CABINET

12 February 2014

COMMISSION FOR A JOBSEEKER MENTORING SERVICE

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

OS25, 23 January 2012 – Young People and Employment Informal Scrutiny Group – Recommendations

CAB2449, 13 February 2013 - Revised Change Plans 2013/14

CL90 (Appendix 1), 8 January 2014 - www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/files/19125/CL090.pdf

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Economy Prosperity Change Plan for 2013/14 includes an action to commission a one-to-one mentoring service to help jobseekers to prepare for and find long term work or training. The proposal – which has its origins in an Informal Scrutiny Group in 2011 which examined the issue of youth employment - is supported by a wide range of local stakeholders working with benefits claimants and jobseekers of all ages.

The service would be operated on a professional basis but delivered by volunteers from a range of backgrounds and ages across the Winchester District, overseen by a steering group with a good understanding of this area of work.

Members are asked to approve the commissioning of this service, including the provision of the appropriate budgetary provision over the coming two financial years as set out in the Resources section of this Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That approval be given under financial procedure rule 7.8 for the budget carry forward of £60,000 from 2013/14 (identified in table 1 of the resources section), with £20,000 to carry forward to 2014/15 and £40,000 to 2015/16. Within this, approval is also sought to Vire budget of £40,000 from the Revenues Section budget (funded by one-off new burdens funding). This is to support the commissioning of a Jobseeker Mentoring Service on a two year trial basis, at a total cost of £95,000.
- That the draft Specification at Appendix 1 be approved, subject to any minor amendments arising from the current consultation work with local stakeholder organisations;
- That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) to make any appropriate amendments to the Specification arising from the above process, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, prior to it being issued;
- That the evaluation criteria set out in the Specification be approved and authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, to evaluate bids and award the commission.
- That subject to 4 above, approval be given for the invitation of bids for provision of a Jobseeker Mentoring Service, incorporating the requirements of the Specification at Appendix 1 to the Decision Notice, by advertising on the South East Business Portal with immediate effect.

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REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES)

DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At the end of 2011, the Council established an Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) to consider the issue of 'young people and employment'. The deliberations and recommendations of this Group have helped to develop a range of activities intended to provide greater support for young people seeking to enter the workplace. These have included the Council's own apprenticeship programme; an employer engagement commission to encourage more businesses to provide work placements and apprenticeships across the District and the introduction of new volunteering targets in core grant agreements with community organisations.
- 1.2 One of the recommendations from the ISG was to establish a job club in Stanmore, but following advice from the existing job club in Winnall, it became clear that a weekly, place-based service operated on traditional lines might not be the best approach.
- 1.3 The idea of one-to-one mentoring support came about in discussion with voluntary organisations working with jobseekers of all ages. They emphasized that the journey towards employment starts before the traditional job hunt; it involves dealing with a range of personal challenges (health, mental well being, family issues, accommodation, training) for which help is often available, but from a confusing range of agencies. They also felt that jobseekers would respond better to support provided in a more personalised way.
- 1.4 Consequently, the Economy Prosperity Change Plan for 2013/14 includes an action to commission a mentoring service, operated on a professional basis but delivered by volunteers from a range of backgrounds and ages across the Winchester District (report CAB2449 Appendix 1 refers).
- 1.5 This Report seeks approval for officers to proceed with the procurement of this service for a two year trial period, based on the draft Specification at Appendix 1. It also seeks authority for a budget carry forward of £60,000 from 2013/14 to make appropriate financial provision for the two year contract.

