

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

South Area Council Meeting:

24th February 2017

**Report of South Area Council
Manager.**

Recommissioning of South Area Council Advice Services contract

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the final draft tender specification for the recommissioning of the South Area Council Advice Services contract for consideration and approval by the South Area Council.

1.2 To seek volunteers from the South Area Council to sit on the Evaluation Panel as part of the recommissioning process.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That members agree the revised tender specification for the Advice Services contract, including agreement upon any required amendments

2.2 That members approve the recommissioning of the Advice Services contract for two years from 1st July 2017

2.3 That the South Area Council nominates a minimum of one representative to sit on the Evaluation Panel for the recommissioning of the Advice Service contract

3. Background

3.1 The South Area Council first commissioned advice services in June 2014, when Barnsley Citizens Advice Bureau and BMBC Welfare Rights Service were jointly approved to deliver the 'One Stop Shop' contract across the South Area.

3.2 This highly successful contract has now seen in excess of 2100 people and has brought back in excess of £1,687,000 in extra income to local people in the form of benefit gain. A Social Return on Investment analysis found that the project brought in over £28 of social value for every £1 invested by the Area Council.

3.2 The initial 2 year 'One Stop Shop' contract finished in June 2016. However, it was decided not to recommission the project at this stage because a major restructuring of mainstream advice provision was underway as part of a local Welfare Review and this needed to be completed in order for the implications (if any) on the 'One Stop Shop' contract to be clear. As a result, two waivers to Standing Orders were granted to cover the period July 2016 – June 2017, to allow the project to continue whilst the Welfare Review and its associated restructurings were completed.

3.3 At its meeting on 2nd December 2016, the South Area Council had already decided to recommission this service, and asked for a detailed and revised tender specification to be drawn up for its approval at its meeting on 24th February 2017. This specification is attached at Appendix A.

4. Revisions to the tender specification

4.1 The 'One Stop Shop' specification has now been renamed the 'Advice Services' project. This is because the original idea for a range of advice services to be housed under one roof outlined in the 2014 tender specification did not turn out to be possible because of practical limitations on confidential space across the four wards. The need to join services up for the client was achieved through highly effective referral and signposting to other organisations and help by the two advice workers on the project.

4.2 The tender document makes reference to the need for the appointed provider/s to make strong links to the new Public Service Hubs which will be in place from 1st April 2017. This will need further exploration with the provider/s after the contract has been awarded because the way in which the Hubs will operate is still under development.

4.3 The tender specification also makes reference to the possible development of a 'triage' system whereby clients are screened on arrival and referred for a range of help (from intensive face-to-face support through to self help/partial self help or online/phone support) dependent on assessed need. This is done both to boost the client's ability to help themselves, but also to manage high levels of demand.

This approach has not been used to date as part of the 'One Stop Shop' contract but has been operating in town centre Welfare Rights services for some time. Rising demand on the South Area Council advice workers means that the introduction of this way of working may need to be considered on the new Advice Services contract, but it is not clear how this would work locally and this would need further exploration with the provider/s once the contract is awarded.

4.4 For the first time, provider/s are being asked to deliver occasional briefing sessions for practitioners working in the area on important changes to the welfare system – for example, the rollout of Universal Credit. This reflects the government's continuing reforms to the welfare system, which look likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

4.5 Reflecting the need to continue Social Return on Investment analyses on all South Area Council contracts, the provider/s are being asked to collect some new statistical data which will make this more accurate – for example, the number of clients with mental or physical health problems and the number of clients who have been helped to avoid a tribunal.

4.6 Because the session times and venues are now well established and known within the South Area, the tender specification stipulates that the provider/s must retain the same service schedule. The specification also asks the provider/s to present additional ideas to support clients – for example, the use of webchat or the development of Check & Send services, where the client completes documentation which is then checked by the advice worker before sending.

Appendix A: South Area Council Advice Services tender specification
Appendix B: South Area Council Advice Services Business Case

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