



Committee report

Committee	CABINET
Date	14 SEPTEMBER 2017
Title	ISLE HELP STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
Report to	CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Executive agreed on 14 May 2015 that the council should develop a strategic partnership with the Isle Help consortium of independent voluntary sector providers of advice, information and guidance (AIG).
2. The strategic partnership provides a framework and joint strategy for bringing together the resources, knowledge and expertise of the council and the Isle Help consortium for the benefit of the community, and the mutual benefit of each party.
3. This report is designed to provide an overview of the progress being made through the partnership in providing AIG provisions through its annual report. This report recommends that Cabinet notes the 2016/17 annual report (Appendix).
4. Furthermore, that Cabinet notes and approves the request by the partnership parties to extend the agreement for a further year from 1 July 2018, as per the existing terms of the partnership agreement, for an agreed funding level of £151,200, which will enable the continuation of the One Public Estate ambitions and strategy that seeks to align AIG provision to work in partnership and continue to model and evaluate future needs for AIG provisions.

BACKGROUND

5. Accessible AIG services for adults provide people with help in relation to matters including debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment, consumer and other health and wellbeing matters. If these services are effective, people can be better empowered to resolve their problems, which can in turn prevent escalation, unnecessary distress, and divert people from the need to use costly public services.
6. While in general, advice, information and guidance provision is discretionary, most council and independently provided AIG services often underpin and support the council's delivery of its statutory obligations and priorities including the prevention of homelessness, and the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

7. The Executive considered a report on 10 February 2015 titled '*The future of independent advice, information and guidance services*', which set out options for the council's role in enabling public access to AIG. The report set out a background of increasing demand, increasingly limited resources for providers, pressures on council funding, the growing role of AIG in empowering people, and the need for the council to make changes to its own directly provided AIG services. The Executive agreed that subject to further consideration of governance arrangements, that was agreed by the Executive in a further report of 14 May 2015, a strategic partnership between the council and the Isle Help is the preferred approach.
8. Isle Help is an existing consortium of independent voluntary sector partners. Membership of that consortium currently includes the Isle of Wight Citizens Advice, Age UK Isle of Wight, People Matter Isle of Wight, the Independent Law Centre, Community Action Isle of Wight and the Footprint Trust. Following the Executive decision, the council and Isle Help have jointly through the governance arrangements managed and delivered a strategic partnership for AIG. The outcome of this has been for the partnership to produce an annual report that has reported on the progress that has been made; the outcomes, added value and performance achieved; and the plans for the coming 12 months that supports the council through partnership working to achieve its aspirations towards coordinated access integration of service provision, Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) Early Help offer, and One Public Estate opportunities.
9. The partnership agreement duration was agreed for an initial period of three years from 1 July 2015, with the option for the parties to agree to extend the partnership for a further year under the existing agreement terms.
10. It was envisaged that the partnership would adapt to making AIG services financially sustainable without public funding by seeking alternative funding streams not available to the council, however, while it is has been possible to access some sources of alternative funding for specific aspects of support or service delivery to the community, it is not universal in funding wider AIG needs for the community, and therefore maintaining a sustainable AIG provision without any public funding support is unlikely to be achieved.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

11. The council's Corporate Plan 2015-17 sets out a number of key strategic priorities. The options and recommendations in this paper are intended to support the delivery of the following council priorities. They include in particular:
 - Priority 3 - protecting the most vulnerable with health and social care, investing in support, prevention and continuing care; and
 - Priority 4 - ensuring that all the resources available to the Island are used in the most effective way in achieving the Island's priorities.
12. Independent and council provided AIG helps people and communities to make choices based on knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. This is increasingly important with regard to the council's health and wellbeing responsibilities. In addition, independent community organisations are investing in more opportunities for volunteering and community action, which strengthens communities and provides new options for the council to draw on in delivering its priorities. It is also important to ensure

that the council is able to apply its resources most effectively by having a means of ensuring that services are commissioned and delivered effectively and efficiently regardless of which sector provides the services.

