

Cabinet – 18 October 2022

Award of contracts for provision of Young Peoples Accommodation Support Service

Portfolio: Councillor Ali – Customer
Councillor Wilson – Children’s and Health and Wellbeing

Related portfolios: Councillor Perry – Deputy Leader, Resilient Communities

Service: Customer/Childrens Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To ensure we effectively deliver our commitments to support and accommodate young people aged 16 to 29 through our homelessness duty and provide effective pathways for those leaving the council’s care.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Council wants to provide housing choice and opportunity for young people in Walsall, enabling them to transition into more stable independent living. The number of young people aged 16-29 experiencing homelessness has increased over the last 3 years and the issues faced by them have also changed such as substance misuse and mental health. The Council has retendered three lots of young persons’ accommodation services, including key decision Lot 2 – Accommodation and Intensive Housing Management for Young People.
- 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 11 August 2022 and closed on 12 September 2022. An Open Procedure Procurement Process was used to invite tenders. There were no compliant bids for Lot 2, and this report seeks authorisation for delegated authority to approve a future award of Lot 2 following a review of the specification requirements and retendering exercise.
- 2.3 This is a key decision because Lot 2 exceeds the threshold for significant expenditure and affects more than 2 wards.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet delegate authority to award the contract for the provision of Lot 2 Accommodation and Intensive Housing Management for Young People for the period 4 January 2023 to 3 January 2025, with an option to extend for up to a further 24 months to midnight on 3 January 2027 as set out in this Cabinet Report to the Executive Director Children's and Customer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer.
- 3.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director Children's and Customer, to enter into a new contract to deliver the Lot 2 Accommodation and Intensive Housing Management for Young People 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 delegate authority to the Executive Director 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 such services, should this be required throughout the duration of term of any contracts, and provided they are in line with the Council's Contract Rules and any relevant legislation, including Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 The Council aims to provide young people in Walsall with access to a range of accommodation to meet their individual needs. The Council understand the importance of ensuring the right accommodation is available to young people at the right time to ensure they are able to transition to independent living and avoid disruption. Customer and Children's Services currently have two contracts with different providers which help young people depending on what their needs are, to secure accommodation in the future. In addition, Children's Services currently uses a mixture of local and regional providers and seek accommodation for young people through the West Midlands Regional Supported Accommodation Framework Agreement.
- 4.2 The Council has duties under the Children Act 1989 and Children Leaving Care Act 2000 to prepare and support children leaving care and care leavers to provide a range of suitable accommodation. In addition the Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out 7 Corporate Parenting Principles to achieve the best possible outcomes for Children and young people in care, and Care Leavers. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out various duties that local authorities have towards young people in and leaving care, including those relating to accommodation. The duties differ depending on care leaver status (i.e. eligible, qualifying, relevant or former relevant child) but the general requirements are that local authorities should:
 - plan with young people and involve them in decisions
 - avoid moving young people who are settled
 - assess young people's needs and prepare them for any move

