introduced the report and explained that, although the funding for Healthwatch had moved into the Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate, the responsibility for the service, due to the need for objectivity, remained with the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, Mr R Gough, and it was he who would be taking the key decision to extend the contract. Ms Hanson and Mr Gough responded to comments and questions from Members, as follows:-

- a) tendering arrangements for a new contract would start in the autumn of 2016 and the new contract was expected to start in April 2018;
- b) the County Council had been continuing to work with the provider to refine and apply a robust performance framework to measure the performance of the contract and ensure that it delivered value for money. Mr Gough added that, when awarding the original contract, he had been keen to establish robust monitoring, eg of Healthwatch's profile, its engagement with clinical commissioning groups and contribution to the Kent and Medway Health and Wellbeing Board. Monitoring also needed to be objective, and the County Council needed to be able to demonstrate objectivity, if challenged, as it commissioned both Healthwatch and some of the services on which Healthwatch was required to comment;

- c) Healthwatch services were funded in part from the revenue support grant (RSG);
- d) a view was expressed that Healthwatch was not as effective a consumer champion as the former LINKs had been. Ms Hanson explained that Healthwatch was improving its reach and visibility, it works with existing patient groups. Members would have input into the shaping of the next contract;
- e) in response to a query about the number of contacts with Healthwatch and if these were increasing or decreasing, which areas of service attracted the most comment and complaint and how successful the current contract had been to date, Ms Hanson undertook to supply this information outside the meeting; and
- f) a view was expressed that much valuable work had been done for the CQC by working with Healthwatch.

2. RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, to:-

a) extend the Healthwatch Kent Contract from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2018, with an optional one- year break clause available at the end of year one (31 March 2017); and

b) delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer, to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision,

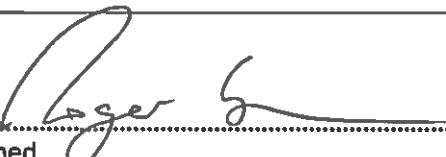
taking account of comments made by this committee, be endorsed.

**Any alternatives considered:**

KCC has a statutory responsibility to maintain a local Healthwatch, therefore the other option available was to end the current contract and recommission the service. The current service is providing good quality outcomes and an extension is available it was, therefore, considered inefficient to recommission.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

None

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 signed

24 March 2016  
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