CONSULTATION

13. This report requires no formal consultation to be undertaken to present the annual report, however, consultation has been undertaken with the Isle Help Community Interest Company directors to determine whether they wish to endorse the option to extend the existing partnership agreement for a further year. They have confirmed they are in support of this proposal.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

14. While there are no direct financial implications of the annual performance report, a financial case for agreeing the strategic partnership was contained in the report considered by the Executive on 10 February 2015. Following discussion with the Isle Help consortium, the proposed funding arrangements based on that report and are set out in schedule 3 of the partnership agreement. This amounted to £500,000 over three financial years from 2015/16 to 2017/18 and is paid by quarterly instalments.
15. The below provides an indication of the funding payment amounts made annually to Isle Help for AIG provisions under the three year agreement to be tapered to reflect early investment in change and then decreasing reliance on council core funding.

Year	Annual funding amount
2015/16	£186,900
2016/17	£161,900
2017/18	£151,200
Total	£500,000

16. The three year total council funding provision for 2015-18 of £500,000 represented a reduction of £60,700 core funding over the three year duration of the agreement, based on funding made available in 2014-15 to individual organisations providing support towards AIG needs.
17. The proposal to extend the existing agreement by a further year will mean that a further £151,200 will be paid to the Isle Help consortium. This represents an ongoing reduction of £35,700 over the year compared to core funding that had previously been made available in 2014-15 to individual AIG organisations and is within the current budget available for AIG funding provisions.

CARBON EMISSIONS

18. The property arrangements for future delivery aspirations of AIG services set out in the annual report are in the process of being reviewed as part of the ongoing AIG partnership arrangements over the coming year, and may result in either an increase or reduction in carbon emissions, depending on the use of council buildings for future delivery. The change will be calculated once the final property arrangement are known but, in any event, is likely to be minimal and inconsequential in terms of the council's ability to deliver the Carbon Management Plan.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. There is no statutory obligation on the council to provide advice, information and guidance services to the public. However, many of the council's statutory functions are exercised through the provision of these types of services. AIG enables the council to ensure that service users are provided with access to information to enable discharge of the council's statutory duties in relation to housing, social care, benefits and revenues. In addition to the value in terms of discharging statutory functions AIG services have an added value in the part they play in reducing the direct contact the council has with service users on a day to day basis.
20. The increase which has been seen in the demand for AIG service will continue by virtue of the introduction of the Care Act 2014. The Care Act has, from April 2015, created new duties and responsibilities for the council and has resulted in a need for the council to provide better access to information and advice in discharging its social care functions. The indication is that in discharging this duty under this legislation simply relying on websites and leaflets will not be sufficient. The annual report contains examples of where through the partnership agreement it has successfully provided support to residents to meet Care Act requirements.
21. The future rollout of the government's national welfare reform, Universal Credit (UC) Full Service rollout, due to commence on the Island from May and July 2018 is likely to lead to an increase in demand for AIG support in terms of housing, budgeting support, debt management and discretionary support needs. National trends of where UC Full Service has already begun to be rolled out suggest a number of difficulties in terms of delays in UC awards and payments, and the impact that this has had to claimants being able to manage their housing, financial budgets and day to day AIG needs. The partnership agreement helps to ensure that service users are provided with access to AIG to enable discharge of the council's statutory duties in a number of areas (eg housing, social care, benefits and revenues).
22. Implementing the option to extend the partnership agreement for a further year will allow the council to look at longer term commissioning and future contract agreement needs through a procurement exercise, which will commence from April 2018 to prepare for any AIG provisions from 2019/20 financial year. This will take into consideration the emerging needs and abilities to align AIG provisions though the One Public Estate ambitions and AIG needs that are beginning to be formed through evaluation and evidence of need.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

23. The council, as a public body, is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
24. There are no direct equality and diversity implications of this report as it is noting the annual report performance, and seeking to extend the existing agreement, as enabled

by the partnership agreement terms, by a further twelve months from 2018-19. AIG services are accessed by many of the most vulnerable people in society. There is the potential for people who have protected characteristics to be affected by any changes in the council's approach to AIG, should the present agreement come to an end without due regard to further AIG service needs.

PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

25. The partnership agreement with Isle Help includes provisions that will enable the council and Isle Help to better deliver the joint partnership strategy by sharing premises and equipment, if that is assessed to be the most effective approach. The potential sharing of premises is currently being scoped as a project between the partners through the One Public Estate and property rationalisation programmes. The intention is that the project will be implemented over the coming 12 to 18 months of the partnership agreement through a review of all face to face AIG provisions currently provided through the partnership in Newport. This will seek to centralise AIG partnership resource provision through the potential use of County Hall as a One Stop AIG Hub and through the wider ambitions of the Coordinated Access project determined through the health and social care local care system.

OPTIONS

26. Option 1 – Cabinet chooses to note the contents of the partnership agreement annual report.
27. Option 2 – Cabinet notes and approves the request by the partnership parties to extend the agreement for a further year from 1 July 2018 (as per the existing option contained within the partnership agreement), for an agreed annual funding level of £151,200,
28. Option 3 – Cabinet notes and declines the request to extend the existing AIG partnership agreement at the expiry of the three year period (2017/18) and transfer responsibility for such AIG provision services to the council to provide.

RISK MANAGEMENT

29. Risks have been managed as far as possible through a form of partnership development and governance arrangements that builds on the council's experience of partnership working. The partnership executive steering group has sought to implement performance management and monitoring arrangements to understand what AIG is achieving and to help determine where emerging needs through AIG can be responded to as a partnership to support statutory service provisions and the wider needs of the community.
30. Option 1 - There are minimal risks associated with members agreeing to note the contents of the report.
31. Option 2 – The continuation of the formal partnership arrangements with Isle Help consortium members will continue to provide the opportunity for the council to have greater influence over the wider provision of AIG services, while not having to provide the same itself. A sound and effective partnership will, however, reduce the risk of inadequate service or business failure on the part of the council and independent

providers, and should continue to develop a more community led AIG service in the future.

32. The partnership requires council leadership capacity and significant degree of council involvement in order to ensure that potential benefits are recognised across the council. Leadership or commitment failure would result in a financial and reputational risk. Operational risk would also arise as a result of an inability, despite council funding, to find a way of making services financially effective and sustainable without public funding. The failure of the proposed partnership to adapt to reduced funding may increase the costs of providing for preventable public and service user demand, and the cost of responding to inadequately effective or accessible AIG.
33. The risks of formal partnership have been agreed during the creation of the agreement and that adequate protection for each party is set out in terms of governance, liabilities, termination arrangements and other common aspects that protect partners. The proposed extension to the agreement will therefore manage the operational, reputational and financial risks that a partnership may represent to the council through the existing agreement arrangements.
34. Option 3 - Ceasing the partnership agreement and funding of key provider organisations will significantly reduce the capacity of the voluntary sector AIG service providers to meet both current and future demand. This would have a knock on effect on the wider AIG sector, including fragmentation and the loss of current consortium arrangements.
35. There is a financial and operational risk that lack of public access to independent AIG will result in increased demand for council provision and for costly council services at a time when the council is not able to directly provide new services and has made considerable changes to its face to face offer. As outlined within the Legal section, the Care Act has, from April 2015, created new duties and responsibilities for the council and has in turn resulted in a need for the council to provide better access to information and advice in discharging its social care functions. In addition, there is the further rollout of Universal Credit during 2018/19. The council may also suffer reputational impact arising from failure to invest in the development of well-used community services for supporting AIG provisions.
36. To decline the extension request of the agreement under the current arrangements provides the council with a dilemma; not only in terms of the ongoing partnership developments to align AIG face to face provisions within a One Public Estate approach, but also in resolving its commissioning and procurement intentions in a realistic timeframe to be able to deliver access to AIG through any future contract or partnership arrangement. This may lead to a loss of confidence in the council and subsequent reputational damage should it be perceived that the council is withdrawing from providing support and funding from a key part of the local voluntary and community sector that is supporting the council and wider health system to support AIG provisions. Uncertainty may lead to business failure, which may increase demand for council services and reduce the scope for short term partner involvement in changes being made by the council in response to future funding and commissioning intentions.