2 <u>Supporting Jobseekers</u>

- 2.1 Although the proposed commission had its origin in an Informal Scrutiny Group looking into youth unemployment, it also aligns with the Government's aspirations to reduce welfare dependence.
- 2.2 The Winchester District area has a low unemployment rate, by comparison with almost any other part of the country, and as such stakeholders agree that action to support jobseekers is possible on a personalised basis. Trials have shown that a one-to-one approach is effective, and there are useful lessons to be learnt from the Supporting Families and Integrated Offender Management programmes, where a 'one plan' approach is made possible by providing a joined up response from support agencies. The mentors would similarly be able to signpost and co-ordinate access to such support, whilst providing personal encouragement and practical help for jobseekers.
- 2.3 The experience of running the Council's Employer Engagement commission in 2013 has shown that employers are very willing to provide work placements, apprenticeships and new employment opportunities but that the jobseekers can be reluctant to take these up for a wide range of reasons. Officers and stakeholders believe that the Council is well placed to bring about an initiative which explores, on an individual basis, these reasons and seeks to deal with each one so that the jobseeker feels ready and able to work, wherever this is a genuine possibility.
- 2.4 The <u>NOMIS</u> website for official labour market statistics shows over 3,600 people receiving key out-of-work benefits in the Winchester District, with 2,700 officially 'unemployed'. However, it is considered that official figures to do reflect the full extent of worklessness, with some choosing not to claim benefits and others being 'under-employed' (working fewer hours or at a level below they one they are qualified for). The same website, in fact, shows 5,100 people as 'wanting a job'.
- 2.5 Although there is no agreement about the lifetime cost of unemployment to the taxpayer, in terms of benefits payments, lost productivity, healthcare and crime, research carried out by the London School of Economics back in 2007 suggested that:
 - the average lifetime cost to the taxpayer of unemployed young person is £97,000
 - £22m per week was then the cost of Jobseeker's Allowance to support under 24s
 - £10m per day is the cost of lost productivity arising from youth unemployment, and
 - £23m per week is the cost of related youth crime.

A more recent Government study shows the cost of unemployment to be around £2,810 for every household in Britain.

2.6 At time when Government is encouraging local councils to develop action plans to support communities through Welfare Reform, and in particular through the forthcoming introduction of Universal Credit, there is increasingly close working between Council teams and external partners to help benefit claimants off benefits and into work.

- 2.7 As a major provider of social housing in the District, the Council has an obvious interest in helping tenants currently on benefits into employment or training: this may both improve their financial position and diminish future need for housing, when there is continued pressure on housing waiting lists.
- 2.8 Consultation with a wide range of organisations shows a high level of support for the concept of a 'one to one' service. This is intended to help individual jobseekers work through a range of personal challenges with the support of the appropriate agencies to the point where they feel able to work, and indeed to provide continued mentoring until they are actively employed, or engaged in long term volunteering or training.
- 2.9 The Council has already received 'New Burdens' funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government to support the transition from Council Tax Benefit to the local Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme. Because the Revenues Team has succeeded in managing most of the transition within existing budgets, officers propose the redeployment of some of this funding towards a scheme aimed at reducing the overall number of claimants by helping them to find work. This fits with the objectives of the Scheme, which encourages people to work by increasing the level of earned income allowed (i.e. not taken into account) in calculating individual CTR entitlement.

3 The Specification

- 3.1 The draft Specification for the service is attached at Appendix 1, and is subject to some final consultation with voluntary organisations, public agencies, churches and other bodies able to provide professional insights and/or a potential source of volunteers.
- 3.2 The style of the specification is in keeping with previous commissions, the presentation of which has been complimented by those individuals and organisations bidding for work with the Council.
- 3.3 The specification includes evaluation criteria. Because a fixed fee is offered for the contract, the evaluation criteria focus on the quality of the service. Consequently, the scoring varies from the Council's usual 60:40 price:quality evaluation weighting.
- 3.4 Representatives of relevant stakeholder groups would be included on the evaluation panel, which will then evolve into a project steering group to ensure that the initiative provides a genuinely integrated service to jobseekers.