- ensure that the accommodation meets any needs relating to impairment
 - consider education, training and employment needs
 - where practicable, offer a choice of accommodation
 - set up a package of support to go with the accommodation
 - have a clear financial plan for the accommodation and a contingency plan.
- 4.3 The Housing Act (1996) sets out requirements on local authorities to assist people who are homeless. Part 7 requires that local authorities secure suitable accommodation for a person who meets all of the four statutory tests. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) came into force in April 2018, and puts an important focus on the prevention of homelessness. As part of the legislation, local authorities have more responsibility to support those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- 4.4 Children's services current provision includes the use of the Council's Rivers House temporary accommodation and West Midlands Regional Supported Accommodation Framework (jointly commissioned by 13 local authorities with access to 82 providers across the region). The new contracts will enable Children's services to bring children placed in supported accommodation into settled accommodation in Walsall and provide an additional pathway for young people to be housed in Walsall.
- 4.5 A joint 16 to 17 Year Olds Housing Protocol between Customer and Childrens Services has been developed in compliance with legislation under the Children Act 1989 (part 3) and the Housing Act 1996 (part VII). The statutory guidance outlines the joint responsibilities of Children's Services and Customer in working together to meet the needs of young people who are 16 and 17 years old in Walsall, and are homeless or at threat of homelessness. The commissioned provision will help deliver accommodation through this route via a Housing Pathway Panel. The Panel is a network of partnership case conference meetings between Customer, Childrens Services and relevant providers who deliver accommodation options in consultation with young people.
- 4.6 Our Walsall Right for Children vision is setting out our commitment to ensure that the right young people are in the right place with the right support for as long as it needed. This means that for our most vulnerable young people, including young people leaving care, for whom supported accommodation is the right place, we want to ensure they can continue to live in Walsall with the quality of support available so they can acquire the skills to live independently, and make successful transition to independent living.
- 4.7 The proposal will contribute to a range of Supported Housing accommodation and support in Walsall for Young People who are aged 16-25 years for whom the LA has a statutory responsibility as children in need, children in care and young people who have left care under the Children Act 1989. This includes Children and young people in care r aged 16-17 years; Care Leavers aged 18-25 years; and homeless young people aged 16-29 years. Children's Services and the Customer Team joint working arrangements are underpinned by a Young Persons Housing Protocol. Children Services and Customer has carried out a procurement exercise to contract for services jointly across 3 Lots.

- Lot 1 – This will provide Supported Lodging units in a host family setting and a Night Stop and a Day Stop service. The Night and Day Stop service provides a temporary place for the young person before they are either accommodated through the council or move to the supported lodging units. The 15 supported lodgings units, Night and Day stop placements are with host families who have been trained by the provider to help the young person achieve crucial outcomes like going into employment, education or training. This service will include up to 3 placements for individuals with a higher level of need allowing a tiered approach to give young people an opportunity to live in a safe, stable, caring and homely environment where they are safeguarded and their physical, mental and emotional welfare is protected. The existing provider Black Country YMCA has been reappointed to deliver this service until 3 January 2025 with the option to extend for up to an additional 24 months. The total contract value is below that requiring a key decision.

Lot 2- The primary purpose of the range of provision will be to prepare young people for independent living by building up their skills and resilience in areas such as payment of bills, education and employment or training. Once the young person has the skills and capabilities to sustain their own tenancy, the provider will convert the tenancy to a standard tenancy wherever possible. This means the young person does not have to move around or have any further disruption. The young person will be encouraged to take part and integrate into their local community and link into key services.

The provider will make available a total of up to 65 properties (up to 54 for Customer and up to 11 for Children's Services) with intensive housing management which will be available for young people. This Lot 2 will now also incorporate a Training Flat, detailed as Lot 3 below. The young people will also need some floating support to help succeed in the tenancy which will be provided by the council. The Children's element may include units allocated to the House Project for children leaving care. The House Project takes a ground-breaking approach through its commitment to young people's ownership to enable Young People leaving care to achieve successful independence. The House Project was co-designed with young people from the start and works on cooperative principles through which adults and young people in and leaving care work together to refurbish properties that become their homes and build a long term community of support. As many of these units as possible will need to be readied during the Mobilisation Period. There were two non-compliant bids for this lot, and this report seeks delegated authority to award the contract following a specification review and retendering exercise.

- Lot 3 – The purpose of the Training Flat is to provide a dedicated unit which is managed by the Council and allows for young people who are in the process of leaving care to test an environment of independent living. The young people will be expected to live independently for short periods between 4 to 6 weeks at the Training Flat whilst being supported by a dedicated support service provided by the Council. The duration of time spent in the Training Flat required will vary from each young person and this will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. The time spent at the Training Flat will introduce concepts such as budgeting, managing a tenancy and will include a Tenancy Ready Programme tailored to the young person. The outcome of the placement will result in a young person with support making a more informed decision on a future housing option. There were no bids for this Lot 3,

and it will now be incorporated into the Lot 2 specification review and retendering exercise.

