

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda Item no. 6

TO: Social Care & Inclusion Panel
DATE: 3 April 2012

RE: LOCAL HEALTHWATCH

Purpose

This Briefing has been prepared in response to a request from the Chair of the Social Care and Inclusion Panel for an update on HealthWatch.

The Panel is asked to note that this Briefing is based on the best available information to date and that guidance may change. Local HealthWatch and related responsibilities rely on the Health & Social Care Bill passing into law.

Position

The Council is required to commission a Local HealthWatch organisation by April 2013. The new organisation is intended to be the new consumer champion for health and social care. It will replace the current Local Involvement Network (LINK) arrangements and have many of the same functions, including involving and engaging service users and exercising 'enter and view' powers. It will also take on additional responsibilities, including the 'signposting' elements of the Patient Advice and Liaison Service, reporting local experiences to HealthWatch England, and be represented on the local Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Council's Procurement Team advise that any tendering process for the new body will be required to meet EU Procurement Rules as the expected value of the contract for the new body will exceed EU tender thresholds.

Recent amendments (2 March 2012) to the Bill indicate that the Local HealthWatch organisation will be a body corporate carrying out statutory functions and will be required to be a 'social enterprise'. They also indicate that local authorities may use a grant-in-aid approach. Whatever the funding arrangements available to the Council upon the passage of the Bill into law, The Council will need to carry out a competitive procurement process in order to ensure value for money, and will take advice from the procurement and legal teams on this process when more definitive guidance is available.

A report to Cabinet (4 April) has been prepared seeking authority to start the procurement process for the new body.

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