

DECISION-MAKER:	HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL		
SUBJECT:	HEALTHWATCH SOUTHAMPTON		
DATE OF DECISION:	21 ST MARCH 2013		
REPORT OF:	JOINT ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY			
None			

BRIEF SUMMARY

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires local authorities to establish local Healthwatch as a vehicle to succeed and build upon the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) as a voice for patients and the public on health and care services. In addition it will undertake the additional new roles of providing information, advice and signposting on services, and NHS complaints advocacy. This paper provides an update on the arrangements for securing local Healthwatch for Southampton.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the Scrutiny Panel notes the progress towards securing local Healthwatch for Southampton.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To inform the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel of the arrangements for securing local Healthwatch.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2. A range of alternative options were considered and rejected. These included:
 - Splitting the functions of Healthwatch into separate contracts. This was rejected on the grounds that there are significant benefits to Healthwatch in terms of gathering evidence, linking outcomes across all functions and the management of a single service. The splitting of functions would reduce these advantages.
 - Negotiated tender arrangements. While this would have allowed a tender to be issued earlier, there would have been significant negotiation required after any tender process. This would have included negotiation on the final price.

- Grant aid was also considered, but rejected as this would have still required a decision on either:
 - grant aiding a single agency, of which none appeared to have all the skills to meet the requirements; or
 - grant aiding more than one agency and splitting the functions across those agencies, a decision already rejected.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

Background

3. Healthwatch is established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to act as a strong and independent voice of patients and services users of health and care services. Healthwatch England was established in October 2012 as the national body, and each upper tier local authority is required to secure local Healthwatch to operate in their area. Local Healthwatch will be responsible for the following activities:
 - Community Engagement and Research
 - Evidence, Insight and Influence
 - Information and Advice
 - NHS Advocacy Service.

4. A number of activities were undertaken in 2012 as steps towards developing Healthwatch Southampton. These included a series of consultation and engagement events between April and July, and market development workshops for potential providers in autumn 2012.

Following these workshops small grants were made available to facilitate potential groupings of providers to undertake development activities necessary to prepare themselves for any tender submission. Agencies had to be properly constituted and have a realistic plan to develop a consortium bid, with one lead agency.

A major project was also commissioned to document the Southampton LINK legacy, and this is now coming to a very successful conclusion. It will aid handover of crucial information to the new Healthwatch service.

5. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel has received a series of reports summarising the key issues in developing local Healthwatch services. Members will recall that the introduction of Healthwatch has been delayed twice, and the final regulations providing details of the requirement for local Healthwatch were not laid before Parliament until December 2012.

Securing Local Healthwatch In Southampton

6. Whilst the Council's original plans would have secured Healthwatch by 1st April 2013, there have been a number of delays as a result of the delay in the

Department of Health publishing the final regulations, and in the Council determining the final budget for local Healthwatch – again, following delays in the final grant settlement being announced by central government.

7. The key requirement of the tendering process is to secure a high quality, sustainable Healthwatch service capable of acting in the best interests of the people of Southampton over the longer term. The decision was taken to include all elements of the service within one tender process, rather than tendering for separate elements, thereby enabling better management of all parts and the stronger coordination of local services. This has however, required the Council to enter into two short-term arrangements to cover the initial period from April until the new service commences (see Next Steps below). These short-term arrangements will enable the full service to be operating shortly after April, negating further tendering or the combining of functions at a later date.
8. A competitive tendering process has been used to meet the Council's requirements as set out in the Contract Procedure Rules. A maximum price for the tender has been specified which is in line with the budget decision. It will measure tender submissions on a basis of 70% Quality; 30% Price.
9. There was a balance to be struck between publishing a tender document early, which would allow time for Healthwatch to be up and running by 1st April, and waiting until all the information was in place to enable a better informed specification to be prepared. The latter route was followed to secure the best service for the longer term, enabling price information to be included, and ensuring all legal requirements would be met, without the need to renegotiate any potential changes, as a result of the final regulations possibly containing details that had not been previously foreseen, potentially resulting in a failed tender.
10. The delay in tendering for this service has allowed the City Council to write a comprehensive Service Specification and Terms and Conditions. The tender documents are based on:
 - Two provider information days held in September / October 2012;
 - Confirmation of the budget given in February 2013;
 - The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 which was laid before Parliament on the 17th December 2012;
 - Discussions with other local authorities regarding their tender documents and procurement process; and
 - Advice from the Health and Social Care Partnership.

The robustness of the tender documents will enable Healthwatch Southampton to work within coherent guidelines and provide direction for a high quality service. The tender has been advertised on 12th March, and is

due to commence in May and June 2013.

Next Steps

11. A number of actions are underway to secure interim arrangements until the contract comes into effect. The NHS complaints advocacy service in the interim will be provided by the organisation currently supplying the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (SEAP). This service has been provided at a regional level, and the provider has indicated it will continue to register and process requests for support from Southampton. When the new contract comes into effect, any live cases will be transferred to Healthwatch Southampton.
12. Discussions have taken place with Southampton Voluntary Services who currently act as host to the LINK, to continue to support the activities that are currently the responsibility of the LINK beyond the period when the LINK ceases exist. At the same time, conversations have continued between the LINK Chair and Steering Group, offering them a continuing role in the transition period.
13. The two short term measures above will operate under the Healthwatch logo, ensuring that Southampton meets its obligations prior to the longer term service coming into full operation.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

14. The Council has set a revenue budget for 2013/14 of £200,000 for local Healthwatch.

Property/Other

15. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

16. The framework for local Healthwatch is set out in Sections 183 – 189 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Further requirements are set out in the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.

Other Legal Implications:

17. None

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

18. None

KEY DECISION? No

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	None
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Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	None	
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