

<b>Cabinet</b>  29 November 2023	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Lisa Fraser, Acting Corporate Director Children's Services,	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway contract extensions</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor)
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Layla Richards, Covering Director Commissioning and Youth
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Reason for Key Decision</b>	Financial threshold
<b>Forward Plan Notice Published</b>	26 October 2-23
<b>Exempt information</b>	None
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	3. Accelerating education 5. Investing in public services 8. A council that listens and works for everyone

### Executive Summary

The Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway (four block contracts) is undergoing a transformative recommission to improve the Council's placement and support offer for our children in our care and homeless young people. The service provides a safe alternative to housing 16/17-year-olds and young people aged 18-25 who are in and on the edge of care, as well as homeless young people. The service did not go out to tender by the end of the contracted period (30<sup>th</sup> July 2023) and contract extensions were not put in place in a timely manner. Nevertheless, the tender was published on the 18<sup>th</sup> September and closes on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023. An RCDA has been put in place from the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 until the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 to enable time to gain Cabinet approval for the remaining months (6 months) of the requested direct contract award. As a result, this report requests approval for direct contract awards from the 1<sup>st</sup> December until the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024 to enable ample time to implement the newly transformed Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Living Pathway ensuring minimal disruption for our young people.

## **Recommendations:**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the direct contract award request for the Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway (YPSHP) for six months from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2023 to 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2024 with a value of £675,892.43.
2. Note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.1

### **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 To ensure the Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing pathway contracts are extended in line with the procurement timeline and start of new contract.
- 1.2 To ensure continued and high-quality services for our most vulnerable children and young people.

### **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 To not put direct contract awards in place. This option is not recommended as these are statutory services that the council must provide for our vulnerable children and young people.

### **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 This Cabinet report is a direct contract award request for the Tower Hamlets Young People's Supported Housing Pathway (YPSHP) for six months from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2023 to 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2024 with a value of £675,892.43. The pathway serves the borough's Children's Social Care (CSC) and Housing Options and Support team (HOST) with accommodation-based and support services in single and shared units across the borough.
- 3.2 Service background
- 3.3 The council has full nomination rights to all properties and works collaboratively with the service providers to ensure that our young people are placed in suitable accommodation and support hours meet their needs. The service provides a safe alternative to accommodating 16/17-year-olds and young people aged 18-25 who are in and on the edge of care, as well as homeless young people (prioritising young people with Special Educational Needs) and meets the statutory responsibilities of all local authorities under the Children's Act 1989 and 2008.
- 3.4 The current YPSHP includes four block contracts:

<b>Contract Number</b>	<b>Service name</b>	<b>Annual Value</b>	<b>Contractors</b>
CS5273	Young People Assessment & Support Service	£282,636 p/a	One Housing
AHS5147	Tower Hamlets North Young Persons Support Services	£155,599.50 p/a	Providence Row Housing Association
AHS5146	Mile End Road Young Person Support Services	£463,931 p/a	Look Ahead
AHS5145	Tower Hamlets Campbell Road Young People's Support Services	£449,618.36 p/a	Look Ahead
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,351,784.86 p/a</b>	

- 3.5 The Young People's Assessment and Support Service contract acts as the entrance to the YPSHP assessing young people unknown to Children's Social Care to identify their support needs. The other three services deliver a wide range of support, from high support placements, i.e. staff on site 24 hours, medium support placements, where staff are on site during the day only, and low support placements, where staff support is provided to young people by visiting their managed properties, and lastly a floating support provision.
- 3.6 The principle aim of the YPSHP is to support our most vulnerable young people in the borough. This varies from young people who may be at risk and /or leaving care and /or at risk of re-offending with a range of complex support needs. It also includes young people who may be homeless or excluded from the family or parental home where mediation has failed or require a supported environment as a step towards independent living. The pathway also ensures that our 16- & 17-year-old young people who are at risk of homelessness are assessed, housed and offered intense support to meet their needs and mediated back to their families if suitable.
- 3.7 The key service objective of the YPSHP is to enable young people to develop the independent living skills required to move on to longer term stable housing, explore life choice options, and become independent.
- 3.8 The YPSHP aims to achieve the following desired outcomes for our young people:
- Enabling young people to continue to work towards independence and achieve better life outcomes.
  - Maximising and improving opportunities for accessing education, training and employment,
  - Improving access to health services and ensuring service users are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles.
  - Helping to facilitate provision for service users in need of care.
  - Decreasing criminal activity and anti-social behaviour by supporting service users to address offending and re-offending behaviour.

- Supporting service users to understand and access sources of assistance in the community that will be able to continue to assist them in the future.
- Improving and encouraging the development of skills and confidence to negotiate safe healthy relationships and support young people to tackle issues affecting their physical, mental and sexual health and well-being.
- Promoting responsible parenting, enabling young people to make informed decisions as to parenthood and where required access appropriate accommodation.

### 3.9 Contracting approach

3.10 This contract was previously extended through Cabinet approval until the end of July 2023 to enable the commissioners to revise and complete the planning of a transformative recommission of the pathway including:

- Stakeholder consultation – meeting with internal and external stakeholders including Children’s Social Care (CSC), and service users.
- Revising the service specification into one block contract with several service lots that would best meet the needs of our young people and CSC and HOST.
- Revising and completing all tender documentation and completing the procurement of the existing pathway.

