

## SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

17<sup>th</sup> January 2024

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Commissioning Healthwatch in Northamptonshire</b>
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<b>Executive Member (NNC)</b>	Cllr Helen Harrison
<b>Cabinet Member (WNC)</b>	Cllr Matt Golby

<b>Key Decision</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974</b>	

### Appendices

Appendix 1 – Online Consultation

Appendix 2 – Responses to the Consultation

### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1 To outline the intention to separate the countywide Healthwatch service and for each authority to develop and commission their own Healthwatch models for West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) respectively.
- 1.2 The contract expired on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 and a 5-month waiver was put in place until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 to allow enough time for the service to be recommissioned. Both councils were looking to do this after the next contract, so it is accelerating that decision.
- 1.3 To allow enough time to for North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council to develop and commission their own local model, an additional 12-month waiver from 1st April 2024 to 31st December 2024 will be requested.

## 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council jointly commission a local Northamptonshire Healthwatch organisation. The existing contract is due to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
- 2.2 Both Authorities want to develop and commission their own Healthwatch service to make it more local to their respective area, as per the national guidance.
- 2.3 Healthwatch is a statutory duty for each local authority. Councils have a responsibility under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to make arrangements to establish and maintain a local Healthwatch service.
- 2.4 The current contract value is £195,000 per annum. It is divided proportionately as follows:
  - North Northamptonshire Council: £94,770 (48.6%)
  - West Northamptonshire Council: £100,230 (51.4%)
- 2.5 Under the joint contracting arrangements, a commissioning project has been underway to plan, design and procure a new Healthwatch specification, in line with Healthwatch England's recommendations and incorporating their quality framework.

The following consultation was carried out by commissioners but at a time when both councils were looking to contract another joint model:

- An online consultation survey across Northamptonshire seeking the views of people living in Northamptonshire.
- Discussions with the following:
  - Regional lead for Healthwatch
  - North Northamptonshire Council
  - West Northamptonshire Council
  - Public Health
  - Integrated Care Board's (ICB) Head of Public Engagement

Consideration was made for incorporating funding from the ICB for projects for Young Healthwatch to undertake, as part of the contract. However, they could not commit to more than a year's finances.

- 2.6 Benchmarking against other local Healthwatch organisations was carried out.
- 2.7 Each Authority will now revise the project that has been underway to align to their own local footprint and seek the views of local people and stakeholders in their respective area.

### **3. Recommendations**

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3.1 The Shared Services Joint Committee are being asked to consider and agree the following recommendations.

3.2 It is recommended that the Shared Services Joint Committee delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health and the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of People Services and Director of Public Health & Wellbeing to:

- Commission a separate more local North Northamptonshire Healthwatch and a West Northamptonshire Healthwatch service, that will have the interests of its own population served.
- Each authority reviews their service specification to include Healthwatch England's current recommendations and any revised national quality framework.
- The guidance states that local authorities should establish a contractual arrangement with an independent organisation that should be a social enterprise that delivers Healthwatch activity. Social Enterprises are defined as:

*Community Interest Companies (CICs), Industrial and Provident Societies (IPSS) or Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs).*

- The recommended financial model for Healthwatch asks councils to provide additional funding to bolster the core grant. A 12-month waiver would offer each authority time to re-assess the contract value as they develop their own model.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered:

- The only alternative would be the existing model, that both councils had the intention of moving away from.

### **4. Report Background**

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4.1 The current contract has been in place since 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 for a 2-year period and an extension has been extended by waiver for 5 months until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

4.2 The total annual cost is £195,000 which is split 48.6% North Northamptonshire Council and 51.4% West Northamptonshire Council.

4.3 A 5-month waiver was required to cover the period of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. This was to allow for the online consultation to run for the recommended period. Without this waiver the councils would have been unable to adhere to TUPE period, recommendations and regulations.

