

Cabinet – 14 December 2022

Award of contract for provision of the Housing First service

Portfolio: Councillor Ali - Customer

Related portfolios: Councillor Pedley – Adult Social Care

Service: Customer

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To ensure we continue to support our customers who remain within the Housing First service, contributing to the continued reduction of rough sleeping in Walsall.

2. Summary

2.1 Through the Housing First scheme (“the Scheme”) this Council, via the existing contracted provider GreensquareAccord, has managed to house and support over 100 of our most entrenched rough sleepers since the Scheme started five years ago in November 2017. There are currently 50 customers receiving support on the Scheme, with an additional 26 customers who have ‘graduated’ from the service who still have the option to seek support if required. External grant funding has successfully been secured to provide this service for existing customers for a further two years (2023 to 2025).

2.2 A public advertisement was placed on the Council’s e-tendering portal ‘Intend’ and published on Contracts Finder and on the Find a Tender Service, on 21 October 2022 and closed on 21 November 2022. An Open Procedure procurement process was used to invite tenders.

2.3 This Cabinet report should be read and considered in conjunction with the ‘Award of contract for the provision of the Housing First service’ Private Session Agenda Cabinet Report.

2.4 This is a key decision because it exceeds the threshold for significant expenditure and affects more than two wards.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That following consideration of the confidential report in the private session of the agenda, Cabinet approves the award of the contract for the provision of the

Housing First service to GreenSquareAccord Limited for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025 with an expected contract value of £676,400 with an option to extend for up to a further 24 months to 31 March 2027 which would take the estimated total contract value to £1,329,200.

- 3.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Children's and Customer, to enter into a contract to deliver the Housing First service and to subsequently authorise the sealing or signing of any associated contracts, deeds or other related documents for such services including the optional extension periods.
- 3.3 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Children's and Customer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for the service identified above, should this be required at any time during the contract term, in line with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Rules.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Housing First is an approach of moving people experiencing homelessness, who are typically rough sleepers, into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional support and services as needed. Housing First is designed to provide open-ended support to rough sleepers who have high support needs. It uses an individual-led approach and the people using Housing First services exercise choice and have control over their own lives. Housing and support are also separated, in that getting access to housing and remaining in housing is not conditional on accepting support or interventions. Service users are also not expected to cease their drug or alcohol addictions in return for accessing or remaining in housing, although the support service will help them access addiction treatment if they choose to engage.
- 4.2 People using Housing First's services are much more likely to have mental health challenges, poor physical health, long-term limiting illness and addictions than the general population. They are often highly socially marginalised, stigmatised and lack social skills to engage in offers of support and community integration. They are likely to be economically inactive and to have histories of contact with the criminal justice system. Rates of problematic drug and alcohol use are also high.
- 4.3 The seven core principles of Housing First are:
 - 1) People have a right to a home
 - 2) Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed
 - 3) Housing and support are separated
 - 4) Individuals have choice and control
 - 5) An active engagement approach is used
 - 6) The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
 - 7) A harm reduction approach is used.

- 4.4 The Council commenced a self-funded Housing First pilot in 2017, appointing GreensquareAccord (trading at that time as 'Accord') to deliver the Scheme, and the first service user was housed on 27 November 2017. At the same time the Council was part of a joint regional funding bid submitted by Birmingham City Council on behalf of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). In October 2017 the then Chancellor announced £28m for three Housing First pilots, to be shared between Greater Manchester, Merseyside region and WMCA. Following subsequent discussions, the WMCA was awarded £9.6m, the largest of the allocations. This was to deliver Housing First for the period 2018-21 with a potential extension of up to a further two years, taking the service to 2023. Walsall was awarded £1.3m of this fund and was the first of the participant councils to subsequently procure a provider through an open tender exercise, reappointing GreensquareAccord with a contract commencing 31 January 2019.
- 4.5 The Council has recently been successful in bidding for additional monies (as detailed in 4.10) to continue legacy support for those 50 existing customers who remain in the programme. New referrals into the Housing First pilot ended in late 2021. Any new rough sleepers who may have been referred into Housing First previously, are now assisted by the Council's enhanced Rough Sleeper team, which through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) external grant funding have a team in place that provides outreach services, and support services to those customers.
- 4.6 The Scheme has helped make a difference to the lives of some of our most entrenched rough sleepers, housing and supporting 103 individuals over the lifetime of the project, and has had a number of successes:
- 26 individuals graduated to independent living albeit there is still support available if they have a crisis for example
 - 78 have received addiction treatment, and 16 have overcome their addictions through this work
 - 69 have accessed mental health services
 - 11 have engaged at some point in either training or employment
 - Average length of tenancy is 2.75 years, with longest tenancy of 5 years
 - There have been no evictions to date

Council Plan

- 4.7 The Housing First support service will contribute to the Council's priorities as follows:
- Economic - Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses – the support provider will work with service users, and in partnership with other agencies to assist customers to be work ready and promote training and employment opportunities.
 - People - Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing – the support provider will be required to support service users in maintaining a tenancy, promoting independence, and ensuring access to mental and physical health, addiction and wellbeing services.

