



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC – APPROVAL FOR SECOND EXTENSION OF COMMISSIONED ARTS ADVISORY SERVICE FOR THE WINCHESTER DISTRICT

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

Contact Officers:

Case Officer: Eloise Appleby, Assistant Director (Economy and Communities), tel 01962 848 181, email eappleby@winchester.gov.uk

Committee Administrator: Nancy Graham tel 01962 848 235 email ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

- Portfolio Holder Decision Notice [PHD364](#) sought permission to test a new style of arts advisory service designed to test the merits of an externally provided service, following the voluntary redundancy of the Arts Development Officer (ADO).
- Portfolio Holder Decision Notice [PHD414](#) sought permission to extend this service for a further year to June 2013, based on its success.
- The 'commissioned' service has not sought to replace on a like-for-like basis the work of the ADO, but it has maintained a good level of development support for arts businesses and organisations as well as individual practitioners. In addition, it has targeted key organisations (eg Blue Apple Theatre, 10 Days, Winnall Rock School, Hat Fair) to offer a more intensive support programme to help them become more secure and resilient. The

service also advises City Council Members and officers on arts policy and funding matters.

- Stephen Boyce, a locally-based arts and heritage consultant, secured the commission through a competitive process and has been providing the service since November 2011.
- The service provided, complementing the more project-based approach of the Economy and Arts Team, seeks to encourage arts practitioners to consider themselves as businesses, with a viable financial model and good governance structure.
- Feedback on the service has been very positive: an e-survey of the arts community conducted in May 2012 showed that nearly 90% of those who had made use of the service thought it to be good or excellent (with 74% 'excellent'). Anecdotal feedback has continued to be good over the past year.
- Officers feel that it would be reasonable to extend the current contract for one last time because:
 - a) there is a high level of satisfaction with the service;
 - b) it takes time to procure and embed a new provider, which disrupts continuity for customers and leads to a period of non-productive time during contract initiation period;
 - c) the Council is currently entering a period of service review/transformation, which will provide a natural opportunity to consider the future provision of this service over the coming months.
- In normal circumstances, officers would be required to seek three competitive quotes to commission the service for a further year.
- Officers therefore seek a direction under Contract Procedure Rule 2.4a for authorisation to negotiate with one supplier only for the delivery of the Arts Advisory Service for a further year. This would be in order to realise the full value of the money already invested in the commission, and the time spent by the service provider in developing strong relationships within the arts community and with other key organisations/communities around the District.
- Officers have verified that this constitutes a contract for services, and the consultant is self-employed, rather than being an employee of the City Council, in order to ensure that the Council is not responsible for tax/national insurance due from the individual concerned.
- This commission supports the corporate outcome of being an Efficient and Effective Council, and associated Change Plan themes of 'Providing customer service we're proud of'.

DECISION

1. That a direction under Contract Procedure Rule 2.4a be made and the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) be authorised to negotiate a contract for the delivery of the Arts Advisory Service by Stephen Boyce for a twelve month period from August 2013 to July 2014, at a cost of £18,000 from the base Arts Development Budget for 2013/14 and £6,000 in 2014/15.
2. That the future provision of the service be considered as part of the Economic Prosperity Transformation Review during autumn 2013.

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Externalising the service provided the opportunity to evaluate the key needs of the arts community and provide strategic support for these, whilst reducing the number of time-consuming practical demands which were made on Council officers. Stephen Boyce is clear at first contact about the support on offer, and his availability to provide this support, and has helped the Council to redesign the service in a way which is helpful to customers and officers alike.

The externalised service has been welcomed by the District's arts community, although it is recognised that they do not have the same level of access nor the same kind of operational support as a full time ADO provided. Feedback has provided evidence of the quality of the advice and help being provided, and the value which is attributed to it.

At the start of any contract, the contractor spends time setting up his operation and becoming familiar with his customer base. The commissioned Arts Advisor has already been through this setting up period, and officers feel there is better continuity for customers and better value for money for the Council in extending his contract rather than initiating another bidding process.

A one year contract provides some continuity, whilst still giving the Council flexibility to discontinue the service and save or reallocate the funds in 2014/15 should this be deemed desirable.

Alternative options include:

- re-establishing the post of Arts Development Officer at the Council: this option provides less flexibility and will not help to manage demand on Council officers in the way that the current arrangement does. It is also unlikely that the Council would benefit from the level of experience from an employed member of staff that it has been able to command through this competitive bidding process.
- discontinuing the service completely, which would be seen as a counter-intuitive move by our significant arts community who are – more than ever – in

need of support and guidance as funding become scarcer and earned income reduces, whilst aspiration and creativity increase. It is clearly recognised that Winchester's economy benefits from the strong arts and cultural profile of the City and surrounding area, and the quality of life is greatly enhanced by organisations as diverse as Platform 4 Theatre Company, Hat Fair and the Bishop's Waltham Festival. Moreover, the work associated with the service would not disappear, and there is neither the capacity nor the expertise to deal with many of the enquiries that would return to the Council.

Both of these continue to be options for the future. However, officers feel that the commission is working well in providing a cost-effective and reliable solution and should be allowed to continue in its present form for another year.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

A short-term extension of the current contract to the end of July 2013 has already been agreed, in order to create a block of days for City Council activities which could not readily be identified in June.

The twelve month extension would therefore be from August 2013 to July 2014, and the cost to the City Council would be £24,000. This would be met from the Arts Development Budget, pro rata over the two financial years.

The mid scale pay for a full time grade 5 officer with on-costs is £34,566 at current rates (excluding car allowance), although there is not a straight 'value for money' comparison to be made because the externalised service is not full time and focuses on strategic support and development of the sector.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

A short customer satisfaction survey was issued to the Council's 400-strong database of cultural organisations and practitioners in May 2012. This was designed to assess the quality of the service provided, along with any service improvements which could reasonably be introduced without increasing the budget.

As indicated earlier in this Notice, satisfaction levels with the new-style service are high with nearly 90% of those who had made use of the service considering it to be good or excellent (with 74% 'excellent'). This evidence, combined with requests to increase awareness of the service and feedback from officers who have benefited from making referrals to the service, has prompted the decision to request a one year extension to the current arrangement.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development has been consulted regarding this decision.

**FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED
FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION
NOTICE**

n/a

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR
OFFICER CONSULTED**

N/A

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

N/A

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision

Councillor Humby – Portfolio Holder for Economic Development