

Written statement of a non-key officer decision
Director for children's wellbeing

Title	Provision of children's rights and advocacy service
Decision maker	Director for children's wellbeing
Date of decision	15 May 2018
Report exemption class	Open
Purpose	To make a decision on the delivery of the children's rights and advocacy service from August 2018.
Decision	(a) That the children's rights and advocacy service is provided by the council's corporate customer information and equality team from 1 August 2018, at an annual cost of £48k.
Reason for the decision	As set out in the report. Documents relating to this decision are available at http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=50025876
Consultation	
Options considered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do nothing. The implication of doing nothing would be that the existing contract would expire on 31 July 2018. This is not recommended as the council has a statutory duty to provide advocacy for looked after children, who request representation, including making complaints. The service also undertakes non-statutory work by supporting children with disabilities and children open to social care who are a child in need or on a child protection plan. 2. The current contract could be extended for two years on an as-is basis or by reducing to provide statutory functions only. Continuation as-is would not help the council to achieve its medium term financial strategy (MTFS). Provision of only statutory functions would mean that children subject to child protection would no longer be able to access advocacy, which could also risk criticism by Ofsted at a future inspection. Advocacy provides a valuable opportunity to gather feedback from children that could help the local authority to improve the quality of its children's social care services, however the provider has indicated an unwillingness to facilitate such a feedback pathway. For

	<p>these reasons, a contract extension is not recommended.</p> <p>3. To tender a new contract. Existing staff are on terms and conditions above the sector pay, which is likely to discourage providers from tendering. Past experience is that very few responses have been received when a tendering exercise has been undertaken, and that the provider market is small in this sector. Recent experience of a neighbouring authority also suggests that no bids would be received due to the low contract value.</p> <p>4. For the service to be brought in-house and be redesigned deliver statutory work only. Whilst potentially annual savings of £35k could be made, redundancy costs of £14,500 may apply in year 1. This option is not recommended, as there is a risk Ofsted would be critical of non-statutory work ceasing. Furthermore, reduced staffing capacity would allow for little flexibility or cover to offer a responsive service during periods of holiday or absence.</p>
Declarations of interest	
Call-in expiry date (decisions are not subject to call-in where special urgency provisions apply)	21 May 2018

<p>Officer:</p> <p>Director for children's wellbeing (Chris Baird)</p>	<p>Date 15 May 2018</p>
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