

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Cabinet Member for
Children, Young People and Education

DECISION NO:

17/00077

For publication**Key Decision**

Affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions and expenditure of more than £1m

Subject: Shared Accommodation Service for the provision of accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 16-21

Decision: As Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, I agree to:

- a) **AWARD** short-term interim contracts to the existing service providers to deliver a Shared Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 16-21 from 1 March 2018 to 31 August 2018;
- b) **AWARD** a new contract for a Shared Accommodation Service from 24 October 2017 to 31 October 2022; and
- c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer, to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision: KCC currently purchase an Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers Aged 16-21. The service is predominately but not exclusively accessed by Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The service is delivered through two block contract arrangements and a multiple supplier accommodation framework (call off) contract for provision of accommodation placements. Currently approximately 570 young people are accommodated in this provision. The contracts started on the 1 March 2012. Contract extensions were agreed in 2017 and will end on 28 February 2018. The original contract value of these contracts was in the region of £1.8 million (approximately 300 bed spaces) per annum. Due to a large increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Kent annual spend for 2016-17 was approximately £4.4 million (approximately 600 bed spaces). During the course of 2017 the Strategic Commissioning Division has been working with colleagues in the Council's Property Division to fully investigate alternative options and to ensure that future commissioning intentions are informed by professional property input. This extensive exercise has delayed the original commissioning plan but has provided valuable support to help to address weaknesses identified in the current provision.

The Council is planning the procurement of a new Shared Accommodation Service from October 2017. The current providers have been clear that they cannot continue to lease houses for use by KCC without a contract as providers must commit to a 6 month minimum lease on all properties.

Approving a Single Source Action allows sufficient time to align with the proposed Procurement timetable, existing services to continue with minimal disruption to service users and support a gradual transition to a new service.

Legal Implications

The Council has a statutory duty to provide suitable and safe accommodation that has the right level of support for CIC (including UASC) in accordance with the Children's Act 1989.

The Council must provide Care Leavers (including former UASC) with support and financial support to assist in promoting their welfare, especially in relation to maintaining suitable accommodation and

promoting education and training.

Equality Implications

An EQIA assessment has been undertaken and a low weighting has been determined. The EQIA supports the intention to diversify provision according to individual needs of service users

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation: The proposed decision was discussed at the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 7 September 2017. Karen Sharp and Sian Fox (Commissioning Officer) introduced the report and welcomed questions and comments from the Committee.

Philip Segurola discussed the close working relationship with colleagues from commissioning and the need to maintain the right balance between cost efficiency and what is best for the young people.

In response to questions from Members, Karen Sharp discussed the current contract weaknesses and how these would be overcome and the option for Gen2 to deliver the service which was not considered the most viable current option. Philip Segurola said that in terms of the funding, there was a set amount from the home office for every over 18 year old which covered everything that they needed. Under the arrangements that the cost ceiling, provided housing benefit claims were available or the young person could self-fund should ensure that KCC are the right side of the cost ceiling and therefore should minimise cost implications for the Council.

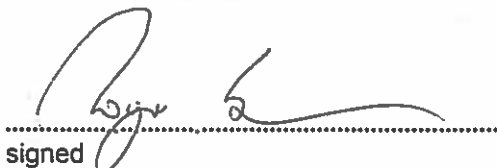
Andrew Ireland said that by securing a more effective contract in the future and a managed transition process, the authority would be in a position to be able to plan more strategically.

RESOLVED that that the Cabinet Committee considered, endorsed or make recommendations to the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education to:

- a) Award short-term interim contracts to the existing service providers to deliver a Shared Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 16-21 from 1 March 2018 to 31 August 2018,
- b) Award a new contract for a Shared Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 16-21 from 24 October 2017 to 31 October 2022, and
- c) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer, to implement the decision.

Any alternatives considered: Consideration has been given to doing nothing. Contracts expire on the 28 February 2018, if new interim contracts are not in place a large number of UASC and Former UASC currently accessing the services may lose their accommodation and become homeless. KCC will be required to provide the majority of existing service users with alternative accommodation, which is likely to be unaffordable through the Home Office grant.

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


signed

24 October 2017
date