- 4.4 The incumbent provider, Connected Together CIC, has held the contract for a number of years and was the only bid the last time the service was commissioned.
- 4.5 A Healthwatch Organisation acts as an independent consumer champion for people who use health and social care services. They ensure local voices are heard and that people's views and experiences are used to improve existing services and to help shape future services.
- 4.6 Their main statutory functions are to:
- Promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services.
  - Obtain the views of people about their needs and experience of local health and social care services. Local Healthwatch make these views known to those involved in the commissioning and scrutiny of care services.
  - Make reports and make recommendations about how those services could or should be improved.
  - Provide information and advice to the public about accessing health and social care services and the options available to them.
  - Make recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the CQC to carry out special reviews or investigations into areas of concern.
  - Make the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England, helping them to carry out our role as national champion.
- 4.7 North and West Northamptonshire Councils receive the Local Reform and Community Voices (LRCV) grant.
- This is a non-ringfenced grant that lists what the funding should be used for
  - Each year Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) sends the Local Authorities a letter confirming the LRCV grant funding available to Local Authorities for commissioning Healthwatch. This letter has been known as the local authority social services letter (LASSL)
  - The letter setting out LRCV allocations for the 2022-23 financial year was not released by DHSC until 16th February 2023
  - This is a significant issue meaning an eleven-month delay in disbursement to Local Authorities and the letter for the 23-24 financial year has not yet been received.
- 4.8 West Northamptonshire Council receive £208,502 from the Local Reform and Community Voices grant and North Northamptonshire Council £180,856 respectively.
- 4.9 Local Reform and Community Voices (LRCV) Grant Received:

	LCRV Grant received	41% LCRV Grant allocated for Healthwatch
WNC	£208,502.00	£85,485.82
NNC	£180,856.00	£74,150.96

4.10 The total annual cost is £195,000 which is split 48.6% North Northamptonshire Council and 51.4% West Northamptonshire Council:

	Current spend based on split 48.6% NNC and 51.4% WNC
WNC	£100,230.00
NNC	£94,770.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£195,000.00</b>

4.11 The following activities have been conducted in reviewing this contract during the first waiver period:

- Incumbent consultation
- Review of the funding
- Internal and Healthwatch England specification review.
- Public consultation online.
- The service specification has been benchmarked against the Healthwatch England and other Healthwatch areas specification criteria.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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5.1 This pre-procurement work has identified a series of pressures and opportunities. The pressures include:

- No interest was received from other providers for the previous tender period
- There are limitations on which providers can fulfil this service. The organisation should either fall into one of the following three categories:
  - Companies limited by guarantee and registered as a charity
  - Community Interest Companies (CIC)
  - Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO)

Or have a constitution which:

  - Ensures that over 50% of its distributable profits in each financial year will be used for Healthwatch activities

- Contains a statement or condition that the local Healthwatch is carrying out its activities for the benefit of the community in England
- Contains specified provisions relating to the distribution of assets if the body is dissolved or wound up.

5.2 Commissioning a local NNC and WNC footprint offers the opportunity for:

- Improve the funding to meet levels set by national guidance
- Stimulate the market and attract the interest of other suitable providers
- Review the role of Healthwatch locally and its role in providing a patient voice in our health and social care system
- Maximise the interest in the re-procurement by exploring alternative models with national sign-off
- Develop a local communications plan with all stakeholders to better inform the respective local authorities population of the Healthwatch model and how to access its services across Health and Social care
- Review the KPI's to include specific data, demographics and demand from each local authority area with a potential to include Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) data.
- Generate a new invigorated Healthwatch as part of a vibrant core of resident and patient engagement in public services.

## **6. Next Steps**

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6.1 Seek a further 12-month waiver.

6.2 Each authority review their own service specification and seek the views of partners and stakeholders before commissioning a more local model.

6.3 Notify Healthwatch England of the change of commissioning model

6.4 Seek comment on the respective service specifications with Healthwatch England

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **Resources, Financial and Transformation**

7.1 Each authority to undertake their own financial review of the model and whether they increase the funding to the levels of the nationally recommended guidance

### **7.2 Legal and Governance**

- The councils have a statutory duty under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to provide a local Healthwatch service.

- A Healthwatch Organisation acts as an independent consumer champion for people who use health and social care services. They ensure local voices are heard and that people's views and experiences are used to improve existing services and to help shape future services.

