

Audit Committee Update – Supporting People Programme Grant

22nd March 2016

Introduction

In the last Audit Committee meeting on 18th December 2015 a brief update report was presented to show the progress that had been made by the Supporting People Team on the two key issues raised by the Internal Audit of the Supporting People Programme Grant for 13/14.

During this meeting the Audit and Risk Manager highlighted the weaknesses that were identified in the 2014/15 Audit of the Supporting People Programme Grant.

This update seeks to evidence the work that has been done since the last Audit Committee meeting and seeks to re-assure members that the work is progressing in a planned and timely way.

Progress to date

Progress is being made by the Supporting People Team on all the 4 elements that were agreed in the Status Report. However, this needs to be seen in the context of the wider Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) issues faced by the Welsh Government and Carmarthenshire County Council.

The British Government's Comprehensive Spend Review delayed the Welsh Government's budget announcement which had a knock-on effect on the announcement of the SPPG award for 2016/17. It was pleasing however that no cuts were announced for the SPPG though the Supporting People Team had invested much time in preparing for cuts that were widely expected to be between 5% and 20%.

The following is a brief summary of the actions completed to date:

1. Floating Support projects –Work on the tender has been ongoing with 2 market engagement events being undertaken. A number of service providers, both existing and new, have attended these events. This tender exercise has proved to be a complex one with TUPE arrangements being the main issue to be resolved. Meetings have taken place with colleagues in Legal Services and Corporate Procurement to resolve issues as they have arisen. The new locality based floating support service will now be tendered in April 2016, as opposed to January 2016, with new contract arrangements being in place in late Summer 2016.
2. Jointly funded supported living projects – Work is currently being undertaken as part of the Accommodation and Efficiency Programme around these services.
3. Older people alarm services –An evaluation of these services is nearing completion. Service users in have been consulted regarding the service and whether it is valued.

This will provide evidence for the report that will now be written for consideration by the Supporting People Planning Group on 12th April 2016.

4. Remaining services (Domestic Abuse, Homelessness, Young People and Substance Misuse static projects) - The prioritisation exercise as described in the last update is ongoing. It was suggested by the Supporting People Planning Group, in the meeting on 1st February 2016, that the Supporting People Team meet with the strategic leads of their services. This work has been completed and a report will be submitted to the Planning Group on 12th April. This will help the Supporting People Team timetable a schedule of tendering for these services. This process has already highlighted some services that are no longer strategically relevant which are to be considered for decommissioning.

The programme of contract review meetings is ongoing with a number of meetings scheduled for April and May 2016. These will be accompanied by monitoring visits to test eligibility for funding and also outcomes achieved.

The concept of the SPURS Gateway system was introduced in the last update. Work is continuing with colleagues in Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion so that Carmarthenshire can join the system early in 2016/17. There have been some teething problems with the system but most of these have now been resolved. As stated in December's update, this is seen as an important step for Carmarthenshire's Supporting People Team to take because this system will help with evidencing eligibility for SPPG funding as only those who have declare a housing related support need will be able to access SPPG funded projects. This is not in any way a replacement for good quality, on-site monitoring information but it does give an initial indication of eligibility.

Since the last Audit Committee, much work has been done to resolve the financial administration issues highlighted. Meetings have been held with the Senior Business Support Manager to discuss the parameters of the financial administration and monitoring required for the SPPG. To this end a member of staff is to be recruited to undertake the payments to service providers. This will release a more experienced member of the Team to undertake some financial monitoring of service providers. It has been agreed that the transfer of responsibilities will take place in April 2016. This will coincide with a full review of the grant administration procedures that the Supporting People Team currently uses to enable a more comprehensive system to be put into place in 2016/17. This can only improve the administration of the SPPG.

In the interim period, the invoice processing has had to be undertaken by the Temporary Team Leader – Supporting People. This has not been an ideal situation but in the absence of an alternative solution this has had to be prioritised over some of the Team's other work.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this report shows the progress that the Supporting People Team has made since the last Audit Committee meeting and the commitment remains to improve the administration and management of the SPPG in line with the standards expected by Carmarthenshire County Council.