

**Social Care and Health Overview
Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Agenda
Item No.**

17 DECEMBER, 2015

6.

Healthwatch

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Martin – Public Health and Wellbeing

Executive Summary:

On 23 January 2013, Cabinet approved the contract with Healthwatch Walsall. This was a consortium made up of MyNHS Walsall, Walsall LINK, Age UK Walsall, Walsall Housing Group and Walsall Citizens' Advice Bureau

The contract commenced on 1 April 2013, and an initial term of two years, with an option to extend with a further term of up to one year. This one-year extension was agreed by Cabinet on 29 October 2014 and commenced on 1 April 2015. The contract is monitored through the Community Development team, which sits within Communities and Public Protection.

In the first year, the main requirement was to establish the organisation as a Community Interest Company (CIC), a form of social enterprise required by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This included establishing Healthwatch Walsall as a legal entity, establishing governance structures and a constitution, the appointment of key staff and the transfer of responsibilities from the LINK (the pre-existing community health watchdog) to Healthwatch Walsall. All actions were completed within the timeframe.

Year 2 required the organisation to: provide advice and information about access to services and support for making informed choices; provide, make the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England; recommend investigation or special review of services via Healthwatch England or direct to the Commission for Quality Care (CQC); promote and support the involvement of people in the commissioning and provision of local care services, gather the views and understand the experiences of patients and the public and to provide access to the NHS complaints advocacy.

Reason for scrutiny:

Healthwatch Walsall has encountered a number of issues over the contract period: high turnover of staff, changes in senior management and challenges relating to the relationships between assembly members and the Board. This culminated in a decision by the Board in July 2015 to implement an independent investigation into financial procedures, procurement processes and the governance of the organisation. Walsall Council supported the new CEO to develop and implement a more robust financial system and to revisit procurement processes.

The independent investigation was completed in October 2015 and the Board and CEO are in the process of implementing the recommendations. Walsall Council maintains a close working relationship with Healthwatch Walsall to ensure the organisation continues to comply with the terms of the contract.

Under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, there is a statutory duty to commission a Local Healthwatch. The existing contract, plus one year, will end on 31 March 2016. In light of the difficulties faced by Healthwatch Walsall and the indication from some consortium members that there is no future appetite for continuing the current partnership, it is the intention of Walsall Council to re-procure the contract for 2016 onwards. This approach will not exclude the existing organisation from tendering for the new contract.

The key dates for this process can be seen at Appendix A.

Recommendations:**That:**

1. That the Scrutiny Panel notes the content of this report.
2. That the Scrutiny Panel notes the timeline for re-procurement of the contract.

Background papers:

None.

Resource and legal considerations:

Not applicable at this moment.

Citizen impact:

Not applicable.

Environmental impact:

None.

Performance management:

Not applicable.

Equality Implications:


Not applicable.

Consultation:

Not applicable.

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