4.8 Young People's Pathway

The local authority will be working with the successful providers to ensure clear referral pathways and communication protocols are in place to ensure young people are placed appropriately and issues are resolved proactively reducing placement breakdowns. In addition our commissioned providers will be required to provide a good service with a Restorative Practice/relationship based approach and within a Psychologically Informed Environment enabling young people to better understand the relationship between their emotions and behaviours in a nurturing rather than a transactional setting. The Providers are expected to work to the ethos of the Young Persons 16/17 Year Olds Housing Protocol and attend Housing Pathway meetings where decisions are made on suitable placements.

4.9 The current spend across the two services is outlined in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Spend on existing contracts

Customer spend	2019 (£)	2020 (£)	2021 (£)	*Actual Spend to June 2022, incorporating (predicted to Dec 22)	Total Spend
Lot1 : Support Lodging/Night & Day stop emergency accommodation	93,810	105,530	135,410	123,810	458,560
Lot 2: WHG - YP Temporary Accommodation Customer 60 Units	123,123	136,330	128,071	107,421	494,945

Childrens Services spend	2019/20 (£)	2020/21 (£)	2021/22 (£)	2022/23 (£) (Q1)	Total Spend
Lot 1 – Childrens supported lodging/Night & Day Stop emergency accommodation		4,288.39	22,419.77	1,966.67	28,674.83
Lot 2: WHG - YP Temporary Accommodation Childrens Services 16 Unit Spend	42,502	62,263	76,295	11,275	192,335

4.10 Lot 3 Training Flat is a new initiative and does not have any current spend.

4.11 Consultation was carried out with young people leaving care and those using our current young person's provision. The results directly influenced the new service provision being procured, with our young people telling us:

- There is a need for a Lot 1 and Lot 2 type service
- A training flat would provide an excellent trial opportunity for all
- Having a dedicated support who can help with navigation through various systems is important
- Having intensive housing management is crucial for tenancy sustainment
- Some young people need to be within a family setting

- Having a menu of housing options is important which are explained, enabling informed choices to be made
- Having the right property in a suitable area is key for tenancy sustainment
- Access to health services and information on the procedures is vital especially when navigating through the different services
- Access to employment and education is a key component of a young person being able to service in the future
- Many of our service users want to be able to maximise their potential and want to integrate within communities.
- Services should be easy to access and the procedures must be easy to follow
- Our support within the services must be tailored to individuals and be resilient to the needs of service users.

Further Consultation on the development of the House Project and Training Flat will be undertaken with the Children in Care Council.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.12 The Accommodations and Intensive Housing Management for Young People service will contribute to the Council's priorities as follows:
- Economic - Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses – providing a home and support for our young people will help improve their prospects to access training and employment.
 - Children - Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well – these contracted services will help provide our young people with a safe sustainable environment.

Risk management

- 4.13 There is a risk that the providers will not work closely together to ensure the best outcomes for young people in Walsall. This will be mitigated by the requirement for joint provider partnership meetings through the Housing Pathway meetings which will be held on a regular basis.
- 4.14 The risk of challenge to the future award of the Lot 2 Contract is low, given that it will be procured in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

Financial implications

- 4.15 Lot 1 - Such expenditure will be funded through Customer Funds.
- 4.16 Lot 2 (incorporating Lot 3) - Following the recent procurement exercise the combined cost for Lot 2 will be approximately £291,000 to procure up to 65 units, and a training flat. Such expenditure will be funded through existing Customer and Children and young people in care placement budgets.

Legal implications

- 4.17 The Directorate has in consultation with Legal Service, elected to use the Council's standard 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 ensure the Council's best interests are fully protected and minimise any risk of a legal challenge.
- 4.18 The procurement is to be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's best value duty.
- 4.19 During the tender process no tenderers raised queries about or requests for changes to the Council's preferred form of contract.

