

**Decision Maker:** CARE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER  
For pre-decision scrutiny by CARE SERVICES POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date:** Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent                      Non-Executive                      Non-Key

**Title:** KENT ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND – OVERVIEW OF  
CONTRACT AND COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS

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**Chief Officer:** Terry Parkin, Executive Director, Education, Care and Health Services

**Ward:** (All Wards);

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1. Reason for report

The Care Services PDS have requested a report on the Kent Association for the Blind (KAB) to assist them in better understanding the background to the contractual arrangement and the work undertaken by KAB on behalf of the Council.

This report outlines the contractual arrangement for the provision of services for people with a visual impairment provided by the Kent Association for the Blind.

The report also provides details of the history and annual contract value of the service, provides an update on the level of service, and seeks approval to extend the contract for a period of eighteen months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the background and proposal.
- 2.2 The Portfolio Holder is asked to note the history and annual contract value of the contract with the Kent Association for the Blind and agree to the extension of the service under Contract Procurement Rule 23.7.3 as outlined in paragraph 3.14

## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy: Building a Better Bromley
  2. BBB Priority: Supporting Independence
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost: Total£149,421  
comprising £99,614 in 2015/16 and £49,807 in 2016/17
  2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost:
  3. Budget head/performance centre: 825900 3625
  4. Total current budget for this head: £146,120 per annum
  5. Source of funding: Education, Existing Revenue Budget
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## Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A – the Service is provided by an external provider
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Approximately 10 hours per annum  
Officer time to monitor the contracts.
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Government Guidance:
  2. Call-in: Applicable
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Estimated 1500 people per annum
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## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

### 3. COMMENTARY

#### Background

- 3.1 The Kent Association for the Blind, a voluntary sector organisation for the provision of services for people with a visual impairment, was established in 1920 and is a registered charity that now provides support services to adults and children under contract to Kent, Medway and Bexley Councils as well as in Bromley.
- 3.2 There has been a long standing partnership between KAB and the London Borough of Bromley. A continuous contract history can be traced back to April 2002 however KAB has been delivering services under contract to the borough for over 25 years. Indeed their work in the area even precedes the formation of Bromley as a London Borough in 1965.
- 3.3 Until 2007 KAB staff working in Bromley were co-located with LBB staff at the Council offices in The Walnuts, Orpington. As well as providing office accommodation the Council also provided clerical support. This very close working link was based upon KAB carrying out statutory care management duties and providing rehabilitation services on the Council's behalf for all people with a visual impairment.
- 3.4 In 2007 KAB established the Bromley Sight Centre in Blyth Road and moved all their local staff and operations to that base. They have continued to provide the same range of services under the contract.
- 3.5 The main elements of the contract are the provision of specialist assessments for people with a visual impairment and maintaining the registers for people who are blind or partially sighted. These are statutory requirements which are carried out by the Kent Association for the Blind on behalf of the Council. Additionally they are contracted to provide some rehabilitation support, including provision of equipment.
- 3.6 The current total KAB service provision in Bromley is:
- Maintenance of Sight Impairment Register
  - Specialist Assessment and/or Statutory Assessment
  - Provision of Rehabilitation and Habilitation Services including
    - Specialist information advice and guidance
    - Mobility orientation training
    - Independence skills training
    - Specialist equipment provision
    - Assistive Technology and communication
    - Support for family carers
    - Environmental assessments
    - Habilitation services for children and young people
    - Signposting and onward referral
    - Benefits and concessions advice
  - Eye Clinic Liaison Officer
  - Provision of volunteer support
  - Transcription services
  - Equipment Exhibitions and Sight Centre Open Days
  - Training Provision & Awareness Raising
  - Bromley Service User Forum
  - Social Clubs
  - Website