EVALUATION

37. Option 1 - This report reviews the progress that has been made by the strategic partnership between the council and the Isle Help consortium in addressing the AIG needs during the second year of the agreement. Its purpose is to inform cabinet members of the impact of the work done to date and the focus of the work to be started in the final year of the existing agreement, rather than to provide a range of options for future activity. Consequently, Cabinet members are asked to note the contents of the report.
38. It is considered that option 2 will enable the continuation of the formal partnership working arrangements with Isle Help and would continue to secure services and investment in the voluntary sector and in AIG services for the Isle of Wight. The existing partnership agreement permits the continuation of AIG services provided by the key Isle Help members, and investment in AIG infrastructure. Isle Help members not currently funded via the proposed agreement will continue to work within the consortium. An extension of the agreement for a further 12 months has been agreed at £151,200 and is within the budget available to continue to meet not only the needs of vulnerable Islanders, but ensure there are no gaps in provision that will impact unduly on statutory services. This will enable:
- i. The continuation of the One Public Estate ambitions and strategy that seeks to align AIG provision to work in partnership; and
 - ii. Continue to model and evaluate future needs for AIG provisions for a future procurement and commissioning route.
39. The agreement commits parties to continuing to develop and implement a strategic partnership strategy that will deliver the aims and objectives set out in the agreement. These include:
- (a) A focus on ensuring council and independent AIG services that are sustainable into the future;
 - (b) Public satisfaction and evidence of wellbeing;
 - (c) An emphasis on prevention that reduces crises and demand for costly public services;
 - (d) Building efficiency by managing duplication among providers and between sectors, and reducing costs by sharing assets, resources and overheads;
 - (e) Moving to new ways of providing access to services, including more co-ordination and sharing of face to face provision, and a greater use of digital options;
 - (f) Sharing service standards, training and reporting arrangements across organisations;
 - (g) Revenue generation, and;
 - (h) Enhancing relationships between organisations.
40. Option 3 - Declining to extend the partnership agreement or deferring approval, would require the council to reconsider options for commissioning AIG services. The main options would be to cease funding of independent services, tender for provision, or to resume grant funding of AIG providers.

41. Any significant reduction in funding or cessation in the existing partnership agreement for AIG services is unlikely to result in a significant reduction or cessation in the demand from services users of the same. In essence people will continue to need and want access to advice, information and guidance and the council will be in a position where it will need to meet this demand through another mechanism. This would result in a saving in the provision of the AIG service but increase costs to council service areas in meeting new demand where it links to their statutory duties. In addition any significant reduction or cessation in funding and the agreement at this time would result in voluntary sector providers losing their core funding and thereby impact directly on the ability of the voluntary sector to continue operating to the same level or committing to wider co location and joint working arrangements. The demand for AIG services is increasing and Option 3 would result in the loss of the current benefits where providers are working towards a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to the provision of advice, information and guidance. In addition, the council's own plans for re-configuring One Public Estate public facing services and collaborative working would lose the involvement of strong independent sector partners.

RECOMMENDATION

42. Option 1 –Cabinet notes the contents of the partnership agreement annual report in accordance with option 1

and

Option 2 –Cabinet notes and approves the request by the partnership parties to extend the agreement for a further year from 1 July 2018 (as per the existing option contained within the partnership agreement), for an agreed annual funding level of £151,200.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

43. [APPENDIX](#) – Isle Help CIC Annual Report 2016-17.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

44. [Report to the Executive: The future of independent advice, information and guidance services. 10 February 2015.](#)
45. [Report to the Executive: The future of independent advice, information and guidance services. 14 May 2015. Including the Appendix 1 link to the strategic partnership agreement](#)

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