

From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services
Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 21 November 2023

Subject: Commissioned Youth Service Contracts

Decision Number: 23/00100

Key decision: It affects more than two Electoral Divisions
It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m.

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet – 30 November 2023

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

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.

Recommendation:

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on the proposed decision to;

- a) AGREE to 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.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC's offer of Open Access services includes a directly delivered service and commissioned provision. These services work together seamlessly to engage young people requiring services across all 12 of the districts. This model has been in place since 2016.
- 1.2 In addition to the 12 in-house Youth Hubs, there are 7 providers delivering Youth Services across the 12 Districts for children aged 8-19 as well as those with disabilities up to 25. This typically includes group sessions on weekday evenings that are free at point of delivery with music, cooking, dance, sport and craft being common activities.
- 1.3 With the exception of one commissioned contract, being the service delivered in Canterbury through a contract held by Canterbury Academy, none of the proposed contracts to be ended are subject to the Kent Community Assets Key Decision. The majority of commissioned Youth Service providers occupy KCC buildings, although (with the exception of Canterbury) this is not detailed within the Youth Services contracts. There are separate leases for the building occupation. The progression of the Kent Community Assets Key Decision is therefore not more than minimally linked to the decision to cease these contracts when they naturally end at the end of March 2024.
- 1.4 It is estimated that the savings associated with ending these contracts 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.

2. Public Consultation and Securing Kent's Future

- 2.1 There are two key considerations which affect this proposed decision. The first is the Kent Family Hub services public consultation which ran between 19 July 2023 and 13 September 2023 to provide those who use the services, members of the public and strategic partners the opportunity to review the proposals in detail and provide their response. The feedback from the consultation has been considered and evaluated in preparation for this proposed decision.
- 2.2 Throughout the consultation a schedule of proactive engagement events took place with those who use the services, members of the public and partners. The consultation document set out 24 events across the county for the public to attend, learn more about the consultation and provide feedback. These events totalled 70 hours of proactive engagement during the consultation period. 32 of those hours were specifically for engagement with young people. In addition to service user feedback, feedback was sought through attendance at meetings with District Councils, Health services and wider partnerships.
- 2.3 An additional effort was undertaken by KCC and commissioned Youth Service staff in each local youth provision to dedicate time with young people and

encourage them to give their views throughout the period of the consultation. This feedback was accepted in a range of formats allowing for the understanding that young people may not want to complete the entire consultation questionnaire.

2.4 Table 1: Youth Consultation response types by centre name:

Centre name	Feedback type
Brogdale CiC	1 video Youth feedback word document - 33 comments
Canterbury Academy	1 flip chart page
The Pavilion	3 flip charts
Canterbury Youth Hub	2 Youth feedback forms
Quarterdeck Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Kent Youth Voice	3 youth feedback forms
Dartford Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Gravesham Youth Hub	4 flip chart pages 3 post it notes
The Grand	2 flip chart pages
Northfleet Youth Hub	6 youth feedback forms 2 flip chart pages
Swale Youth Hub	5 youth feedback forms
Pie Factory	13 voice clips
Salus	3 flip chart pages 10 posters 2 videos
Ashford Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Dover Youth Hub	3 youth feedback forms
Folkestone & Hythe Youth Hub	4 youth feedback forms
Tunbridge Wells Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Play Place	1 video

2.5 A breakdown of the feedback received from the consultation is included within the consultation report, which was collated and assessed by LAKE market research, this is included at Appendix 1.

2.6 During the consultation the rationale behind the programme and proposed changes to commissioned Youth Services was set out, including the proposal to no longer continue with commissioned Youth Services after the end of their current contracts in March 2024.

2.7 The second key consideration is financial. Since the consultation closed the financial position for the Council is even more pressing than it was when the consultation was live in the summer. This position is set out in Securing Kent's Future, which should be considered alongside this proposed decision.

3. Consultation and consideration of responses

- 3.1 As detailed in the consultation report, consultees were invited to comment on the specific activities highlighted in the consultation proposals and describe the difference stopping these activities would make to them. By way of a summary, the main themes of feedback as it related to the cessation of the Youth Service contracts are included here.
- 3.2 When the question was put to residents, just under a third of consultees (31%) stressed the personal need for these activities and 17% indicated that they rely on these services. Just over a quarter (27%) believe it will result in them missing out on socialising/mixing/building confidence in making friends. Other comments highlight that the removal of these activities would be detrimental to children/young people that use them and have a negative impact and affect mental health/wellbeing/anxiety/feelings of isolation.
- 3.3 When the question was put to professional/organisational consultees, they expressed concerns that increasing numbers of young people need to access support and stopping services is the opposite of what is needed. In addition, consultees reference the potential implications of this in terms of mental health and safety concerns. Consultees also expressed concerns that these activities provide much needed services for 'hard to engage' young people/adolescents and that they may not interact with other service provisions.
- 3.4 Having considered all factors including these responses, KCC's preferred course of action remains to cease the commissioned Youth Service contracts at the end of March 2024, analysed below as Option 1.
- 3.5 Whilst KCC acknowledges the value of the work carried out by commissioned Youth Services for the duration of the current contracts, reflected in the consultation responses, the extent of the financial challenge the Council now faces has led to difficult decisions being necessary. The implication of continuing with the Youth Service contracts delivering discretionary services beyond March 2024 would be a requirement to make greater cuts in other parts of the Council's CYPE budget, which could require making cuts elsewhere.
- 3.6 In ceasing these contracts, the Council recognises that commissioned activities and clubs may stop or reduce unless the organisations are able to find alternative funding to deliver them.
- 3.7 Discretionary commissioned Youth Services is part of the overall offer for youth across the County. This includes a wide range of private, third sector and voluntary organisation offers which are not funded by Kent County Council, and youth provision provided in-house by Kent County Council, neither of which are within the scope of this proposed decision.
- 3.8 While ending the commissioned Youth Service contracts will be an unwelcome decision for those using the services, it is important to bear in mind that:
 - 3.8.1 There are a wide range of youth activities available and flourishing in our communities e.g., local sports clubs, faith groups, uniformed

