**Market Engagement Workshop – Social Welfare and Advice**

**Date 20th May 2021 2pm – 4pm**

**Why hold a Market Engagement Workshop?**

* Understand the requirements of a new social welfare and advice service
* Explain requirements to providers
* Understand how much a new model will cost
* Understand how long it will take to implement
* Encourage applications to tender
* Stimulate innovative solutions

**Current Position**

Cheshire West and Chester Council commission a Social Welfare and Advice service which supports approx. 11,000 clients per year and processes approx. 12,000 individual cases per year. The current commission is a consortia arrangement with Citizen Advice Bureau (lead), West Cheshire Dial, and Age UK. The current contractual arrangements were due to end on 31st March 2021, due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on commissioning timelines a further 12 months extension to this contract was agreed and current arrangements will cease on 31st March 2022.

The aim of the Social Welfare and Advice Service is to ensure there is provision of free and accessible advice to the most vulnerable residents, who need assistance to resolve their issues. The current Social Welfare and Advice service offer the following advice: Benefits, Debt, Housing, Employment, community Care, Consumer rights, domestic abuse.

All Advice and information is delivered across a tiered system

Tier 1 – General Advice, Signposting

Tier 2 – Assisted advice and support

Tier 3 - specialist advice including tribunal representation.

The current cost of the commissioned Social Welfare and Advice provision is £530,000 per

annum; this equates to approximately £3.2 m over the 6 years of contract life. The revenue budget proposals set out in the approved council budget report for 2021-22 and indicative budget plans for 2022 – 2025 include a £79k annual saving (15%) against the social Welfare and advice budget from 2022 -2023 onwards. This results in maximum funding envelope of £451,000 per annum being available for the recommissioned service, providing an opportunity to review and redesign the service on recommission.

**Reasons for Market Engagement**

The existing model of social welfare and advice has remained largely unchanged for

ten years, consultation responses and engagement feedback indicate, residents of

Cheshire West and Chester would prefer a more effective and locally based model of

support with a clearer route to access and desired outcomes.

Consultation results indicate demand for a visible and locally based service with

evening and weekend access. There is demand for increased promotion, more

joined up provision and integrated services. Provision needs to be non-discriminatory

to all protected characteristics and person centred.

Delivery of the proposed model would be strengths based, with an emphasis on a

one conversation model, preventing escalation of need and duplication of support.

The proposed model will support residents to maintain their independence, challenge

issues which may lead to social exclusion and exercise their individual rights.

To achieve the saving of £79,000 in the 2022-2025 scenario through the

recommissioning of the contract in line with the proposed new model outlined in this

report.

**Market Engagement**

Cheshire West and Chester council commissioners would like to engage with the current market to

present proposals for the new model of social welfare and advice based on consultation findings.

Commissioners would also like to use this session to support the shaping of the contract

specification. This will be opportunity for innovative solutions and ideas to be shared to ensure

the aims of the social welfare and advice service are achieved.

The market engagement session will be held on 20th May 2021 from 2pm – 4pm via Microsoft teams

if you would like to request an invite please email: [stephanie.taylor@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:stephanie.taylor@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)