

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 13th January 2025
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: Yes
Title of Report: **Extension of the contact for Healthwatch Southend**

Executive Director: Mark Harvey Executive Director Adults & Communities
Report Author: Jess Siggins, Lead Commissioner
Executive Councillor: Councillor Maxine Sadza Portfolio Holder Social Care and Healthier Communities

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility for the commissioning of a local Healthwatch service for their local authority area, in Southend-on-Sea, this is Healthwatch Southend. A local Healthwatch service gathers and represents the views of the public on health and social care services, ensuring that their feedback is used to improve these services. They also provide information and advice to help people access the care they need.
- 1.2. The current contract commenced on 1st April 2022 and is due to expire on 31st March 2025 and is £119,095 per annum.
- 1.3. The current contract can be extended by the Council for a further period of up to two years.
- 1.4. The commissioning team have undertaken a review to inform the commissioning recommendation for the extension of this service.

2. Recommendations

that Cabinet:

- 2.1. Agree to extend the current Healthwatch Southend contract for up to 24 months (or any part therein) until 31st March 2027 at a price of £125,050 per annum, subject to all necessary steps being undertaken to negotiate and finalise the extension of this contract.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 places statutory duties on local authorities to commission Healthwatch services. The local Healthwatch

Southend (HWS) has been commissioned by Southend-on-Sea City Council to act as an independent champion to give residents a stronger voice to influence, shape and challenge any issues that exists within health and social care.

- 3.2. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) allocates the Local Reform and Community Voices grant (LRCV) to fund Healthwatch services. A portion of funding for the Local Healthwatch service is also expected to be allocated from the larger Local Government Finance Settlement to the Council.
- 3.3. Following a standard competitive tender exercise in 2021, The Advocacy People were awarded the contract for the delivery of the Healthwatch Southend service with an initial term of 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2025 with the option to extend for a further 2 years or any part thereof to 31st March 2027.
- 3.4. From review of the services activity and reports, as well as case studies and feedback from residents, it is felt the service has had a positive impact on the local health and social care system, aligned to its aims as a local Healthwatch. Part of the services role is to provide scrutiny and feedback to the system, and the Healthwatch Southend service has published a number of reports and made recommendations to decision makers and system leaders (as well as the NHS Integrated Care Board), many of which have influenced resulting activity.

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1. Following review of service activity and performance and feedback, the commissioning team are satisfied that delivery against the service objectives and broader service performance is positive.
- 4.2. Engagement with and access to the service has increased throughout the contract lifetime and the provider has demonstrated the ability to adapt delivery to meet service needs and respond proactively to areas requiring improvement.

5. Other Options

- 5.1. **Decommission** - This is not recommended as this is a statutory service which will need to be replaced with some level of provision to meet minimum requirements.
- 5.2. **Go out to tender for a new/ revised service specification** - This is not recommended as the current provider is performing well and going out to tender risks destabilising service delivery and using staff resource with no evidence of any benefits while there is option to extend within the existing contract.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The service is currently funded at £119,095 per annum due to expire 31st March 2025. If approved, the service will be extended for up to 24 months (or any part therein), at a slightly increased contract value of £125,050 per annum, which accounts for an inflationary increase in cost.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. Sections 221 of Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Care Act 2007 imposes a duty on local authorities to make contractual arrangement for the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of health and social services. S221(1) requires each LA to ensure there are means in place to facilitate the carrying out for of specified activities to promote involvement and provide support for the involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services. the specified activities will include enabling people to monitor, and review, the commissioning and provision of local care services for the purpose of considering standards of local care and whether and how they could or ought to be improved. The activities also include obtaining the views of people about their needs for, and experiences of, those services and may involve making reports and recommendations to people responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising those services about how local care services could be improved. **The Council are required to commission a local Healthwatch service.**
- 7.2. The existing contract contains an option to extend the contract for a further period of up to a total of 2 years. The recommendation within this report will assist the Council to meet its statutory duties in this regard
- 7.3. If the current service were to discontinue the Council will be at risk of not meeting its statutory duties.
- 7.4. The terms and conditions of the contract will remain the same, except the initial Price paid for the services may be adjusted, as agreed between the Council and the service Provider. The contract reflects the Council has a Best Value Duty placed upon it and the Council can ask the Provider for evidence that it is receiving value for money (efficient, effectiveness & economy). If the Council request a revision to the contract, then the Price will be 1% less than the Consumer Prices Index.

8. Policy Context

Health and Social Care Act 2012 - [Health and Social Care Act 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

9. Carbon Impact

- 9.1. No changes are being proposed to the current contract so there will be no implications in relation to carbon impact.

10. Equalities

- 10.1. The purpose of the Healthwatch Southend service as a public function is to be independent of the Council and be the voice of residents across Southend to improve services and reduce inequity. Monitoring of impact is informed by

service engagement is built in contract management and will continue to be used to adapt and shape service delivery moving forwards

11. Consultation

11.1. Service user feedback is collated to understand how residents feel about their service, a review of this feedback illustrates that the service is well received.

12. Appendices

N/A

13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
Executive Director(s)	Mark Harvey	22/11/2024
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	26/11/2024
Monitoring Officer	Susan Zeiss	26/11/2024
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr M Sadza	08/11/2024