

<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Cabinet member health and wellbeing</b>
<b>Decision date:</b>	<b>Monday 18 December 2017</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Recommissioning of services to support WISH</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Senior commissioning officer</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to:

- the strategic nature of the decision, and
- the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose and summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to bring into the council the content management and support / promotion of the WISH (Wellbeing Information and Signposting in Herefordshire) website.

WISH is the council's main information and advice service for wellbeing and support for adults, children and families in Herefordshire. It forms a key part of the strategic approach to wellbeing and prevention.

WISH has two elements;

- Technical maintenance and hosting of a website with information, signposting and advice

- Development, content management and support / promotion of the website

This report covers the second element only.

The current support and development service was commissioned in 2015 from Services for Independent Living (SIL). The original focus of this service was to provide an in-person information and signposting hub to use and complement the website. However, experience has demonstrated that aspects of this service are not required and it is to be discontinued in its current form. The SIL service has therefore already been changed to help transition to an approach focused on promoting and extending the online content of WISH. As a result, there will be no telephone or face to face information and advice offer as part of WISH from 2018.

The contract with SIL will expire in March 2018. The role required to support and complement the online WISH service has changed significantly since 2015 and needs to evolve yet further from April 2018. It is proposed to deliver an in-house service which will focus on developing and promoting the content of the website, maintaining the quality and supporting its additional interactive technology. An extended and fully functioning WISH service is required to ensure it is a current and credible offer, to enable the council's strategic wellbeing approach and to ensure an effective whole system offer of information, advice and signposting across the county.

Technical maintenance and hosting of the WISH website is commissioned from Public Consulting Group Ltd until May 2020.

## Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the development and delivery of an in-house service to manage the content and support / promotion of WISH is approved; and**
- (b) authority is delegated to the director for adults and wellbeing to approve the final service delivery model and its implementation from 1 April 2018, with a maximum service value of £90k per annum.**

## Alternative options

1. The option to re-commission a WISH service in its current form. The current service, contracted since 1 April 2015, is an information, advice and signposting hub, which provides an in-person wellbeing service, using the WISH website to signpost and enable service users to independently source information. This option is not recommended since monitoring data shows demand on the hub is low and the approach is not cost-effective. It is clear that signposting to, and the use of, the WISH online service can more effectively be carried out and promoted by universal services.
2. The option to commission a revised WISH service via a competitive procurement process. This option is not recommended. A soft market testing exercise was undertaken to assess market interest in the light of the limited contract value and requirement for a diverse combination of skills. It demonstrated that there was no apparent equivalent service already being provided by the market and the combination of skills and resources required is not readily available from potential providers.

3. The option not to have any service to support the WISH website. This option is not recommended. Without dedicated staff time and expertise, the content on the website will quickly become outdated and the overall focus and presentation of the service and its reputation will decline rapidly. WISH is not yet being used widely or consistently within the council, or across commissioned, health and universal services and the third sector. Work is required to promote and embed its use and ensure that this is sustained. The proposed service is essential to maintain the quality and relevance of WISH and to support its new interactive platforms and functions. In addition, WISH is complementary to the delivery of the council's adult social care pathway, as the mainstream source for wellbeing and community-based information utilised by the public and universal services in Herefordshire. Maintaining the content on WISH and maximising and promoting its use is therefore essential. The skills and expertise for this are different from those held by the council's communications team.

## Key considerations

4. The WISH website is an important element within Herefordshire Council's strategic approach to prevention and wellbeing. The council is committed to enabling and promoting the role of local communities in meeting the needs of people without them having to resort to formal health or social care. This is demonstrated to offer better wellbeing outcomes, an improved experience for individuals, and a more sustainable delivery model. The WISH website aims to offer a single place for comprehensive wellbeing information in Herefordshire and, in order to be effective, it requires:
  - Continued editing and quality assurance
  - Promoting and embedding in communities and universal services as the single place for comprehensive wellbeing information
  - Support to allow the website to become fully interactive
5. An in-person information and signposting hub is not specifically required in order to meet the legal responsibilities placed upon councils to provide advice and support services, as defined in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. This is because:
  - The re-designed adult social care pathway and changes within children's services mean that in-person wellbeing information and advice is already being provided via a number of methods across the council
  - The impact of requirements from the Care Act was in practice not as significant as had been anticipated
  - Planned implementation of care accounts and caps under the Care Act has been deferred indefinitely
  - Performance monitoring data shows that demand on the existing hub is low, despite continued efforts to promote the service
6. The new carers strategy identifies information, signposting and advice for carers as a key priority. Upcoming re-commissioning of support for carers will include a carer specific service which incorporates in-person and telephone advice, funded through resources previously allocated to the WISH hub. That service will be expected to focus around the WISH website, help to grow carer specific content and make optimum use of its enhanced interactive features. The upgraded WISH website will have extended content for carers, including interactive functions. The carers service due to be re-procured in December 2017 will help support carers to interact with and get the most from WISH and additionally, there may be opportunities for some synergy with the carers register.

