

Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision containing exempt information

This Executive Decision Report is part exempt and Appendix B and Appendix C are not available for public inspection as they contain or relate to exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 1 & 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. They are exempt because the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

Subject Heading:	Permission to award Havering's All Age Autism Contract to Sycamore Trust UK
Decision Maker:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Ford, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services
ELT Lead:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Report Author and contact details:	Sophie Barron, Senior Commissioner – Living Well T: 01708 431082 E: Sophie.Barron@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	The Adult Social Care and Support Planning Policy states that Havering's vision is: 'Supporting excellent outcomes for the people of Havering by helping communities to help themselves and targeting resources and interventions to encourage independence' It is also Havering's aim to deliver integrated services and work in partnership to achieve improved

Non-key Executive Decision

	outcomes and value for money services for residents
Financial summary:	<p>The contract will support both adults and children with autism and will operate out of community centres in both the North and South of the borough to reduce fixed accommodation expenses.</p> <p>The proposed total cost for the 3 years + 2 years' extension contract will be £350,000. This is broken down into annual costs as per below:</p> <p>Year 1: £70,000 Year 2: £70,000 Year 3: £70,000 Year 4: £70,000 Year 5: £70,000</p> <p>Total: £350,000.00</p>
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee:	People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision

Non-key Executive Decision

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well (X)

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy ()

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council ()

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

For the reasons stated in this report, the Strategic Director of People is recommended to agree to award the All Age Autism Contract to Sycamore Trust UK following a successful procurement process, for a period of 3 years plus 2 years' extension (3+2), from 1st November 2024 to 31st October 2029 at a total value of £350,000.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Havering Constitution:

Scheme 3.3.3

Powers common to all Strategic Directors

1. General

1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures.

4. Contracts

4.2 Power to award all contracts with a total contract value of below £1,000,000 other than contracts covered by Contract Procedure Rule 16.3.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This paper is seeking permission to award the new All Age Autism Service to Sycamore Trust UK following a successful procurement process for a period of 3 years plus 2 years' extension (3+2) from 1st November 2024 to 31st October 2029 at a total value of circa £350,000.

Background

Havering currently commissions the Sycamore Trust to deliver a preventative offer for Adults with Autism and related conditions with the current contract ending on the 31st October 2024.

With the launch of the all-age strategy and the development and expansion of North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT's) Autism Diagnostic pathways in 2023, the current service specification is no longer fit for purpose. In addition, there have been some service delivery-related issues with the commissioned provider, i.e. low numbers of new referrals when compared to the numbers coming through the new NELFT diagnostic pathways; and a considerable spend on rental costs.

To help develop a further understanding of what the current gaps are in Havering, a survey was designed in collaboration with people with autism and their parents and carers to gather feedback. Two surveys, one for those with autism and one for parents and carers were published in February 2024 for 4 weeks, resulting in a combined 149 responses.

The main focus of both surveys was to establish the top 3 priorities to help us design a service that meets the current and future needs of our autistic community.

Non-key Executive Decision

When asked what types of community support would you like to see in Havering, the common themes included:

- More support for parents of autistic children
- More autism friendly activity groups that are available at different days and times to be more accessible
- Better help with social isolation
- Better autism awareness and education
- Post-diagnostic support
- Better information, advice and practical help when approaching GP's, employers, schools and colleges etc.
- Better support with gaining and maintaining employment

A report detailing the full findings from these surveys is in Appendix A.

Service Summary

The findings and feedback from the surveys have been used to design a new All Age Autism service specification. The service will be community based, providing information and advice, peer support and activity groups to meet the needs of local people of all ages on the Autistic Spectrum. The service will also include supporting individuals and their families through the diagnosis process in the form of pre diagnostic support.

The service is framed around 4 keys areas:

1. Partnership Working

The provider will work with various services and organisations across health, social care, and education and employment settings. This will include working with GP's and NELFT's diagnostic pathways to improve support to those going through the diagnosis process. It will also require working closely with children's and adult's social care, mental health providers and the DWP to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the autistic community.

