

Decision Maker: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CARE SERVICES

Date: For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 21st March 2017

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Key

Title: CONTRACT AWARD FOR BROMLEY WELFARE FUND/
ESSENTIAL HOUSEHOLD GOODS SERVICE PART 1 (PUBLIC)
INFORMATION

Contact Officer: Tracey Wilson, Compliance & Development Manager
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Chief Officer: Sara Bowrey, Director: Housing

Ward: Borough-wide

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of a tendering process to establish a framework of providers for the provision of essential household items needed to meet the basic requirements of homeless people leaving temporary accommodation and moving into settled accommodation.
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2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Care Services Policy & Development Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of this report prior to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services being asked to:

- i) Note this summary when considering the recommendations in the Part 2 report

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Recipients of the scheme are some of the most vulnerable members of the community with high representation from particular equality groups; in particular vulnerable due to disability, mental health, pregnancy or young children and people including those leaving care.
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Safe Bromley Supporting Independence
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost £400k over four years
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Bromley Welfare Fund
 4. Total current budget for this head: £350k
 5. Source of funding: Government programme funding including underspend agreed to be carried forward from 14/15. Will need to include the budget for CSC setting up home allowance
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement Care Leavers setting up home allowance is a statutory requirement. The Welfare Fund is not a statutory requirement but assists in fulfilling statutory rehousing duties
 2. Call-in: Applicable
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: The tendering process was carried out in line with public contract 2015 regulations
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Approximately 6,000 households approach each year at risk of homelessness. There are currently nearly 1300 households placed in temporary accommodation to whom the Council has a statutory rehousing duty under the homelessness legislation. This number is currently rising by between 12 and 15 households per month. Around 550 families are assisted to move into settled accommodation each year. There are currently approximately 169 care leavers, all of whom will require access to the Setting Up Home allowance grant at some point.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Welfare Reform Act (2012) ended the provision of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans under the Discretionary Social Fund for living expenses provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. Funding was transferred to Local Authorities from 1 April 2013. Whilst there is no statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to deliver a specific scheme to administer this funding, the Council considers it in the best interests of the community to run such a scheme and in July 2014 the Resources Portfolio Holder approved the adoption of a white goods and furniture welfare scheme from 2015/16. The scheme replaced The Bromley Welfare Fund following the government decision to withdraw ongoing funding. The fund has primarily been used to award furniture and white goods to people leaving temporary accommodation or an institution.
- 3.2 It was agreed that the scheme would be restricted both in terms of eligibility criteria and goods available (cookers, fridges, freezers and beds) which have been identified as the minimum items required for the Council to meet its statutory duty to provide suitable settled accommodation for statutory homeless households. Framework Agreement consisting of two lots was tendered in early 2015:
- Lot 1: Supply and fit of specified white goods
Lot 2: Supply of specified beds
- 3.3 Members approved three companies to be appointed to the Framework. At the time of appointment it was recognised that the limited number of companies could, potentially, limit options for the smooth delivery of the service but as the Council would not be bound solely to the use of the Framework it would be able to go back out to the market under a separate tendering exercise if required.
- 3.4 The services purchased through the current framework have on the whole been satisfactory, except some problems with one Provider regarding health and safety with gas cooker installation. This has now been rectified satisfactorily; however, it highlighted the risk of having so few providers on the Framework. We have reason to believe that there would be more interest from the market on a refresh of this framework. A number of other Local Authorities are using similar schemes were able to attract more companies and this extra supply could provide a decrease in prices. We would also ensure that relevant suppliers were made aware of the tender opportunity in order to attract more suppliers and increase competition.
- 3.5 The initial Framework Agreement was put in place for two years with a possible extension of two years. However, given the limited number of suppliers as mentioned above, Commissioners are of the opinion that the establishment of a new Framework Agreement would allow a significant increase in providers to be appointed to the Framework due to changes in the market.
- 3.6 Whilst reviewing the service it was identified that the that Children's Social Care, Leaving Care Team regularly purchase a number of comparable items. Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act, care leavers are entitled to a setting up home allowance to ensure that they have the essential household items needed to set up a new home. Currently the Leaving Care Team are purchasing these essential living items on an ad hoc basis which does not ensure best value for money. Analysis of expenditure over the last year has confirmed that the white goods and beds could have been purchased more economically using the framework and with faster delivery times. Any delays in moving into Care Leavers into independent living result in additional placement costs
- 3.7 It is proposed that the Children's Leaving Care Team access this framework to purchase essential household items.
- 3.8 It was agreed that we would tender for a new Framework Agreement to begin 1 April 2017 when the original Framework is due to expire. This will include provision for goods purchased for care leavers under the setting up home allowance. The Framework will be for a period of four years.

3.9 An additional lot will be introduced and in addition to the items we are already able to provide to clients, this may also include the following items:

- Wardrobe
- Washing machine
- Sofa
- Chest of drawers
- Dining table/chairs
- Bedding
- Curtain
- Hoover
- Television

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

4.1 Summary of Impact: Recipients of the scheme are some of the most vulnerable members of the community with high representation from particular equality groups; in particular vulnerable due to disability, mental health, pregnancy or young children and people including those leaving care.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The objective of this service is compliant with the statutory framework within which the Council's housing function must operate and assist in achieving the targets set out within Building a Better Bromley.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. The use of a framework to meet the requirements of the service allows for the greatest level of flexibility in expenditure because it makes no guarantees to successful tenderers regarding the volume of service activity. This will enable service levels to be increased or reduced in line with statutory requirements, budget pressures and Member priorities.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1. The legal implications of this contract award are included in the Part 2 report

8. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The commissioning approach to this service was approved by the Portfolio Holder on 13 October 2016 (report no. CS17039)

8.2 This new contract is a combination of two previously separate services (Welfare Fund and Setting up Home Allowance), the predominant purpose of which is the support service element.

8.3 The tender opportunity was advertised in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in the Official Journal of the European Union (notice no. 2016/S195-351663) and Contracts Finder.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Personnel Implications.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	N/A