7. A soft market test exercise has been conducted recently to determine the capacity of the market to meet the revised requirements to support WISH. Three submissions were received from a diverse range of providers. The responses showed:
  - There was no equivalent service already being delivered in the market
  - The combination of skills and resources required were not readily available from any single provider
  - Providers tended to focus on only one or two aspects of the service rather than detail how they might deliver the entire service required within the budget
8. Throughout the past two years, the council has devoted significant officer time to the WISH project. This work has focused on developing the online offer and writing and editing the extensive narrative content. From April 2018, there is an expectation that all work associated with WISH will be incorporated and resourced within the new service, other than the technical maintenance and hosting of the website itself which is managed under an existing contract with PCG until May 2020.
9. Performance monitoring of telephone calls to the WISH Information and Signposting Hub shows that approximately 40% are passed to the adult social care advice and referral team to provide a response to the query. Increased resilience and training within the advice and referral team as part of the re-designed adult social care pathway will ensure that additional demand as a result of the closure of the IAS Hub is anticipated and managed.
10. Employing staff within the council to provide the WISH support service would ensure they were well connected and suitably placed to undertake the partnership work with Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Wye Valley NHS Trust, 2gether NHS Foundation Trust, West Mercia Police and others to promote and embed the use of WISH. External providers often find locating and establishing such connections difficult. It would also be flexible in responding to changing requirements.
11. As part of the council's core strategic approach to prevention, the service will be located within prevention and wellbeing as part of the adults and wellbeing directorate. However, in developing the service and recruiting staff it is intended to draw upon the skills and experience within other parts of the council, including adults' and children's social care, communications and Hoople.
12. An in-house service could be mobilised easily within the timescale and with minimal risk. A detailed project plan has been prepared. The timetable for the in-sourcing and recruitment of a service to support WISH is shown below:

December 2017	Writing of job descriptions and job evaluation. Consideration of TUPE
January 2018	Recruitment
February and March 2018	Training and mobilisation
End March 2018	Existing contract ends. New service commences

13. A communications strategy will be agreed with the outgoing provider, Services for Independent Living, to ensure the public and stakeholders are aware of the changes to the services and the way it is operated.
14. The progress of the service will be monitored and reported regularly. There will be a full review of WISH and the service, and a report will be presented to the Cabinet member for health and wellbeing in late 2019, to consider options for further development in the light of the circumstances and requirements at that time.

## **Community impact**

15. The council's corporate plan includes a commitment to enabling people to live safe, healthy and independent lives. The WISH website is intended to be the central point of information for wellbeing in Herefordshire and for connecting people with their communities.
16. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2017, 'Understanding Herefordshire', details that the county is predominantly rural, with a higher than average population of people aged over 65. This presents unique challenges in terms of delivering services across the full diversity of the population. Embedding WISH into universal services and communities will ensure it becomes a whole system service, making it accessible to all.
17. The proposed interactive functions within WISH will make wellbeing information and advice increasingly more accessible to those who may have difficulties accessing services via other means. As part of a wider wellbeing approach, WISH will assist in addressing the main priorities in the health and wellbeing strategy, including those for children and mental health. It will enable people to find out about and use local informal and community based services to promote their physical and mental wellbeing.
18. There are no negative implications for looked after children or the council's role as a corporate parent arising from the recommendations. WISH includes narrative content about the 'local offer' for disabled children and their carers, which will be coherently connected to the council's corporate website. Other aspects of children's services will also be included on WISH, where the information relates to health and wellbeing and is not already detailed on the corporate website.