- 3.7 In the 9 month period from April 2014 to end of December a total of 410 individuals received support from KAB through 658 separate interventions. These included:
- 179 statutory needs assessment and rehabilitation input
  - 102 registration as sight impaired or severely sight impaired
  - 95 equipment provision only
  - 19 mobility training
  - 235 information, advice and guidance
- 3.8 Inevitably with such a long established working relationship, and with KAB also fulfilling its charitable aims as a voluntary sector organisation, the range and scope of the services provided by KAB has grown and goes some way beyond that for which the Council directly contracts. Although the additional activity by KAB would appear to add value to the contract it is important to establish exactly what the Council does want to commission.
- 3.9 There has never been any competitive market testing for the services provided under this contract and consequently it cannot be known whether the services provided by KAB could be provided by any other organisation or, if so, at what cost.
- 3.10 However, a recent 'soft' market testing exercise established that there are a total of 9 voluntary organisations around London, including KAB, providing various services under contract to other boroughs. Further investigation has revealed that none of those services are comparable in range or extent to those provided in Bromley by KAB. Most are in the area of rehabilitation support, there are none that include specialist and statutory assessment or maintenance of the sight register. In most boroughs these activities are operated in-house by Council employees.

### **Commissioning Intentions**

- 3.11 Before any clear decision can be made about the long term support requirements in the borough for people with visual impairments, and the best way for those supports and services to be provided, a comprehensive review of the services provided by KAB needs to be undertaken so that future requirements can be properly understood.
- 3.12 Additionally the Care Act brings in new responsibilities for Councils in respect to blind and partially sighted people as well as reinforcing existing duties. It also introduces new rules on the way in which the Local Authority assesses eligibility against the national framework and will necessitate consideration of the way in which this assessment is carried out for all clients. This will need to be done in a comprehensive way that ensures consistency for all client groups.
- 3.13 Until these reviews are carried out and the assessment approach re-modelled it is important to ensure continuity for service users. Kent Association for the Blind has demonstrated that it can provide a robust and comprehensive service for people with a sight impairment and has the infrastructure in place to be able to provide the requirements set out in the service specification. It is the only organisation currently in the borough with the level of specialist skills and experience, infrastructure and local knowledge required to provide the wide range of support services to people with visual impairments.
- 3.14 The current contract expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. It is proposed to extend the contract for a further period of 18 months during which time a full review of the services provided by KAB in Bromley can be carried out with the intention of bringing a gateway report to Members in the latter part of 2015 to trigger the required commissioning activity in the first half of 2016.
- 3.15 As with all Council contracts, the extension will include a 3 month break clause which would allow the Council to terminate should the provider be in breach or should circumstances change requiring the Council to reconsider the funding position.

- 3.16 The Contract Compliance Team will maintain contract monitoring meetings with the Kent Association for the Blind including receiving quarterly monitoring reports during the proposed extension period.

#### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 In accordance with the Council's commitment to Building a Better Bromley to support people to live as independently as possible within the community, the service reflect the Council's strategic objectives particularly for vulnerable people.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 From 2002 the contract price included provision for annual review in line with NJC increases. In 2007 a variation was agreed with KAB for the Council to pay for admin support instead of providing a part-time member of staff for this function. In 2012/13 the Council funding reduced by 13% to £99,614 and has remained fixed at this rate.

The agreed cost of the Kent Association for the Blind Contract since 2002/03 is set out below:

	<b>Contract Price per annum £</b>
2002/03	88,240
2003/04	90,711
2004/05	93,387
2005/06	95,955
2006/07	98,786
2007/08	107,708
2008/09	113,906
2009/10	114,614
2010/11	114,614
2011/12	114,614
2012/13	99,614
2013/14	99,614
2014/15	99,614
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,331,377</b>

- 5.2 A review of this service and the linked Guide Communicator Service will be carried out to identify potential efficiencies in service delivery.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The service is a Part B Services for the purpose of Schedule 1 to the Public Contract Regulations 2006 (as amended). This means that it is not essential to follow the OJEU processes, although in the interest of good practice the Regulations will be shadowed. Award of contract is primarily governed by the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations.
- 6.2 Rule 3.7 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules state " Where a Service is to be provided by a Voluntary Sector Organisation through an external Service Level Agreement the relevant Chief Officer, in consultation with the Director of Resources, can decide not to obtain competitive tenders or quotations provided that:
- The Chief Officer is satisfied that the Voluntary Sector Organisation is, or will be able to provide a satisfactory quality of Service and that the sums payable under any Service Level Agreement entered into represent Value for Money;

- The relevant Head of Finance keeps a record of all payments made and any Grants received under the Service Level Agreement;
- The Service Level Agreement is time limited and subject to renewal under the arrangements identified in this Rule.

Approvals will be obtained as provided for in Rule 13.1, as appropriate for the estimated total value of the intended arrangement.”

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	