

Children’s Trust Joint Committee
Tuesday 16th January 2024

Report Title	Approval of proposed of changes to Support Services SLA’s and associated costs.
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Executive Members	Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, WNC Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills, NNC

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Support Services SLA changes and costs

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. This report seeks approval of the proposal to amend the Support Services Service Level Agreements (SLA’s) delivered to Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) by West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Council’s (WNC & NNC) via the Change Control Process.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. WNC and NNC provide a range of support services to NCT as part of the Support Services Agreement (SSA) which commenced in November 2021.
- 2.2. Each support service has a detailed Service Level Agreement (SLA) and cost schedule that was developed in the run up to the signing of the SSA.
- 2.3. The Support Service SLA's have not been formally reviewed since their inception except where changes to individual agreements have been proposed and agreed through the formal Change Control Process outlined in the SSA.
- 2.4. On the recommendation of the Support Services Board NNC, WNC and NCT conducted a review of all Support Services SLA's in summer 2023 to ensure the services remain cost effective and fit for purpose.
- 2.5. A summary of the proposed changes and revised costs to the SLA's is contained in Appendix A.
- 2.6. The financial impact of the proposed changes is an increased annual cost of £0.639m to deliver support services SLA's from 2024/25 onwards.
- 2.7. The additional funding of £0.639m has been included in the provisional contract sum for 2024/25 which was approved by Strategic Group on the 28th November 2023 and included in draft budget reports received by Cabinet in West Northamptonshire Council and Executive at North Northamptonshire Council their respective meetings in December 2023.
- 2.8. A formal change control is required in order to vary the SLA's in accordance with the terms and conditions of the SSA.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Approve the proposal to amend the Support Services SLA's delivered to NCT by WNC and NNC as detailed in Appendix A.
- b) Note the increased cost of £0.639m to deliver the Support Services SLA's for 2024/25 detailed in Appendix A and that this has been included in the contract sum of 2024/25.

3.2. Reason for the Recommendations:

- The proposed changes to the Support Services SLAs will ensure:
 - The support services accurately reflect the current service levels, funding is sufficient to enable the services to continue to meet the current and future service demand.
 - Provide ongoing assurance to the respective parties that support services remain cost effective and fit for purpose.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children's Trust to deliver Children's Social Care and Early Help services across Northamptonshire. Both take their corporate parenting role very seriously and want to support children, young people and families to thrive in their community.
- 4.2. Children's Services in Northamptonshire were judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2019.
- 4.3. Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) was partially formed on 1st November 2020 and fully launched on 1st April 2021.
- 4.4. From 1 April 2021, after the abolition of Northamptonshire County Council, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council became joint owners of Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT).
- 4.5. As part of the Service Delivery Contract with NCT NNC and WNC are required to deliver a number of dependencies to NCT including properties, insurance and other support services.
- 4.6. WNC and NNC provide a range of support services to NCT as part of the Support Services Agreement (SSA) which commenced in November 2021.
- 4.7. These services are essential back-office services that support NCT to deliver good and safe services to children and young people and families.
- 4.8. Each support service has a detailed SLA and cost schedule that was developed in the run up to the signing of the SSA.
- 4.9. Support services have been uplifted in each year of the SSA to take account of inflationary pressures.
- 4.10. The Support Service SLA's have not been formally reviewed since their inception except where changes to individual agreements have been proposed and agreed through the formal Change Control Process outlined in the SSA.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. On the recommendation of the Support Services Board NNC, WNC and NCT conducted a review of all Support Services SLA's in summer 2023 to ensure the services remain cost effective and fit for purpose.
- 5.2. An 'SLA Star Chamber' was established as the delivery vehicle for the review which included a series of meetings from August 2023 – September 2023 to enable the

operational leads from NNC and WNC's respective support services and NCT counterparts, to present any proposed changes to the SLA's.

