

Update Report for Audit Committee Meeting 30th Sept 2015

Background

In the last Audit Committee meeting on 10th July 2015, a quarterly update report was requested regarding the Internal Audit report of the administration of the Supporting People Programme Grant.

The Audit and Risk Manager identified three significant areas of weakness in the management of the Supporting People Programme. In particular the following were highlighted:

- 1. Insufficient evidence available to enable an assurance to be placed that grant terms and conditions, the Project Grants Manual and the Authority's Financial Procedure Rules had been fully complied with.**
- 2. The standard of documentation retained, and the evidence available to support eligibility and outcomes continued to be poor despite issues being previously raised by Internal Audit**

Progress to date

There has been an agreement that there are many areas of the Supporting People grant administration that need to be improved but also that not all elements can be remedied immediately. Some elements have been prioritised over others but the Supporting People Team is determined to deliver all the improvements needed. A meeting held with Internal Audit on 11th May 2015 which prioritised

- 1. Insufficient evidence available to enable an assurance to be placed that grant terms and conditions, the Project Grants Manual and the Authority's Financial Procedure Rules had been fully complied with.**

A meeting was arranged by the Supporting People team with Corporate Procurement and Internal Audit to discuss the contract position and what needed to be done to remedy this. This was seen to be the most critical element of the Internal Audit review and the element that should be prioritised. The meeting took place on 13th July 2015 and the following points were agreed in the meeting.

1. Floating Support projects – It was agreed that a timed project plan needs to be developed for the tendering of the new floating support. Interim contracts can be awarded to the existing floating support providers stating that they are being issued in preparation of a tender exercise.
2. Jointly funded supported living projects – These were issued with new contracts in 2014. Specifications need to include service profiles detailing breakdown of funding.
3. Older People alarm services – Paper to be prepared for SP Planning Group and/or DMT to consider future commissioning arrangements for the service
4. Remaining services – These services to be the focal point of the exception report to allow the opportunity for the SP Team to evaluate the services to be able to make an informed decision about whether these services are needed and if efficiencies can be found through negotiation with the existing service provider or whether these services need to be re-tendered.

This has enabled the Supporting People Team to prioritise and focus their work on the 4 work areas above in the short term.

An exception report was prepared around these 4 priorities to ask if the interim arrangements detailed in number 1 and 4 could proceed outside of the Contract Regulations. This was to enable the Supporting People Team to, in the case of number 1, to tender for a new countywide floating support service; and in the case of number 4, evaluate the services and decide on their future and apply the relevant tendering/contracting process.

The exception report was amended to be a status report which was agreed by the Section 151 and Monitoring Officers. The agreement of the report enabled the Supporting People Audit Certificate 2013/2014 to be signed and confirmation has been received from Welsh Government that has been received and accepted. The outstanding monies will be released to Carmarthenshire County Council by end September 2015.

The work identified in the four points above has become one of the short-term priorities for the Supporting People Team with target milestones in place to ensure that the work is delivered in line with the timetable identified in the Status report.

Progress has already been made on the four priority areas with some service evaluations nearing completion and the floating support proposal being consulted upon with current service providers.

Outside of these priorities, work has commenced on improving the grant administration systems. Regular contract review/monitoring meetings are being arranged for those services that were not being regularly monitored with these to commence in Autumn 2015.

The Supporting People Planning Group agenda has been amended and will require the Supporting People Team to report progress on the work identified in the Internal Audit report. It will also feature more prominently discussions and agreement of the Spend Plan and quarterly out-turn statements.

2. The standard of documentation retained, and the evidence available to support eligibility and outcomes continued to be poor despite issues being previously raised by Internal Audit

Work has commenced in this area with regular contract review meeting being organised with service providers though it has been agreed that is prioritised after the work needed to satisfy the first main area of concern. This will ensure that the standard of documentation is improved and the necessary monitoring is put in place to ensure that eligibility and outcomes are tested effectively.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the progress to date shows the commitment that the Supporting People Team and the wider Commissioning Division has to progress this work and improve so that the Supporting People Grant is managed to the standards that is expected by Carmarthenshire County Council.