

Voluntary and Community Sector Support and Development Services in Cambridgeshire Contract

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 2 September 2021

From: Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, Adrian Chapman

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2021/056

Outcome: The awarding of a contract for the provision of voluntary and community sector infrastructure support services across Cambridgeshire following a procurement process.

Recommendations: The Committee is asked to:

Approve the awarding of the 'Voluntary and Community Sector Support and Development Services in Cambridgeshire' contract to Support Cambridgeshire for the period 1 December 2021 to 30 November 2025, valued at £640,000, for the reasons set out in the report. Annual value is £128,000.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The investment the council makes to support voluntary and community infrastructure support services to frontline voluntary and community organisations sends a strong signal to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) about their value and contribution to our communities, as well as informing, influencing and inspiring future practice and policy. That support is currently provided by Support Cambridgeshire, a consortium made up of Hunts Forum, Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Cambridgeshire Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE). That agreement is due to end on 30 November 2021.
- 1.2 In October 2019, the Communities and Partnership Committee approved the proposed approach to tender for voluntary and community sector infrastructure support services jointly with Peterborough City Council (PCC). In September 2020, Committee received a paper setting out the required outcomes from the new agreement and agreed the procurement and tender of Voluntary and Community Sector Support and Development Services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. In order for this to happen, Cambridgeshire County Council delegated its procurement and awarding functions to Peterborough City Council for these contracts through an Inter-Authority Partnership Agreement.
- 1.3 The newly commissioned service will be a key enabler in our delivery of the Think Communities approach, and the relationship between the contractor and the Think Communities service will be key in ensuring all opportunities are taken to support the sector to thrive.
- 1.4 On the 5th January 2021, a single procurement process tendering for two contracts was advertised: Lot 1 for Cambridgeshire and Lot 2 for Peterborough. As a result of the national lockdown, a two-month extension was agreed to give bidders additional time to develop their tender submissions as dealing with January's Covid restrictions was limiting bidder's capacity to complete their tender bids.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 For the Cambridgeshire Lot, one bid was received from Support Cambridgeshire comprising Hunts Forum (the lead organisation) and Cambridge CVS. The quality threshold against which bids were assessed was set at 70%, and the Support Cambridgeshire bid fell slightly below this threshold when it was assessed. Despite the additional time permitted by the council to submit bids, it is the case that both Hunts Forum and Cambridge CVS were heavily engaged in pandemic-related, frontline activities throughout the bidding period. Subsequent discussions with the consortium confirm that this affected the time the bidders had to prepare a quality application.
- 2.2 However, the procurement risk of awarding to Support Cambridgeshire has been assessed as low as Support Cambridgeshire were the only bidder for Lot 1, and as the market has been tested and given the opportunity to bid through this tender exercise. The risk around suitability and capability of delivering the service was also assessed as low, given the two partners making up the Support Cambridgeshire consortium have a strong and positive

record of accomplishments. The option of directly awarding the contract would allow the Support Cambridgeshire consortium and council officers to continue working together to ensure the detail, quality and delivery of the contract are maintained throughout its life.

- 2.3 Public Contracts Regulations 2015 Section 32, '*Use of the negotiated procedure without prior publication*', allows authorities to award public contracts, and is applicable and agreed by Legal and Procurement advisers as applicable in this case. This procedure is sometimes referred to as "direct award. Given that this is a Cambridgeshire contract and given the context described above, and that the Inter-Authority Agreement with Peterborough City Council has been formally terminated, it is recommended that Committee approves the direct award that is required to put a contract with Support Cambridgeshire in place.
- 2.4 Once approved, the Mobilisation phase takes place so that the new contract will start on 1 December 2021. The duration of this contract will be for five years (three plus two) and Cambridgeshire County Council's total contribution to this contract is £640,000. This is in excess of £500,000 and is therefore a key decision.
- 2.5 Should committee not agree to make the direct award, we risk having no voluntary sector infrastructure and capacity support in place until such time as a new procurement exercise can be completed. Our reliance on the voluntary sector to support our services and the wider public sector at a time when we are facing unprecedented pressures as a result of Covid means that any gap in support and representation risks affecting the sector's ability to deliver and reduces the ability for their voice to be heard at key system meetings. Additionally, despite soft market testing and running a full and open procurement process for this contract, we received just a single bid, and so there is a real possibility that, if we were to re-run the exercise, we may receive no bids whatsoever.
- 2.6 For information, appended to this report is information relating to the performance of the current Support Cambridgeshire contract, including Support Cambridgeshire Impact Report (Appendix 1), Impact of the Partnership during Covid-19 (Appendix 2) and Lessons from the Pandemic (Appendix 3).