services and community-based youth work. The Council would continue to offer advice and guidance to existing groups to develop new local volunteer-led groups. We will seek to support the development of topic driven youth support services for both the young people and their families as part of a co-produced model of support.

3.8.2 The Council will continue to deliver KCC's in-house youth provision which is delivered across a range of partnerships including schools. The way in which this will be delivered in the future is addressed below in Section 4.

3.8.3 In order to address the concerns expressed within the consultation responses insofar as is possible, if commissioned youth services are not renewed it will be important for us to work with young people and former contracted providers to identify and signpost appropriate services that they will be able to access through in-house youth provision and any other local services (e.g. in the voluntary sector), via a directory of youth services. Further details are provided below in Section 4.

3.8.4 The Council will, wherever possible, provide appropriate support to the affected groups to make applications for grant funding.

3.9 The current in-house youth provision offer will continue to be provided within a range of in-house sites which will (subject to parallel decision making) be renamed Family Hubs and will include face-to-face and outreach activities as well as a digital provision. This is set out in more detail in Section 4 below.

4. Youth Services delivered through the Family Hub model.

4.1 The youth services currently provided in-house will (subject to the parallel decision making regarding the Family Hub model) continue within the Family Hub network. KCC remains committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable young people in Kent.

4.2 Topic-based youth groups open to all will be offered with a focus on individuals who face barriers to participation in privately funded, third sector or community-based activities elsewhere.

4.3 Youth groups delivered as part of the Family Hub model will be informed by the voice of young people who completed the consultation. The topic of the group will be determined by the identified need and requirements of the young people in each district. Examples might be LGBTQ+, employment and housing support, online safety, and mental health and wellbeing. Support, advice and guidance will also be available for young people with a focus where necessary for young people with learning difficulties (13-24), young carers, and those with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

4.4 Street based youth work will also continue within the 0-19 Family Hub model. This type of youth work is not building based, it takes place in community spaces that have been identified as areas that young people spend their time and where

they can be particularly vulnerable e.g., parks or high streets. This makes support accessible to vulnerable young people who are unlikely to attend services which are building based. This is currently delivered by youth teams in various locations identified across multi-agency partnerships.

4.5 The criteria for each group will ensure that young people who face barriers to participation, can access some form of provision. The offer will consider:

- cost
- location
- timing
- safety
- age range
- protected characteristics
- young people's perceptions of the offer
- accessibility of the facilities, including transport link

4.6 The Council will also provide an up-to-date directory of youth services that are delivered both by KCC and through the community through half yearly updates. This will be managed centrally, and annual mapping activity in each district will be completed to ensure the information on local services is up to date. The information about these groups will be collated and made freely available by the Council however, it is recognised that this will not provide an exhaustive list of all services available. Local knowledge and expertise will also be available from Family Hub practitioners and partners working within the Family Hub network.

5. Options for Youth Services

5.1 Option 1:

5.1.1 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.

5.1.2 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.

5.2 Option 2:

5.2.1 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.

5.2.2 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.

5.2.3 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.

5.2.4 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.

6. Financial Implications and breakdown of providers

6.1 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.

6.2 Achieving these savings would contribute to meeting the spend reduction required in KCC Budget and the MTFP, as approved by Full Council.

6.3 Table 2: Commissioned Youth providers breakdown.

	District	New CV per annum
Canterbury Academy	Ashford	100,537.29
Canterbury Academy	Canterbury	114,797.97
Play Place	Dartford	92,389.50
Pie Factory	Dover	104,979.42
Salus	Folkestone & Hythe	91,035.00
The Grand	Gravesham	104,999.96
Salus	Maidstone	96,285.04
West Kent Extra	Sevenoaks	78,750.00
Southern (used to be opitivo)	Swale	140,647.50
Pie Factory	Thanet	143,795.36
Salus	Ton & Malling	85,889.92
Salus	Tunbridge Wells	79,589.92
	Totals	1,233,696.87

6.4 The commissioned Youth Services contracts include different building-based and detached activities such as music, sports, youth clubs, arts & drama clubs and/or street-based such as skateboarding, sporting clubs and any other outdoor positive activities.

7. Legal implications

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

8. Equalities implications

8.1 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.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on the proposed decision to;

- a) AGREE to 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.

10. Appendices

- 1. Full consultation Report including an executive summary

11. Contact details.

Report Author:
Danielle Day, Programme Manager
03000 416689
Danielle.day@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:
Carolann James, Director of Operational ICS
03000 423308
Carolann.james@kent.gov.uk