- 5.3. The Support Services Board recommended to the Childrens Trust Operational Group the in principle agreement to the revised Support Services SLA's which was given at the December 2023 meeting.
- 5.4. A summary of the proposed changes to the SLA's is contained in Appendix A and include increases/decreases to service delivery levels, changes to wording to reflect updated legislation, updated KPI's targets and tolerances, updated levels of variable items (licences etc.) and updates to initial assumptions when the SLA's were first established.
- 5.5. The revised costs are detailed in Appendix A reflect the proposed changes to service delivery levels, purchasing of variable products (licences etc), pay inflation, other overheads and pay & grading changes for WNC provided services.
- 5.6. The financial impact of the proposed changes is an increased annual cost of £0.639m to deliver support services SLA's from 2024/25 onwards. Split by the contract sum percentages WNC contributes £0.357m and NNC £0.282m.
- 5.7. The additional funding of £0.639m has been included in the Provisional Contract Sum for 2024/25 which was approved by Strategic Group on the 28th November 2023 and included in draft budget reports received by Cabinet in WNC and Executive in NNC their respective meetings in December 2023.
- 5.8. A formal Change Control is required in order to vary the SLA's in accordance with the terms and conditions of the SSA.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. If agreed, NNC, WNC and NCT would prepare and sign a Change Control to formally include the updated SLA's and revised costs into the SSA.
- 6.2. The delivery of the new Support Services SLA's would commence from 1st April 2024.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1. When NCT was being developed, detailed work was completed to calculate how costs would be split between NNC and WNC. This was based on the relative populations and demand for children's social care services in NNC and WNC. It was agreed that WNC would contribute 55.84% and NNC would contribute 44.16% exclusive of any specific grants that are given directly to the Councils to passport to the NCT.
- 7.1.2. The budget to deliver the Support Services SLA's (excluding property maintenance and insurance premiums) in 2023/24 was £2.842m and this cost

is included in NCT's Contract Sum. This is split based on that described in 7.1.1 with WNC contributing £1.587m and NNC £1.255m.

7.1.3. NCT buy support services back from NNC and WNC with the majority provided by WNC. The cost to NCT in 2023/24 (excluding property maintenance and insurance premiums) was £2.624m for services provided WNC and £0.218m for NNC.

7.1.4. Each year WNC, NNC and NCT complete a trueing up exercise to adjust the payments for delivery of support services SLA's to reflect the actual costs vs. the agreed budget to adjust the cost between the parties. These changes include any variable items such as property related maintenance, licences and actual cost of insurance premiums.

7.1.5. As part of the support services SLA review NNC and WNC agreed to apply a consistent approach to applying inflation and overheads costs to the updated SLA costs for 2024/25 and this has been reflected in the revised costs contained in Appendix A.

7.1.6. The increased to deliver supports services in 2024/25 is £0.639m.

7.1.7. The revised budget to deliver the Support Services SLA's (excluding property maintenance and insurance premiums) in 2024/25, contained in Appendix B, is £3.481m. This is split based on that described in 7.1.1 with WNC contributing £1.944m and NNC £1.537m.

7.1.8. NCT will buy support services back from the NNC and WNC in 2024/25 with the majority still being provided by WNC. The cost to NCT in 2024/25 (excluding property maintenance and insurance premiums) will be £3.146m for services provided WNC and £0.335m for services provided by NCT.

7.1.9. The increased cost of £0.639m to deliver the updated Support Services SLA's is contained in the Provisional Contract Sum for 2024/25 and included in draft budget reports received by Cabinet in WNC and Executive in NNC for their respective meetings in December 2023.

7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. The relationship between NCT, NNC and WNC for the delivery of support services is governed by the SSA.

7.2.2. The SSA contains a Change Control Procedure which sets out the procedure for making changes to the agreement. In order to include the updated Support Services SLA's into the Support Services Agreement NNC, WNC and NCT will be required to prepare and sign a Change Control in line with the arrangements set out in the Change Control Procedures.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. NNC has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority in its Corporate Plan recognising that children, young people and their families may need help at different stages in their lives. They will aim to provide help as early as possible and provide the right support, at the right time in the right way to ensure that children are safeguarded and get the best start in life.

7.3.2. WNC has identified 'Improved life chances: Best Start in Life' as a key priority of its Corporate Plan, including a focus on early help services to ensure children have the best start in life and parents have the right support at the right time from the right service, to enable families to thrive.

7.3.3. Both NNC and WNC's identified priorities will be achieved by supporting the Children's Trust to provide higher standards of support.

7.4. Risk

7.4.1. There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. This report has not been subject to any consultation.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel (NNC)

7.6.1. This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel.

7.7. Consideration by Executive Leadership Team (WNC)

7.7.1. This report has been considered by SLT

7.8. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.8.1. This report has not been considered by the overview and scrutiny committees of either council.

7.9. Equality Implications

7.9.1. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

7.10. Climate Impact

7.10.1. There is no specific climate impact arising from this report, however as a both Councils are to considering our impacts on the environment which are managed via the individual strategic lead partnership organisation via organisational policy and commitments.

7.10.2. NNC, WNC and NCT are aware there are emissions associated with publishing web content and will seek to minimise the impact where possible.

7.11. **Community Impact**

7.11.1. There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.12. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.12.1. There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

None