3.5 It is not known how many jobseekers might be helped by the commission as there are no direct benchmarks for this kind of service. However, bidders will be asked to identify performance indicators or targets which will seek to provide value for money – in terms of the return on the Council's investment – whilst reflecting the time that it is likely to take to establish a new service of this kind. For example, there will be a period at the outset of the contract during which volunteers will need to be recruited and trained before any mentoring can be provided.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- 4 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):
- 4.1 The commission supports the Economic Prosperity outcome of the Winchester District Community Strategy, whilst joint working across Council teams to secure the best results for local people supports our ambition to be an Efficient and Effective Council.
- 4.2 The procurement of this one-to-one Jobseeker Mentoring Service was included in the Portfolio Plan for Economic Development and approved at the January 2014 meeting of Full Council (CL90 (Appendix 1) which can be found at www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/files/19125/CL090.pdf)

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The Specification cites a value of £95,000 for a two year contract. Of this, £50,000 is allocated to the first year and £45,000 to the second. This is intended to provide for a slightly higher level of spend in the first year when there may be extra costs in establishing the project. Given that the intention is to let the contract towards the end of the current financial year, it is necessary to identify sufficient budget now in order to cover this commitment.
- 5.2 In order to support this project a budget carry forward of £60,000, identified in table 1 below, is requested. Out of this carry forward £20,000 is required in 2014/15 and £40,000 in 2015/16.
- 5.3 A total of £15,000 will be added to the General Fund budget and recharged to the HRA revenue account, bringing with it a requirement for the service to focus initially on Council tenants. This will be funded from existing HRA revenue budgets.

Table 1 – Financial Implications	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£
Proposed Revenue Expenditure				
Jobseeker Mentoring Service Commission		50,000	45,000	95,000
Total Cost of Services proposed expenditure	0	50,000	45,000	95,000
Proposed Budget Adjustments Economic Prosperity Commissioning budget Revenues Budget - Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (one-off new burdens funding)	-20,000 -40,000	-20,000		-40,000 -40,000
Recharge to HRA revenue budget		-10,000	-5,000	-15,000
Total Cost of Services budget adjustments	-60,000	-30,000	-5,000	-95,000

5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 5.1 Delivering a new service always carries a degree of risk, and the Specification requires a high level risk analysis to accompany each bid.
- 5.2 The evaluation panel will consider these risk analyses in selecting the preferred bidder.
- 5.3 One key financial risk relates to the viability and stability of the preferred bidder. This is a standard risk for any procurement, but in this instance where the service deals with vulnerable people it will be particularly damaging if the organisation delivering the service is unable to fulfil its contract. Colleagues in the Council's Finance Team will therefore be invited to assess financial management information documents supplied by the shortlisted three bidders before any final decision is made by the evaluation panel.
- 5.4 Given the nature of the client group, safeguarding and equalities issues are also prime areas for consideration. Community organisations with experience of working with such groups will be represented on the evaluation panel, which will in turn become the steering group for the contract period.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Draft Specification: Jobseeker Mentoring Commission

Appendix 1: Draft Specification

Winchester City Council Commission

Draft Specification

Volunteer Mentor Support for Jobseekers

Summary: Winchester City Council wishes to commission the creation of an effective and sustainable mentor support programme for jobseekers across the Winchester District. This should provide practical and moral support, coupled with basic advice and signposting, for unemployed residents of all ages and from all backgrounds. The objective is to reduce dependency on benefits and move jobseekers towards employment wherever practicable.

Deadline for bids: Bids from appropriate organisations and individuals should be submitted by **noon** *on XXX 2013*, in accordance with the requirements set out in section 3 of this specification.

1) Background Information

1.1Introduction

Over the last two years, Winchester City Council has introduced a commissioning approach to deliver solutions for identified local problems or make the most of new opportunities.

Whilst the Council has delivered work for many years through a variety of partner organisations, businesses and community groups, the approach seeks to open up the marketplace to allow a wider range of bidders to come forward – and to encourage more creative thinking around how best to provide projects and services.

Commissions are intended to increase transparency, and to deliver positive outcomes for local people in areas which they have said are important for them.

1.2 The Policy Context

The Winchester District Community Strategy (2010 to 2020) sets out three overarching outcome areas, in which the Council and its partner agencies are committed to delivering real change for local people. These are: Active Communities, Economic Prosperity and a High Quality Environment.

The Council's definition of Economic Prosperity is that 'everyone has enough'. In this instance, 'enough' signifies a decent home, a satisfying job and a good quality of life. Yet there are many pockets of deprivation in the Winchester

District, including urban neighbourhoods such as Stanmore and Winnall and more rural market towns such as Wickham.