### 7.3 **Relevant Law, Policies and Plans**

- Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Care Act (2014)
- Health and Care Act 2022
- NHS England and NHS Improvement plan
- Healthwatch strategic plan of; Our future focus, What we want to achieve by 2026
- Commissioning an effective local Healthwatch (Healthwatch 2023)
- Local Healthwatch Funding 22-23
- Department of Health, Local Reform Community Voices Grant 2022-2023
- Healthwatch Quality Framework (2022)

### 7.4 **Risk**

- Providing a local Healthwatch service is a statutory duty for the local authority.
- Limited tender submissions could lead to a non-competitive tender.

### 7.5 **Consultation**

- An online consultation of Healthwatch was completed and shared across Northamptonshire when commissioners were considering another joint model.
- The online responses received was 120. This is made up of 72 fully completed responses and 48 incomplete responses. Incomplete means that the respondent has worked through some of the survey but did not reach the point at which they can submit.
- 71 individual responses were made and 1 on behalf of an organisation or community group.

- The results from the online consultation, shows throughout the consultation that a limited number of people have heard of or know what Healthwatch do or who they are. The responses from people who have heard of Healthwatch comment that there is not widely known, service needs to be promoted and established across the public in Northamptonshire wider.
- Appendix 1 shows a copy of the online consultation.
- An overview of the questions around contacting Healthwatch and their experience is shown as a brief summary below:
- The results of 72 completed responses of some of the survey questions; Have you heard of Healthwatch Northamptonshire before now?
  - 44 (61.1%) No
  - 25 (34.7%) Yes
  - Not answered/do not know (4.2%)
- 12 people responded to have contacted Healthwatch previously
- How would you describe your experience of Healthwatch Northamptonshire?
  - Good 1
  - Neither good nor poor 2
  - Poor 2
  - Very good 7
- What was the reason for contacting Healthwatch Northamptonshire? - Reason for contact
 

Do not know	1
To get information and advice about health and care services	1
No	58
Not Answered	45
Other	7
To help improve health and care services by sharing my experience and knowledge	4
To make a complaint or raise a serious issue about a health or care service	2
Not Answered	1
Yes	12
Other	1
To get information and advice about health and care services	3
To help improve health and care services by sharing my experience and knowledge	6
To make a complaint or raise a serious issue about a health or care service	2
- 57 people answered the following question as a yes and we had 55 comments; Do you think Healthwatch Northamptonshire could improve awareness of its services to local people? The responses are all ideas



around promoting and advertising the services, signposting in all different Health Settings.

- **Appendix 2** shows the responses of the consultation in details.

## 7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1 The proposal has not yet been considered by the Executive Advisory Panel as this paper is only to inform the board that each council will commission their own service and in order to do that, a further waiver will be required. When each council develops their own service specification, the executive advisory panel will be engaged.

## 7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1 The proposal has not yet been considered by scrutiny as this paper is only to inform the board that each council will commission their own service and in order to do that, a further waiver will be required. When each council develops their own service specification, Scrutiny Committee will be engaged.

## 7.8 Equality Implications

- Current service data indicates that the pre-dominant population engaged through Healthwatch is a white female cohort. Targeted engagement work does pick up the needs of some different communities.
- The assessment undertaken also identified a high degree of non-declaration of personal characteristics which means make specific conclusions are very difficult to make.
- The re-procurement of the service will address these points for:
  - more consistent monitoring
  - clarity on why data is collected
  - target engagement of populations that do not traditionally engage with Healthwatch about their health and social care experiences.

## 7.9 Climate and Environment Impact

- There are no direct Climate and Environment impacts because of this proposal.

## 7.10 Community Impact

- As an independent voice for residents across both North and West Northamptonshire, Healthwatch is a crucial part of how the communities of the two Authorities can engage with and be supported in expressing their thoughts on their experiences in accessing health and social care service.
- The continuation of the service through this re-procurement means this support can continue and be developed at a more local level and aligned to each authorities own strategic priorities.

### 7.11 **Crime and Disorder Impact**

- There are no direct crime and disorder impacts because of this proposal.

## **8 Background Papers**

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8.1 The following background papers can be considered in relation to this report:

Appendix 1 Consultation

Appendix 2 Consultation Response document