Risk management

- 4.8 There could be a risk that there will be delays in new service implementation. This risk is low given that a suitable mobilisation period has been allowed for in the timetable.
- 4.9 The risk of challenge to the award of the contract is low, given that it has been procured in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015).

Financial implications

- 4.10 There is a maximum budget envelope available of £676,400 and this is fully funded from external grants as per Table 1 below:

Table 1: Housing First extension funding

Grant Name	Funder	Period	Amount
Housing First pilot	DLUHC	23/24	£350,000
Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)	DLUHC	24/25	£326,400
Total			£676,400

- 4.11 Grant funding for this contract is confirmed for the two years ending 31st March 2025. There remains no indication as to further grant funding opportunities post this date. As such a review of this service will need to be undertaken closer to the end date to consider impact, future delivery options and any associated funding implications.

Legal implications

- 4.12 The Directorate, in consultation with Legal Services, has elected to use the Council's long form contract for goods and services. This has been modified as required by Legal Services to fit the tender proposals and ensure the contract is sufficiently robust, as well as to promote best value and ensure the Council's best interests are fully protected. This is in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015. No legal implications have been identified during the tender processes that are not already thoroughly addressed in the proposed form of contract.
- 4.13 During the tender processes no tenderers raised queries about or requests for changes to the Council's preferred form of contract.

Procurement /Social Value

- 4.14 The contract has been tendered in compliance with the Council's Contract Rules and the PCR 2015 using an open tender process which enabled local providers to bid for the contracts.
- 4.15 The Social Value element resulted in measurable benefits for Walsall as part of contract delivery. These should be reviewed and monitored by the Directorate.

- 4.16 Procurement input has ensured the conduct of a compliant procurement process. A public advertisement was placed on the Council's e-tendering portal 'Intend' and published on Contracts Finder and on the Find a Tender Service, on 21 October 2022 and closed on 21 November 2022. An Open Procedure procurement process was used to invite tenders.
- 4.17 There were 15 expressions of interest and accessed the documentation with 2 suppliers submitting a response. The anticipated contract commencement date is 1 April 2023. The contract includes an option to extend for up to a further 24 months at the Council's sole discretion.
- 4.18 The tenders were all evaluated using 95% quality and 5% price split due to the significant focus on quality of support
- 4.19 Tenders were opened on 21st November by Colleen Male – Director Children's Social Work and Stephanie Westley, Procurement Officer, using a formal opening ceremony on the in-tend e-tendering portal. The Council received tenders as set out below:

Tenderer	Location – Registered Office
YMCA Black Country Group	West Bromwich
GreenSquareAccord Limited	West Bromwich

- 4.20 The tenders were evaluated by a panel of officers in accordance with the Weighted Non-Price Criteria published in the ITT as shown in the table below:

Criteria	Page Limit	Percentage Weighting
Social Value	1 page of A4	5%
Examples of experience in providing this service	1 page of A4	10%
How the support service will work closely with a number of different organisations	1 page of A4	10%
A detailed and comprehensive method statement describing proposals for implementing the service	2 pages of A4	20%
How the potential provider would ensure that support workers have the relevant skills and characteristics	1 page of A4	10%
A description of how the potential provider would support individuals who typically have chaotic lifestyles and exhibit challenging behaviour	2 pages of A4	20%
A description of how the potential provider would help individuals to sustain their tenancy	2 pages of A4	20%
Total		95%

- 4.21 A moderation meeting was held to agree a moderated final score and the result was:

GreenSquareAccord Limited achieved the highest scores overall

Property implications

- 4.22 There are no direct property implications for the Council.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.23 The health and wellbeing prospects for these customers will continue to be improved by the services offered in the Scheme, with a focus on support to access addiction and mental health services, and working to outcomes of independence, employment and training, and sustainability of tenure. Customer Engagement have also worked with Public Health to fund enhanced addiction services that customers can access and engage with.

Staffing implications

- 4.24 Customer Engagement officers will monitor and manage the contract. There are no other direct staffing implications for the Council as all staff engaged in providing the relevant services will be employed by the provider.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.25 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed as set out in a detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) at **Appendix A**. This shows the majority of those accessing the service are single males from a white background, and also the majority of customers have substance misuse and or mental health needs. The service will need to continue to regularly review its person centred planning approach.

Climate Change

- 4.26 There are no specific climate change implications contained within this report.

Consultation

- 4.27 Consultation has been carried out with existing service users through a focus group in October 2022 as part of the Council's Homelessness Review. Customers generally felt that being part of Housing First had a positive impact on their life, and keeping a home, and also helped them to deal with their addictions.

5. Decide

- 5.1 A 'do nothing' option is not viable as the customers are already part of the Housing First service, and if support was removed this may increase the risk of tenancy failure and a return to rough sleeping.
- 5.2 It is proposed that Cabinet approve the contract award to GreenSquareAccord Limited.

6. Respond

If approved, the contract will be entered into, and service continuity planning with the provider will commence.

7. Review

The outcomes of the services will be regularly monitored through Customer Engagement Performance frameworks

Background papers

None

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Signed
Sally Rowe
Executive Director
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Signed
Councillor G Ali
Portfolio Holder Customer
01.12.2022