## **Equality duty**

19. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
20. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in its decision making, in the design of policies and the delivery of services. The WISH website is an important tool for the delivery of wellbeing advice in Herefordshire and for connecting people to what is available within their communities. Part of the focus of the proposed WISH support service will be about promoting and embedding the WISH website within communities and universal services, including using WISH as a tool for social prescribing, so that it becomes accessible to all residents of Herefordshire, including those with protected characteristics under S149 of the Equality Act 2010. In particular, it will support people in very isolated rural communities and those without access to transport.
  21. An equality impact assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix A.
  22. WISH will assist users to maintain their independence and exercise choice and control over how and where to find information and advice through a variety of means, including using mutual support groups or social media.

## **Resource implications**

23. The total cost of information and signposting services will remain at £130k per annum, which is the current value of the contract with SIL. The in-house WISH support service will be delivered at a cost of £90k per annum. The remaining £40k has been redirected to support specific and complementary information and signposting for carers. This was included in the Carers Strategy for Herefordshire decision report approved by Cabinet in July 2017 and has been incorporated into re-procurement of services for carers.
24. No budget pressures will arise from the above recommendations. The service will be funded to the end of March 2019 via the Better Care Fund element received for the implementation of the Care Act 2014. If this funding doesn't continue past the current approved two year plan date of March 2019 then alternative funding will need to be identified or a corresponding saving made.

## **Legal implications**

25. The council has a number of statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, section 1 of which provides the duty to promote individual wellbeing. The WISH website provides wellbeing information. Section 4(1) Care Act 2014 requires each council "to establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers."
26. The contract with SIL commenced on 1 April 2015 for a period of three years. The contract does not provide for further extensions and will terminate on 31 March 2018.
27. Following a review of the services being provided, the council proposes to deliver a different service and provide it in-house, focussing on developing and promoting the content of the website. No procurement exercise is required.

28. SIL will have staff working on the contract the council procured. Where services which were previously undertaken by a contractor and are taken on by the council, The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (as amended) can apply. In such circumstances, staff working in the service may transfer to the council on their SIL terms and conditions. However, for the regulations to apply there must be a transfer of a service and as the service to be provided from 1 April 2018 is different, the regulations may in fact not apply.

## Risk management

29. **Risk:** Allowing the current information and support hub contract to expire may be challenged. **Mitigation:** A review of the existing model and changes to the way wellbeing information and advice is being provided by the council have demonstrated that the hub service is no longer required. The WISH website will need to be embedded in communities and universal services and accessible to those with wellbeing needs who do not use social care services. Ongoing work is required to deliver this. Those people with existing social care needs, seeking information or signposting, may have these met through the revised adult social care pathway or through a variety of provision for young people and families.
30. If the recommendations were not approved, significant risks would arise for the council and local residents. A service to support WISH and potentially new carer services would be delayed beyond April 2018, leading to a temporary loss of all service, disrupting the improvement of the adult social care pathway and opportunities for carers, which may lead to additional costs.
31. Risk: The Care Act element of funding within the Better Care Fund doesn't continue past the current approved two year plan date of March 2019. **Mitigation:** The council will need to find alternative sources of funding or identify a corresponding saving.

## Consultees

32. Stakeholders, including various contracted providers, have been consulted either directly about options for sustaining and developing WISH, or more widely within the context of how to effectively provide information and advice resources to carers. Responses from consultees have generally recognised the need for the service supporting WISH to evolve and connect with wider preventative approaches. Herefordshire Carers Support (HCS) has challenged the idea of WISH having any particular role in information and signposting for carers, advising that an entirely separate service, focused solely on carers, is required. The council has engaged with carers who use services provided by HCS, in addition to carers who access other services, to discuss the most effective way to deliver information and advice. In contrast to the view expressed by HCS, the carers were in agreement that information and advice across the whole system needed to be in one place for all potential users, and delivered in a coherent way, with WISH being an established, central route which could be utilised by carers and professionals, including carers services.
33. The market was consulted via a soft market testing exercise and three submissions were received. Each focussed on delivering only part of the re-configured service, rather than providing a comprehensive solution.

34. The Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the development of WISH on 27 February 2017. The committee made suggestions relating to additional interactive functions including "live help", to aid the effective promotion of WISH and ensuring its accessibility to the public. These suggestions are being scoped for consideration by the executive in relation to future improvements to the online service.
35. Council members have been consulted via group leaders on the proposed service to support WISH and the in-house approach. No comments have been received.
36. The Making it Real Board consists of people who access the council's social care services and seeks to improve the availability of good quality information. The board has continued to be actively involved in the development of WISH, including in the current improvements to the online service. Members' views suggest that the hub service, as originally operated, has not been widely utilised.

## **Appendices**

37. Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

## **Background papers**

38. None identified