

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Cabinet

DECISION NO:

23-00100

For publication

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) *result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or*
- b) *be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:*
 - *the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;*
 - *significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.*

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Cessation of Commissioned Youth Services

Decision:

Cabinet agree to:

- a) cease the delivery of service provision through the commissioned Youth Service contracts from 1 April 2024 when existing contracts come to an end.
- b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into any relevant contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

1.1 The existing contracts for the commissioned Youth Services are due to expire at the end of March 2024. A decision on the future service provision and spend is required.

The cost of the current Youth Service contracts is £1.2m, the savings made by not continuing to commission these services would be £913k from the base budget. The remainder c£321k of the funding is currently utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and this would enable a further reduction to the current DSG overspend.

In accordance with Securing Kent's Future, it is necessary for all services to review future spend, in particular where contracts are reaching end points. In addition, the development of a whole family 0-19 delivery model (Family Hub) at the same time offers the Council an opportunity to refresh KCC's current offer in Youth Service provision without the commissioned activity previously put in place through these contracts.

2. Options for Youth Services

Option 1:

- 2.1 No commissioned Youth Services contracts delivering discretionary services will be renewed when they end in March 2024, enabling a saving to the Council's base budget of £913k and reduction of the DSG overspend of £321K. As described, the Council's current youth provision will continue to be delivered within a Family Hub model and will provide youth provision for children and support for their families where it is most needed. Young people with SEND will continue to receive a universal support service through existing KCC channels and be supported in accessing wider groups and support through the Family Hub network.
- 2.2 Cessation of commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services would bring Kent in line with the national picture. This is the recommended option as it addresses the current requirements of the Council's financial recovery strategy.

Option 2:

- 2.3 The alternative option (and is not the preferred approach) is for KCC to renew the contracts for the current commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services and not realise a saving of £913k and reduction of the DSG overspend of £321K. This decision would not impact on the Council's proposed direction of travel to reconfigure existing standalone Open Access inhouse services into a whole family approach model for infants, children, young people and their families aged 0 to 19 (25 with SEND). If the savings cannot be realised by ending the commissioned Youth Services contracts delivering discretionary services, it will not be possible to meet the commitment set out in our MTFP from this set of activities and savings will be required to be made elsewhere in the CYPE Directorate.
- 2.4 As an additional factor if the Council were to continue with these commissioned Youth Services, as the current contracts are due to come to an end, this will require the delivery of a new procurement process with its associated costs and delay for any deployment of new services. It is estimated that this process would result in an approximately six-month gap in youth provision. This estimate is based on the need to procure new commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services in line with the Family Hub model.
- 2.5 Due to significant budgetary challenges KCC needs to review all of its commissioned contracts that are coming to a natural end as these contracts are.
- 2.6 It is not recommended that KCC renew the current commissioned Youth Service delivering discretionary services contracts from April 2024 as this approach would not deliver the required savings.

3. Financial Implications and breakdown of providers

- 3.1 The cost of the current youth contracts is £1.2m, the savings made by not continuing to commission these services would be £913k from the base budget. The remainder c£321k of the funding is currently utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and would enable a further reduction to the DSG overspend.
- 3.2 Achieving these savings would contribute to meeting the spend reduction required in KCC Budget and the MTFP, as approved by Full Council

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 Consideration has been given to KCC's statutory duties in relation to the provision of commissioned youth services. In particular, the statutory guidance for local authorities on

services to improve young people's well-being states as outlined below:

- Section 507B requires local authorities to, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for all qualifying young people to a sufficient quantity of 'youth services.
- A sufficient quantity of educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities.
- A sufficient quantity of recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

4.2 From an operational perspective, KCC considers that the existing in-house provision, including proposed developments within the planned Family Hub model will allow KCC to meet relevant statutory requirements without the commissioned Youth Services. This is because the offer across the Council's wider services including that provided by schools would meet this requirement.

4.3 There is a nexus between these proposals, the Family Hub Programme, and the Kent Communities programme. KCC has retained external legal advice and Counsel in relation to these proposals and advice has been provided to the operational team on an iterative basis and advice provided to decision makers. The legal risks that will need to be balanced against the requirements of the proposal and wider benefits of implementation.

5. Equalities implications

5.1 Initial assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has identified negative implications on young people within the Age, Disability, Sex, Race, Pregnancy and Maternity Protected Characteristics as the decision will result in a reduction in the number of dedicated Youth Services. However, the remaining service offer continues to meet statutory requirements.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee considered the decision on 21 November 2023.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Options outlined above and in the report attached to this decision.

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

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signed

date 30 November 2023