Each commission issued by the City Council is designed to support the delivery of one or more of the outcomes of the Community Strategy, and this Jobseeker Mentoring Commission has been approved as part of the Council's Economic Prosperity Change Plan for 2013/14.

The Council's economic strategy includes a theme of making the most of the skills and ambitions of local residents. This commission is intended to address issues identified by stakeholders in discussions about this theme, and reaffirmed through a recent study into youth employment in the Winchester District. However, it also responds to the Government's programme of Welfare Reform and the introduction of Universal Credit as part of an action plan to reduce dependency on benefits.

As a major landlord of social housing in the District, the City Council has a direct interest in supporting its tenants – and in turn ensuring that they are equipped to pay their rent and enjoy the many benefits of living in Winchester.

1.3 Unemployment in the Winchester District
By any comparator, unemployment in the Winchester District is low. The
District is characterised by high skills levels, low unemployment rates and
high GDP. It is also, in many parts, an expensive place to live and shop,
meaning that those who are economically challenged are likely to feel
particularly isolated.

Job clubs of varying forms exist at Winnall, Stanmore, the Trinity Centre (a day centre for the homeless) and Winchester Discovery Centre (the library). There is also a wide range of personalised support provided by a local not-for-profit organisations, including the churches. In fact, most voluntary sector organisations – particularly those who are core funded by the City Council - are committed to building life and employment skills among their service users and volunteers, and work with other agencies to achieve this.

Discussions with a wide range of stakeholders have led to the conclusion that the provision of location-based services such as a weekly job club or appointments with Job Centre Plus advisors is not the most effective way to help jobseekers. This is particularly the case for those who are long term unemployed, or for whom there are other health or social issues which need to be overcome before seeking employment. Those who suffer from low self esteem or chaotic lifestyles are especially unlikely to present themselves an official office or centre, and may be challenged by the need to do so at a set time of day or day of the week.

It has therefore been proposed that a volunteer-based system of mentoring for jobseekers, which is professionally managed, would provide a more effective means of tackling the problem. This would see individual volunteers

assigned on a one-on-one basis to individual jobseekers, and staying with them to advise and support them through their journey to employment.

The volunteers would not need to have specialist skills, but would be trained to provide support such as:

- basic coaching
- signposting to specialist agencies and voluntary organisations locally that can deal with individual barriers to work
- practical help with working out journeys to interviews, training etc
- reassurance/encouragement, such as accompanying the jobseeker to interview, sharing ideas about personal development, ringing to follow up on new experiences
- help with constructing CVs, letters of application, job hunting.

The volunteer team would need to be drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, able to work across geographic areas, ages and demographic groups.

There is a strong network of agencies keen to support such work, including Job Centre Plus, but lacking the human resources to reach out on a one-to-one basis. Other organisations, such as Churches Together, offer a potential supply of volunteer power which has already been evidenced through successful initiatives such as the Street Pastors.

The concept is modelled on other areas of work (eg integrated offender management, troubled families) where key workers or lead agencies endeavour to ensure that those in their care are helped to access an integrated and tailored package of support whilst providing a stable, supportive and continuous presence in their lives.

2) The Commission

2.1 The Brief

This commission seeks to achieve the following outcome:

That an efficient and effective network of volunteer mentors be established, which demonstrably improves the life chances of local jobseekers in the Winchester District.

That the roll out of the service prioritises the City Council's own tenants, in recognition of the long term commitment to support both its tenants and the communities around them.

This brief sets out the nature of the commission, and provides further details about submitting a bid, the evaluation process and contractual arrangements.

Bids are invited from any individual or organisation in the private, public or voluntary sector with the appropriate expertise and capacity to deliver the commissioned work, as outlined below.

