



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND SPORT

TOPIC – APPROVAL FOR 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 Corporate Director (Governance), the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance 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 (Economic Prosperity), tel 01962 848 181, email eappleby@winchester.gov.uk

Committee Administrator: Nancy Graham tel 01962 848 217 email ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

- The voluntary redundancy last May of the Arts Development Officer (ADO) provided the Council with an opportunity to test an alternative form of delivery of the well-used and valued arts development function.
- Although the post was disestablished, there was no intention to withdraw the support provided for the District's arts organisations and practitioners, nor for the area's vibrant creative industries sector which is one of five core sectors supported in the emerging Local Plan and the Council's Economic Strategy 2010 – 2020.
- 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.

- The 'commissioned' service has not sought to replace on a like-for-like basis the work of the ADO, but it has maintained essential support for arts businesses and organisations as well as individual practitioners.
- A nine month trial period was approved by Members, paid for from the residual Arts Development Budget, and the opportunity advertised on the South East Business Portal as well as through local networks.
- 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.
- Feedback on the new-style service has been very positive: an e-survey of the arts community conducted in May 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 also been good.
- There is still more to be done to raise awareness of the service, and this can be addressed in relatively simple and free ways.
- Havant Borough Council made a financial contribution to the pilot, enabling the service to be tested across two districts which has been extremely helpful while plans are developed for spending the West of Waterlooville developer contributions for art. However, their arts community is very much smaller than the Winchester one and they do not feel able to continue funding the service after the pilot as a result of other budgetary priorities.
- The eight month pilot will conclude at the end of June, but officers recommend an extension of the contract for a further twelve months to make the most of the time that has been spent establishing the new service and creating new relationships across the District.
- In normal circumstances, officers would be required to seek three competitive quotes to commission the service for a further year. However, officers believe that the current provider offers a high quality of service at a price which has already been proved to be competitive in the tendering process carried out in 2011.
- 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.
- 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' by 'reviewing our service standards to ensure what we

deliver matches customer requirements and expectations', and also 'Providing services which are flexible' by 'reviewing our services with a view to finding more efficient ways of working to balance the budget and support medium term workforce planning'.

DECISION

a) That a direction under Contract Procedure Rule 2.4a be made and the Assistant Director (Economic Prosperity) be authorised to negotiate a contract for the delivery of the Arts Advisory Service by Stephen Boyce for a twelve month period from July 2012 to June 2013, at a cost of £18,000 from the base Arts Development Budget for 2012/13 and £6,000 in 2013/14.

b) That a further review be carried out in April 2013 to determine the preferred option for future delivery of the service:

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. Written feedback and the recent survey provide 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 2013/14 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 Blue Apple Theatre, 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.

The Arts Advisor has produced an assessment of the commission so far, and identifies some development opportunities to enhance the impact of the service, and this will be incorporated into the extended brief.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The cost of the eight month trial has been £20,000, including £5,000 from Havant Borough Council. £3,000 of the Winchester City Council contribution was identified from the 2012/13 budget.

For the twelve month extension from July 2012 to June 2013, the cost to the City Council would be £24,000 to cover the Winchester District alone. This would be met from the Arts Development Budget, pro rata over the two financial years.

To employ a full time grade 5 officer for a year with on costs is £38,366 at current rates of pay, although there is not a straight 'value for money' comparison to be made because the externalized service is not full time and focuses on strategic support and development of the sector.

There is a modest amount of money (£6,000) left in the Arts Development Base Budget to support community projects and initiatives during the period, but this is augmented by other ring fenced funds such as the West of Waterlooville art contribution, partnership project funding (subject to carry forward requests) and the upcoming Silver Hill public art contribution. One-off opportunities also arise. For example, last year, funds were also spent on refurbishing and increasing the number of painted bollards in The Square as part of the wider enhancement programme. These funds currently represent more than enough work for officers to support internally.

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 early May. 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.

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

One Member proposed that it might be prudent to wait until the draft of the Council's new cultural strategy had been received before making a decision about the continuation of this contract. However, it was felt that the extension of the arts advisory service contract would be invaluable in helping to fine tune and then facilitate the delivery of many of the recommendations in the emerging strategy, including raising awareness and excellence of the District's art/cultural scene. The contract is for one year only, and the provision of the service will be reviewed again at the end of this period, by which time different kind of provision may be determined.

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: 03.07.2012

Councillor Stallard – Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture and Sport