

# BKENT COUNTY COUNCIL –RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TAKEN BY:**

Paul Carter  
Leader of Kent County Council and Cabinet Member for  
Business Strategy, Audit and Transformation

**DECISION NO:**

16/00051

**For publication**

**Key decision** Affects more than two electoral divisions and expenditure of over £1m

**Subject: Recommissioning of Infrastructure Support to the Voluntary and Community Sector**

**Decision:** As Leader of Kent County Council , I

- 1) confirm that the current grant funding arrangements to Local Infrastructure Organisations will end, subject to there first being a good model of alternative delivery in place.
- 2) Procure and award a new contract that meets the outcomes identified in section 4.2 of the recommendation report and commences from January 2017.
- 3) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer, to undertake the necessary actions to implement this decision.

**Reason(s) for decision:** Re-commissioning infrastructure support to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) will ensure that it responds to the sector's needs, delivers the aspirations of the VSC policy and is sustainable in the longer term, whilst building collaboration across the sector

**Financial Implications:** The value of the proposed contract is between £1.5m (for three years) and £2.3m (for five years).

**Legal Implications:** None

**Equality Implications:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to consider the impact of this on individuals with protected characteristics. It has concluded that any negative impact on individuals with protected characteristics will be minimal as this funding is not used to deliver services directly to individuals, but rather to provide support to organisations that may provide support directly to people

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposed decision was discussed at the Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee Meeting on 12 July

1. Ms Sheppard introduced the report and explained that the Commissioning Advisory Board (CAB) had considered the issue on 6 July, at which the following points had been raised:-
  - a) concern had been raised about the independence of infrastructure providers, and the fact that they were viewed as competitors by the organisations that they supported because many were also service providers. Infrastructure providers would need to demonstrate that they could separate their infrastructure and service provider roles effectively; and
  - b) the value of the contract would diminish over its length, and services would need to be self-sustaining in providing support. Bidders would need to identify how they would achieve this sustainability.
2. Members who had attended the CAB meeting added that reservations had been expressed there, and the Board had requested changes to the report. Ms Sheppard explained that the agenda

and reports for this committee had been published before the Board meeting and so it had not been possible to update the report to this committee.

3. In debate, Members made the following comments:-

- a) the rationale for using the best available organisations working together as a team, was understood, but an alliance as only as good as its weakest link, and doubts were expressed about how well the arrangement would work. Ms Sheppard responded that peer support could be used to share expertise and spread best practice across the range of large and small organisations;
- b) concern was expressed that, if services were to be delivered by volunteers, skill levels and quality of training could be difficult to monitor and guarantee. Ms Sheppard explained that volunteer centres would take on a brokerage role, so neither they nor the County Council would be liable for problems arising from shortcomings in volunteers. The brokerage role was a traditional one within the sector, but an ongoing challenge to be addressed was a way to make volunteering more flexible so that more people could be encouraged to volunteer in ways that fitted their time, capacity and skills;
- c) the change in arrangement would save £500,000, and the value of making the extensive changes proposed to achieve this saving was questioned;
- d) the proposed 3- or 5-year contract would bring future certainty to providers who currently had no such certainty around ongoing funding from year to year;
- e) the overview of the voluntary and community sector which would be possible with the recommissioning would make it easier for best practice to be shared and spread, and for areas of particular hardship to be highlighted for further help; and
- f) the voluntary sector and the services it provided were of enormous value to the County Council, but the true value could only be calculated if the number of hours donated by volunteers were identified and added together. Concern was expressed that if the voluntary sector were not able to provide a service at any time, the County Council may be unable to plug the resulting gap.

4. In addition to Ms Sheppard's responses, Mr Lobban assured Members that the proposed recommissioning was in no way to be seen as a way of cutting funding or support to the voluntary sector. He emphasised the importance of the sector and said the purpose of the recommissioning was to protect service delivery and review the approach to ensure the most effective delivery. He assured Members that, if consultation had indicated that the recommissioning would be detrimental to the voluntary sector in any way, it would not have been pursued. Mr Ireland added that, in the new arrangement, the County Council would be able to direct the most support to the organisations delivering the most critical support services, while providing all with the stability of a longer-term contract and allowing them to plan ahead with more certainty than previously.

5. Mr Carter emphasised the importance of the proposed new contract in the County Council's relationship with the voluntary sector and the importance therefore of getting its content right. For that reason, it had been referred to the CAB for discussion, even though its value was under the usual threshold of £1m. The County Council sought to work more closely with the voluntary sector, which added great value but was a very complex part of the industry. Consultation had shown mixed views from the sector on the County Council's current support arrangements, and the new contract was a way of improving this support. He advised that the issue would be considered by the Strategic Commissioning Board before the contract was finally issued, to ensure that it gave existing organisations optimum support and encouraged new ones to grow. The County Council needed to harness the skills and creativity of the voluntary sector and he hoped that the Cabinet Committee

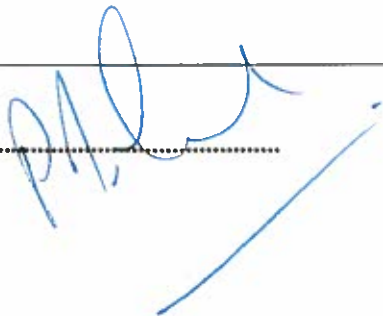
would support the recommissioning as a constructive way forward. He reassured the committee that the selection of organisations to which contracts should be awarded would be carefully undertaken. He suggested strengthening the first recommendation in the report by adding a condition that the ending of the current grant funding arrangements be subject to there first being a good model of alternative delivery in place.

6. RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Audit and Transformation and Commercial and Traded Services, to:
- a) confirm that the current grant funding arrangements to Local Infrastructure Organisations will end, subject to there first being a good model of alternative delivery in place;
  - b) procure and award a new contract which meets the outcomes identified in section 4.2 of the report and commences from January 2017; and
  - c) 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, be endorsed.

**Any alternatives considered:** The alternative is to maintain current arrangements.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**  
None

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signed



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date

19/7/2016