2.2 Expectations and Assumptions

Whilst the Council is interested in hearing from a range of potential providers, all of whom may approach this commission in different ways, there are some key expectations:

- a) the network could take up to two years to establish and pilot, and this funding in intended to last for the full set-up period as a minimum;
- there should be no anticipation of further funding from the City Council for ongoing project or revenue costs, although those bidding for the commission might like to identify sources of funding for future developments to enhance provision;
- there may need to be a trial period of operation and review built into the overall timescale for delivering this outcome, but this funding is to establish a functional jobseeker support service and not simply to test out a concept;
- d) potential providers will harness extensive volunteer power in delivering this commission, in line with the Council's Active Communities outcome, to extend the value of the commission;
- e) the recruitment of volunteers will be the responsibility of the commissioned organisation;
- f) volunteer mentors will be very carefully selected and well trained, and emotionally able to work with jobseekers.

2.3 Anticipated Characteristics of the Successful Bidder

The Council has no preconceived view about the type of provider suitable for this commission, but expects the work to be completed to a high standard. To this end, it is anticipated that the successful bidder will have knowledge, skills and capacity in some or all of the following areas:

- a track record of recruiting, training and deploying volunteers
- a high level of experience in mentoring / coaching
- practical experience of working with job seekers
- a thorough knowledge of agencies providing support for job seekers and the services they provide
- an understanding of the organisations working in and around our priority neighbourhoods – and particularly those in Council-owned housing - who may be able to support delivery of this commission
- knowledge of other funding streams which may be available to support this type of work
- a high level of familiarity with legal and operational requirements around safeguarding and equalities issues
- access to relevant statistics/evidence to provide a sound evidence base for the project
- excellent communications and interpersonal skills
- appropriate levels of safeguarding and diversity awareness/training
- excellent organisational and communication skills

2.4 Fee

The maximum fee for this commission is £95,000, payable over two calendar years. It is envisaged that £50,000 would be payable in the first year and £45,000 in the second, in recognition of the additional costs associated with starting up a service of this kind.

12.5% of the first year's fee would be payable on initiation of the contract. Staging of later payments can be negotiated at the outset of the project, according to predicted cash flow requirements.

There are no additional travel or other expenses, unless the Council specifically chooses to fund – on a one-off basis - goods or works (eg printing, venue hire) that are deemed to be required to fulfil the brief effectively and which are agreed in writing in advance.

It may be also be possible for the co-ordination to be done from the City Council's offices, to reduce overhead costs. Some training rooms may also be made available for free as part of the Council's in-kind support

2.5 Monitoring Arrangements

The successful provider will attend a contract initiation meeting with Winchester City Council's Assistant Director (Economy and Communities), the local Partnership Manager for JobCentre Plus and up to two other stakeholders.

It is considered that this commission will require support from a project team drawing together stakeholders such as JobCentre Plus, the City Council, the County Council, local voluntary organisations etc. An appropriate project management approach, with associated reporting, would be required.

A monthly meeting of the project team, including a short written report from the commissioned project co-ordinator, will be essential to ensure good coordination and optimum outcomes for jobseekers. Written reports should be provided a minimum of one week before each project team meeting.

A review meeting will be organised at 18 months with stakeholders summarising lessons learnt and considering proposals for future development of the service.

Finally, an end-of-project report will be required in order to trigger the final payment of the commissioning fee.

3) Making a Bid

3.1 Eligibility to Bid

This commission has been advertised on the South East Business Portal and via local and regional networks. Bids may be submitted by any organisation (private, public, voluntary sector) which considers itself able to fulfil the brief

effectively, or indeed by an individual on the same basis. Where individuals or organisations feel they would benefit from working together to deliver this project, the Council will accept bids from a combination of partners. However, the contract will only be with one lead individual or organisation and this lead partner must be made clear on the submission.

3.2 Timing

Date	Location	Activity
XX 2014	By email	Final deadline for bids
XX 2014	Winchester City	Evaluation panel considers written
	Council	bids
XX 2014	Winchester City	Interviews for shortlisted bidders
	Offices	(likely to be a list of three)
XXX 2014	Winchester City	Inception meeting
	Offices	

Please note these dates in your diary as they cannot be changed to accommodate individual bidders.

Please note that the interview panel will expect to meet the key personnel involved in delivering the project.