2. Raising Awareness

The provider will support Havering's All Age Autism Strategy with its vision of making the borough Autism friendly. This will include working with local businesses to highlight areas that may not encourage people with autism to access their premises as well as maximising employment opportunities. To support this, the provider will facilitate a training programme for volunteers with lived experience to deliver autism awareness sessions to organisations across the borough with a particular focus on education and employment settings. The provider will also be encouraged to work with other agencies to raise awareness through fundraising and events.

3. Peer Support

The provider will facilitate weekly face to face peer support groups for adults and activity groups for children in community buildings in the North and South of the borough. It is envisaged that these groups will take place on an alternate basis to manage demand across the borough and be held at accessible times such as after school or in the evenings. The groups focus will be to increase life skills to enable service users to access the community and help maximise their independence. In addition, the provider will facilitate a monthly parents and carers support group, a pre-diagnosis group, and an Autism Steering Group to feed into the Havering Autism Partnership Board.

4. Information and Advice

The provider will provide dedicated prearranged 1:1 session for those individuals not in education, employment or training to achieve economic outcomes through information and signposting to relevant support. The provider will also facilitate an online Facebook group to

Non-key Executive Decision

advertise their services and provide an online space for the autistic community to come together and share advice and resources.

Procurement

An open procurement process took place from the 8th May – 28th May 2024 in which a total of 4 bids were received. All 4 bids were compliant through the Standard Qualifying Questions (SQ) stage.

The bids were independently evaluated by 3 evaluators over a one-week period ending on the 12th July and moderation meetings were held thereafter to conclude the evaluation of the technical bids. Following SQ, the four bids method statements were evaluated using the 0-5 scoring rationale. The ITT stated that 'Bidders who do not achieve a 3 out of 5 for each Quality question and Social value question, will not have their Price evaluated'. A score of 3 would achieve a mark of Acceptable. The final scores for each bidder were agreed by all evaluators in moderated meetings held on 17th July, facilitated by the Council's procurement team. Only one bidder passed the quality stage and had their pricing schedules evaluated.

The evaluation panel found that Sycamore Trust UK offer value for money and therefore, recommend to award the contract to them. There is no TUPE implications as the provider is delivering the current autism service.

Attached exempt Appendix B includes a breakdown of each providers score.

Sycamore Trust

Sycamore Trust UK are a charity based in Barking and Dagenham that focuses on supporting the needs of individuals and families/carers for whom autism spectrum disorders and/or learning difficulties are a part of daily life.

Sycamore Trust UK currently operates the Autism Hub in Romford, offering guidance on various issues affecting adults with Autism in Havering. The Hub provides a safe space for individuals with autism and their families to seek support, engage in social activities and develop new skills. The Sycamore Trust raises awareness of autism in the broader community through their autism ambassador programmes, promoting autism-friendly communities, employers and opportunities.

Tender submission

The tender submission showcased dedication to enhancing services for residents with autism. This commitment is evident through experience of working with residents with lived experience to understand needs and how they have shared this with partners to deliver better outcomes. This is apparent through relationships with NELFT, Havering MIND, Havering Works, Havering SEND Family Voice and the DWP.

They showed commitment to promoting place based support across the borough by utilising sites both in the North, South and central parts of Havering to serve the broader autistic community. Additionally, their proactive approach in co-developing peer groups, maintaining a strong online media presence and identifying new revenue schemes reflects their commitment to continuous improvement.

Funding

The annual contract value is £70,000. Sycamore Trust will be delivering the following within this funding envelope:

- Co-designed age appropriate social and support groups held in community buildings across the borough for adults

Non-key Executive Decision

- Operate a life skills youth group and Saturday morning multi-sports sessions for children
- Bi-weekly parents and carers support group
- Operate training workshops for children with autism aged 10-17 and their parents to improve mental health and wellbeing
- Operate wellbeing group in collaboration with Havering MIND
- Monthly steering group which feeds into the Havering Autism Partnership Board
- Monthly pre-diagnosis group for individuals and their families developed with NELFT
- Provide pre-arranged face to face appointment for those seeking individualised support, this can include support with form filling and navigating systems
- Operate an employment programme in collaboration with Havering Works to develop key skills for writing CV's and preparing for interviews
- Operate an Autism Ambassadors training programme delivered by those with lived experience (12 sessions per year)
- Recruit additional volunteers with lived experience
- Promote the service via use of social media, digital newsletters, printed leaflets and hosting fund raising events
- Operate a private Facebook group to provide an online space for the autistic community to come together and share advice and resources