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

- 3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do
 - The VCS Support and Development Services contract sends a strong signal to the voluntary and community sector about their value and contribution to our communities as well as informing, influencing and inspiring future practice and policy.
- 3.2 A good quality of life for everyone
 - The VCS supports people to have a good quality of life in a range of ways. There is evidence that community participation supports the adoption of a healthy lifestyle and builds engagement in health and wellbeing improving initiatives.
 - VCS infrastructure support in building VCS capacity and to support communities that are safe, and good places to live, is a cornerstone of our early help and preventative strategies for vulnerable people.
- 3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

- The support of the VCS makes a real difference to the lives of children and families, providing opportunities for the whole population to succeed and to enable improved outcomes.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

- A positive impact as people will be enabled to access services more locally as well as reducing demand on services which currently have a higher carbon footprint.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

- The VCS supports people to have a good quality of life in a range of ways. There is evidence that community participation supports the adoption of a healthy lifestyle and builds engagement in health and wellbeing improving initiatives.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in section 2.

Legal services are involved in drawing up the contract terms and conditions

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in section 2.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

Legal services are involved in ensuring compliance with contract regulation section 32 and drawing up the contract terms and conditions for the new contract.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Evidence indicates that some services delivered by local people within local communities can be more successful than statutory services at reaching people who may need support. Building a strong VCS to help people help each other should therefore support more equal and diverse accessible provision locally. Some of our services will become increasingly more localised, so that we can meet local and individual need within each specific community context.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There will be a need to undertake clear communications work across the voluntary sector and with Think Communities service and partners once mobilisation and contract starts.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The role of Members helps in contributing towards the success of a thriving local VCS. Members can connect local groups to this support.

4.7 Public Health Implications

A thriving VCS supports individuals and communities to take responsibility for their own physical and mental health. It can engage them in taking steps to adopt a healthy lifestyle and other health improving activities. Building community resilience and VCS infrastructure will impact on many of the needs identified in different Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, including the following:

- Long term conditions
- New communities

- Homelessness and at risk of homelessness
- Vulnerable children and adults
- Carers
- Older people's mental health
- Substance Misuse
- Unhealthy lifestyles

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

Status: Neutral, Through the management and monitoring we will work with the provider to develop information, advice, and guidance to the sector around decarbonisation.

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Status: Not applicable

Explanation:

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: Effective delivery of the service will necessitate some travel into our communities, primarily undertaken using grey fleet (ie. Vehicles owned by staff rather than the service provider). While the service provider will encourage use of lower carbon options and virtual meetings, this may not always be possible. On balance this is neutral.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Status: not applicable

Explanation:

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Status: not applicable

Explanation:

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:

Status: not applicable:

Explanation:

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Status: not applicable:

Explanation:

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Status: Positive

Explanation: The service provides a crucial coordination and support role to the voluntary sector in Cambridgeshire, who in turn provide a wide range of "grass-root" services to our communities. This increases both the resilience of our communities and our services through supplementing the provision CCC are able to provide directly.

Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Henry Swan

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Amanda Rose

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Val Thomas

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 [The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)