It is recognised that the exact timing and duration of the project may depend on the approach adopted to delivering it, but clearly there is a wish to establish the service as quickly as will allow for a good outcome.

3.3 Content of a Bid

There is no set format for a bid, but you must include the following information, and keep in mind the evaluation criteria:

- Full description of the organisation(s) including governance arrangements, or for individuals a current cv
- For lead organisations, a copy of the most recent annual accounts or other appropriate evidence where not available
- A clear description not exceeding 3 A4 pages of how you propose to deliver the commission, describing the expertise available for delivery and the measures of success which you would propose (excessively long or jargon-ridden bids are less likely to score well during evaluation)
- A basic project plan (eg simple Gantt chart) showing key milestones for the project)
- A breakdown showing how the money will be deployed
- A basic risk assessment
- Two referees for work of a comparable nature, and relevant to the proposed project team.

3.4 Evaluation Process and Criteria

Process: All bids will be evaluated in the following sequence:

- Shortlisting by a panel, which will include the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities); relevant Council colleagues; representatives from two or three local voluntary organisations, colleagues from other support agencies, one Councillor, and – if practicable – one job seeker
- Checks on shortlisted organisations by the Council's Finance Team: organisations deemed to present an unacceptable financial risk to the Council will be rejected;
- Take-up of references;
- Presentations by up to three individuals/organisations to the panel;
- Second interviews may be arranged if required.

Criteria: The evaluation criteria which will be applied to all bids are as follows:

- a. the ability and capacity of the bidder(s) to deliver the commission, based on:
 - approach to delivery of the commission (methodology, proposed Pls, familiarity with issues presented in the Background Reading section of this specification)
 - relevant skills and experience (including skills mix)
 - response to the brief, and to the commissioning approach more broadly (understanding of issues and opportunities)

max 35 marks

- recognition of and provision for the support needs of individuals from minority backgrounds as identified by Equalities Law (including safeguarding and equalities qualifications/policies, proposed access arrangements)
 - max 20 marks
- c. the capacity of the bidder(s) to deliver the commission, combined with the timescale set out for completing the project and the credibility of plans to make the project sustainable max 15 marks
- d. the stability and reliability of the bidder (track record, financial status and resilience of lead bidder, overall credibility of bid) max 10 marks
- e. value for money of the bid, such as day rates, added value, enhancements and potential impact of the project on job seekers. max 20 marks

3.5 Contracting Arrangements

Following the selection of the preferred bidder, a follow-up meeting may be arranged for further information or clarification. Assuming this is satisfactory,

there will be an inception meeting at which any contractual details can be finalised and a project timetable agreed.

A purchase order will then be issued, and – in combination with this specification and the successful bidding document – will form the contract. Please note that it can take up to two weeks to set up a new supplier on the Council's payments system, and another week for an initial payment after that period. Bidders may wish to factor this in to the project plan, if it is reliant on start-up funding.

4) Making a Bid

Please submit your bid electronically by noon on XXXX 2014 to: Eloise Appleby
Assistant Director (Economy and Communities)
Winchester City Council
at eappleby@winchester.gov.uk

Please mark the email 'Jobseeker Mentoring Commission' with your company/organisation name alongside it.

Ensure that the file size does not exceed 5MB otherwise it may fail to transmit.

For an informal discussion about the commission, contact Eloise on tel 01962 848 181 or email as above to arrange a phone appointment. You can also leave messages with support officer Rosie Clayton on 01962 848 269 (mornings only).

Background Reading

- Final Report of the Winchester City Council Informal Scrutiny Group into Youth Unemployment http://tinyurl.com/plneit9
- Youth unemployment mapping study for the Winchester District http://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/files/18574/Winchester-mapping-exercise-FINAL-1-.pdf
- Map of the Winchester District <u>http://www.winchester.gov.uk/about/ward-map/</u>
- Supporting Troubled Families web information http://www.winchester.gov.uk/community/health-wellbeing/supporting-families-winchester-district/
- Winchester District Community Strategy 2010 2020 (revised): http://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/files/18898/CAB2533.pdf

Ends