3.11 Due to unforeseen circumstances, the service did not go out to tender by the end of the contracted period (30<sup>th</sup> July 2023) and contract extensions were not put in place in a timely manner. As a result, the service contracts therefore require direct contract awards as the services are now out of contract.

3.12 The value of the requested direct contracts extensions are above the threshold value of £189,000 for a Record of a Corporate Director Action (RCDA) and therefore it must be referred to Cabinet for a decision. Interim RCDA's have been put in place from the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 until the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 to enable time to gain Cabinet approval for the remaining months (6 months) of the requested direct contract award. Cabinet approval is requested for a direct contract award from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December to the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2024 under a value of £675,892.43.

### 3.13 Way forward

3.14 As of October 2023, commissioners are focused on ensuring a robust procurement timetable is followed and that incumbent providers are continuously supported and in agreement with the direct contract awards.

3.15 All recommissioning actions have been completed and procurement of the service is ongoing. Commissioners have worked closely with the Procurement and Legal team to identify the best way forward to ensure a quality recommission. The tender for the improved TH YP Supported Living Pathway

went live on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2023 and is due to close on 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. See Procurement timetable below:

Event	Date
Procurement documents issued	18 <sup>th</sup> Sep 2023
Deadline for receipt of Clarification questions	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2023
Deadline for response to supplier questions	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
Tender return deadline	17 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2023 @ 1pm
Evaluation	20 <sup>th</sup> Nov – 11 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023
Moderation	12 <sup>th</sup> Dec -15 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023
Award Governance	9 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2024
Successful bidder notification	12 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2024
End of Standstill Period	22 <sup>nd</sup> Jan 2024
Contract Award	23 <sup>rd</sup> Jan 2024
Contract start date	1 <sup>s</sup> June 2024

- 3.16 Capacity within the service is being strengthened through recent permanent recruitment and staff have been identified to lead on the award and implementation of the tender and new contract with support of the permanent senior commissioning manager and Head of Service. In the interim, senior commissioners have supported the incumbent provider in their continued delivery and the provider has maintained good performance levels.
- 3.17 Moreover, additional governance is being put in place to ensure that the transformation of the YP Supported Living Pathway remains on track. Firstly, the Young People Placement Pathway Board is being reinstated. This will be co-chaired by the Director of Commissioning and Youth and the Director of Supporting Families. Managers from across Children’s Social Care, Housing, Finance, Procurement and Legal will be required to attend to oversee the evaluation, award, and implementation of the new pathway. Task & finish groups are also being set up that will report into this board to oversee the operational tasks ensuring the lives of our young people are minimally disrupted. In addition, monthly updates will be provided to the Children’s Services DLT which will provide greater oversight going forward.

- 3.18 It is vital that sufficient time and resource is allocated to complete the tender, tender evaluation, contract award and implementation of the transformed YP Supported Living Pathway ensuring the lives of our young people who live in the pathway are impacted minimally.
- 3.19 An implementation period of four months (1<sup>st</sup> February to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024) is recommended as the transition to the new pathway will impact the lives of our young people. If new providers win the new contract, and/ or new properties are allocated to the pathway, providers need to ensure their properties are ready for move in and young people will have to be moved. Commissioners are anticipating that new properties as well as new providers will bid as the new pathway model is different to the previous pathway, and as a result, change in some shape or form will be inevitable. This will have a big impact on the lives of our young people as well as on our internal teams across CSC and HOST. It will require careful and timely planning to ensure that young people are consulted and given a choice to ensure their lives are minimally disrupted. The current pathway holds over 150 placements (including 16 & 17 years old, children in our care/ care leavers and young people at risk of homelessness) and if young people are not ready for move on to permanent accommodation by June 2024, the young people will require a placement in the new pathway. The new placements need to be agreed by CSC and HOST and will have to continue to meet their needs and offer them a new safe home. This realistically requires four months. These are some of our most vulnerable children and young people and we need to allow the time needed to support them appropriately. Initial conversations with CSC and HOST have started and we are beginning to map out the different needs and preferences of all young people currently placed in the pathway with the aim to have a clear plan early in the new year.
- 3.20 It would thus be in the best interest of the Council and service users to offer a direct contract award, from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024.

#### **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 An equalities impact assessment is not required at this stage as this direct contract award is to ensure continued service not a service change or recommission. The YPSHP supports our most vulnerable children and young people in our borough and ensuring equal housing and support for them is offered through these contracts lies at the heart it.

#### **5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration.
- 5.2 The YPSHP is crucial to safeguard our most vulnerable children and young people offering them safe and homely housing and support that meets their needs.

## **6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 6.1 The costs of these contracts are within the current revenue budget, if a extension of the contract was not agreed and we reverted to spot purchases cost are likely to increase significantly.

## **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

- 7.1 The Council has the legal power to undertake the activities detailed in this report.
- 7.2 The Council has a legal duty to subject these contracts to competition. However, the Council also has a legal duty to provide the services to the individuals and so a break in service provision would be untenable as this would breach the Council's statutory duty and leave vulnerable people at risk. Therefore, the most expedient measure is to extend the existing contracts in order to provide the time to deliver an appropriate tender exercise.
- 7.3 The Council is also required to demonstrate statutory Best Value in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of its functions. The contract awards will be subject to the existing terms and conditions which will support the Council when monitoring delivery of the services. Also, the award of the short term contracts in themselves represent Best Value as the award will prevent a breach of the Council's statutory duty.

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- NONE

### **Appendices**

- NONE

### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

- NONE

### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A