Procurement /Social Value

- 4.20 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 11 August 2022 and closed on 12 September 2022. An Open Procedure Procurement Process was used to invite tenders.
- 4.21 Tenders were opened on 13th September by Elise Hopkins- Director of Customer Engagement and David Sheldon, Senior Procurement Officer, using a formal opening ceremony on the in-tend e-tendering portal.
- 4.22 The Council did not receive any bids for lot 3 – Training Flat. There were two non-compliant bids for Lot 2. As a result, the procurement process for Lot 2 was abandoned on 21 September 2022 and a new procurement process for Lot 2 and 3 combined will be issued in October 2022. .
- 4.23 The Lot 2 Contract will be retendered via the Councils' e-procurement portal, in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCRs), the Council's Contract Rules and Social Value Policy.
- 4.24 Input has and will continue to be sought from Procurement and Legal Services, as required to ensure the conduct of a compliant procurement process and contract arrangements.
- 4.25 The new procurement process for Lot 2 and 3 combined will be evaluated by a panel of officers in accordance with the criteria published in the ITT as shown in the table below

Weighted Non-Price Criteria:

Lot 2 and 3 – Temporary Accommodation and Intensive Housing Management for Young People, and Training Flat

Criteria	Maximum Word Count/ Page Limit	Percentage Weighting
Q1 - Social Value (all lots)	1 Page A4	5%
Q8- Service Delivery – (Lot 2)	2 Pages A4	15%
Q9- Partnerships (Lot 2)	2 Pages A4	10%
Q10- Delivery Model (Lot 2)	3 Pages A4	20%
Q11 - Challenging Behaviour (Lot 2)	2 Pages A4	15%
Q12 - Case Study – Complex Needs (Lot 2)	1 Page A4	10%
Q13 - Property Base – Lot 2 (Lot 2)	2 Page A4	15%
Total		90%

Property implications

4.26 There are no property implications for the Council.

Health and wellbeing implications

4.27 The health and wellbeing prospects for young people will be improved by obtaining and maintaining more stable accommodation. National research through Homeless Link (April 2020), indicates a high proportion of young people who are homeless, have mental health needs, including diagnosed psychiatric disorders, and undiagnosed needs that are either self-reported or identified by the homeless services that are supporting them. Therefore, the support for these young people will need to ensure pathways are in place into health and wellbeing services and appropriate outcomes are achieved. The Support services will contribute to the Public Health Outcomes Framework by contributing to increased healthy life expectancy and promoting reduced differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities.

Staffing implications

4.28 Customer officers will monitor and manage the contracts in conjunction with Childrens Services. There are currently 6 members of staff in the Customer Young Persons Team who will continue to provide housing related support to those young people whose accommodation and support arrangements will be the subject of these contracts (Lot 1 and Lot 2). There are 2 members in the Transition and leaving Care Team who are tasked with providing support for Lot 2 and will support Lot 1 where required. Staff will also be involved in the mobilisation of a Training Flat (lot 3) and initiation of the House Project. This resource is not included in the tendered service and is not dependent on the outcome of the tender.

Reducing Inequalities

4.29 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.

- 4.30 The EQIA highlighted a need to ensure young people are more likely to become homeless and there is a requirement especially for those who have a disability and from an ethnic minority groups, their needs are fully understood and delivered. The 2021 census shows that Walsall has a population of 284,100 of which there are 515,00 (18%) are young people aged 15-29.

Climate Change

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

Consultation

- 4.32 Consultation has been carried out with service users and showed a strong support for a menu of housing options dedicated to young people. The consultation across the cohort showed accessing the services in a timely manner, joined up action planning and having a focussed support is key to sustainability.

5. Decide

- 5.1 A 'do nothing' option is not viable as the most of the young people are already settled in Walsall and require a continuation of accommodation and support.
- 5.2 It is proposed that Cabinet delegate authority to award Lot 2.

6. Respond

- 6.1 If approved, contracts will be entered into, and service implementation planning with the providers will commence.

7. Review

- 7.1 The outcomes of the services will be regularly monitored through Customer Performance frameworks and Children's Services jointly, which will include annual customer feedback.

Background papers

Appendix A: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

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