

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 20 April 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director, Children's Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Services for Early Help, Employment, Debt and Benefits Advice Service: Request for Waiver of Standing Orders

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

### **1.1 Request for Waiver of Standing Orders:**

A request for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (iv) of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders is sought for the direct award to support the introduction of a contract with Halton Citizen Advice Bureau to deliver, on behalf of the Council, the provision of Early Help, Employment, Debt and Benefits Advice Service for a period of two years from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board**

- i) note the contents of this report; and**
- ii) in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (iv), Executive Board approve a Waiver of Part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders, for a direct award of a Contract for Early Help, Employment, Debt and Benefits Advice Service to be delivered by Halton Citizen Advice Bureau for a period of two years from 1st June 2023 to 31st May 2025.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1** It is widely reported that the UK is in a cost-of-living crisis. Fuel costs and the cost of heating a home have increased significantly and risen again throughout 2022/ 23. Economic inflation is driving an increase in the cost of household items including food, clothing, winter coats and blankets; this, combined with the changes to the welfare system, and rising prices in the shops due to inflation may leave many households struggling to make ends meet.
- 3.2** Across the generations its further impacts may include increasing levels of social isolation, worsening mental health, increasing levels

of digital poverty, increasing demand on foodbanks, as well as increasing demand on council services and community, voluntary and faith organisations.

- 3.3 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) conducts regular national surveys that have identified a worsening picture of debt, limited spending and lifestyle changes linked to price increases. Those living in the poorest families are making the deepest cuts.
- 3.4 A total of 38,750 Halton people live in the 10% most deprived area nationally: This is almost a third of all residents (30.4%) and the proportion living in the most deprived 20% nationally is almost half of all people (48.4 %.)
- 3.5 The main groups of people who are also predicted to be more at risk from the impacts include people living with a disability (15,770 households with one person with a long-term health problem or disability in Halton: 2011 Census); Children In Halton, 16.6% of children aged under 16 live in relative low income households; this equates to approximately 24,600 children. (Marmot report) and people living in households that meet the definition for fuel poverty (an estimated 7900 homes in total.)
- 3.6 For Halton there has been over a 25% increase during 2022 for debt advice and with an increase in single parents needing access to support.
- 3.7 A key part of the Supporting Families Programme is to drive improvements to local partnership working and data use so that vulnerable families receive the right support, at the right time. There are 10 key outcomes as part of the framework that looks to identify and support the most vulnerable children and families contained within the outcome framework is element around financial stability. The LA must show clear evidence with regard to successful outcomes in order to draw down funding via payment by results. This service will directly support and provide evidence with regard to this outcome and will support the whole family working approach which will aid more families achieving successful outcomes.
- 3.8 The council has also received Family Hub funding over £ 2million over the next 3 years. The Family Hub model is to provide families with a single access point to integrated family support service for early help with social, emotional, physical and financial needs.
- 3.9 A dedicated service provision around employment, debt and benefit advice would enable Halton to deliver on the requirements of the above programmes with the ability for us to support the most vulnerable children and families with a service they can access more readily through the family hub model.

3.10 The value of the contract will be £200,000 for two years and will be supported by the Supporting Families and Family Hub programmes.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The method of procurement complies with both Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.

4.2 The stability of the service will support all aspects of Early Help with a focus upon some of the most vulnerable children, young people and families across the borough

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The funding for the waiver is within current budgets.

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The delivery of the service supports Halton's focus upon Early Help and the priorities within Halton's Children and Young People's Plan

##### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The provider will ensure that young people and families are supported in their learning and future employment and skills development.

##### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The service will support people to access relevant services to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

##### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The service provides support to vulnerable young people and families to assist them to access appropriate service provision within their local communities. This links to satisfaction with services and overall perception of the area in which people live.

##### 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

#### 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Undertaking a tender process would delay the introduction of this specialist service provision and would reduce the impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and families. The Citizen Advice Bureau is a well-established partner in Halton and have the skills and knowledge to provide this service. As well as them having the ability to draw in other resources and initiatives that would support the community of Halton. It would also impact

negatively on the delivery of the Supporting Families programme by Halton not being able to show evidence of outcomes therefore leading to the inability to claim payment by results for families.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The current proposal would not impact upon any equality and diversity issues as all relevant protected characteristics would be unaffected by the proposal.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None are applicable.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None within the meaning of the Act.