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do nothing

Let the current contract lapse at its current end date of October 31st 2024 and not provide another service offer is not an option. As identified in the mapping exercise that was conducted, there are not many services available in the community for our autistic residents, especially for children. In addition, as highlighted in an in the Equalities Impact Assessment under Appendix C, this decision would create a gap in service provision which may result in an increase for demand in statutory services therefore this option has been rejected.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

A survey was co-designed with residents on the autistic spectrum as well as the stakeholders of the Autism Partnership Board for feedback. The surveys were published on Citizens Space on 15th February 2024 for one month and resulted in a combined 149 responses. The survey outcomes were analysed and fed into the service specification, which was shared with the Autism Partnership Board for final comment.

A Procurement Intention Notice (PIN) was circulated to the Market to gauge interest in Havering's All Age Autism Service on the 26th March 2024. This has resulted in 5 providers expressing interest in providing the service.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Non-key Executive Decision

Name: Sophie Barron

Designation: Senior Commissioner

Signature: 

Date:06/09/2024

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may generally do, subject to any statutory limitations. The Council has the power under this section to agree to the proposals in the recommendations.

Further, the Council has the power to award a contract for these services under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which allows the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.

The value of the proposed contract is £350,000 over 5 years (3+2). The value of the proposed contract is below the threshold for Light Touch Services under Schedule 3 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR). Therefore, the contract is not caught by the full regime of the PCR. However, the contract should comply with Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR).

For the reasons set out above, the Council may award the contract to Sycamore Trust.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This decision paper is seeking approval to award the All Age Autism Contract to Sycamore Trust UK following a successful procurement process for a period of 3 years plus 2 years' extension, from 1st August 2024 to 31st July 2029 at a total value of £350,000.

The annual contract value is £70,000 per annum and there is £80,000 per annum allocated through the Better Care Fund so sufficient funding is available. The new contract would generate a saving of £10,000 per annum and £50,000 over the life of the contract.

This saving is not a general fund saving as this contract is fully funded from the Better Care Fund. A review of the Better Care Fund and a reallocation of expenditure will be undertaken following approval at Health and Wellbeing Board level which may result in the £10,000 saving per annum attributed to the general fund.

In the unlikely event that the Better Care Fund funding ceases then alternative funding arrangements would need to be sought to cover the cost of the contract.

The Sycamore Trust UK was the provider of the previous autism service and there were some service related delivery issues with low number of referrals and support only being provided to a small percentage of the autism community. It was therefore not proving to be the best use of financial resources for the council.

However, a service redesign has been worked upon and the contract is now for the provision of an all age autism service rather than just an adults service. There has been a change of Leadership within the company and a change in the operating model, operating the service out of community hubs instead of paying large rent on premises and this is thought to make the service more accessible and increase the number of referrals.

Key Performance indicators have been added into the specification and robust monitoring of these will take place to ensure delivery at an expected standard and these will be monitored monthly at first and then quarterly once the performance has reached expected levels. To

Non-key Executive Decision

negate the risk of the contract underperforming, a no fault termination clause has been added to the contract.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Havering has a diverse community made up of many different groups and individuals. The Council values diversity and believes it essential to understand and include the different contributions, perspectives and experience that people from different backgrounds bring.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- I. the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- II. the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- III. Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'protected characteristics' are: age, gender, race and disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council demonstrates its commitment to the Equality Act in its decision-making processes, the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and employment practices concerning its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

Equalities Health Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix C.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable environmental implications or risks.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://elfy.fa.em3.oraclecloud.com/fscmUI/faces/PrcPosRegisterSupplier?prcBuld=300000002366037>

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Combined Autism Service Survey Results	Open
Appendix B	Scoring results for tender	Exempt
Appendix C	Equalities Impact Assessment	Exempt

Non-key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Barbara Nicholls

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title Strategic Director, People

Other manager title:

Date: 10 September 2024

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____

Non-key Executive Decision