

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE – 17 DECEMBER 2013**

### **Healthwatch Oxfordshire**

#### **Report by Director for Social & Community Services**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background**

1. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, all (top tier) Local Authorities are responsible for commissioning a Local Healthwatch by April 2013. Local Healthwatch is the new independent consumer champion for people of all ages using health and social care services. It replaces the Local Involvement Network (LINK) and has a number of extended and statutory functions. There is a seat for a member of Healthwatch Oxfordshire on the Health and Wellbeing Board.
2. Healthwatch England was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012. It is hosted by the Care Quality Commission, but has independent statutory powers to act outside of Government influence. It provides national co-ordination of local issues of concern and a strong policy influence at a national level.
3. Healthwatch Oxfordshire is responsible for:
  - ensuring people are provided with or signposted to, information and advice about health and social care services
  - making the views and experiences of local people known to Healthwatch England and making recommendations regarding special reviews or investigations into areas of concern
  - promoting and supporting the involvement of people in monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services
  - obtaining the views of people about their needs and experience of local health and social care services and making these known to commissioners, providers and scrutiny committees.
4. Local Authorities were additionally responsible for commissioning the NHS Complaints Advocacy service from April 2013. In Oxfordshire this was commissioned regionally for one year. It is currently being tendered as part of a strategic approach to the commissioning of statutory advocacy services.

#### **Exempt Information**

5. Legal implications have been considered – a summary of that assessment and received advice is in **Annex 1**.

## CMDASC4

The public should therefore be excluded during consideration of the Annex because their discussion in public would be likely to lead to the disclosure to members of the public present of information in the following categories prescribed by Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended):

paragraph 5 – Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

6. Since it is considered that, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that disclosure would be to the detriment of the Council's ability carry out its duties as a public authority.

### **Healthwatch Oxfordshire 2013/14**

7. None of the bids to deliver Healthwatch Oxfordshire from April 2013 met the specified requirements, and a Contract Exemption was agreed in March 2013, allowing an interim arrangement to extend the existing contract with Oxfordshire Rural Community Council to deliver Healthwatch for 1 year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014, taking forward the contract they held for the Local Involvement Network.
8. The total funding for Healthwatch from central government for 3 years is approximately £385,000 per annum. This is not a ring-fenced budget. Approximately £320,000 was allocated to Oxfordshire Rural Community Council to deliver Healthwatch Oxfordshire in 2013/14.

### **Commissioning Healthwatch Oxfordshire 2014-16**

9. Following the 'failed procurement' a Healthwatch Reference Group was established, chaired by the Director for Social & Community Services. It invited key people to support the second phase of commissioning of Healthwatch Oxfordshire, given the determined ambition to secure a strong, robust and independent Healthwatch for Oxfordshire. A model emerged from discussions, which emphasised core characteristics required for Healthwatch to succeed in Oxfordshire. These included high-calibre influential leadership, and a lean infrastructure which drew on the breadth and depth of existing providers and networks in Oxfordshire. It additionally recommended the use of a Grant-in-Aid process rather than a formal contractual one, in order to maximise flexibility and creativity.
10. We are currently in the process of inviting individuals and organisations to bid to deliver Healthwatch Oxfordshire from April 2014. A number of routes are being used to generate interest, including through the South East Business Portal, networks and key contacts identified through the Healthwatch Reference Group and through a specialist Charity Recruitment Agency.
11. Following a shortlisting process, interviews will be held on 12 December 2013. A preferred provider will be recommended following these interviews and reported

to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care on 17 December 2013 (**Annex 2** to follow).

**RECOMMENDATION**

**12. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care is RECOMMENDED to accept the preferred provider as recommended and presented by the Director of Social and Community Services for the award of the grant for Healthwatch, following the interviews on 12 December 2013.**

JOHN JACKSON,  
Director for Social & Community Services

Contact Officer: Alison Partridge, Public Engagement Manager; Tel: 01865 323322  
[alison.partridge@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:alison.partridge@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

December 2013