

Report of: Housing Manager – Tenant and Community Involvement Service

Report to: Chief Officer for Housing Management

Date: 14 July 2015

Subject: West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service (WYCAS)

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The service has for a number of years partnered with WYCAS to provide independent account checks (free for the groups themselves) and WYCAS have now developed good working relationships with groups.
2. The offer of a free accounts health check is an important part of the TARA Service Offer - supporting and developing the cities Tenants and Residents Associations. The accounts check by WYCAS is a requirement to enable the service to provide a group with their annual support grant.
3. The partnership adds value in that it also gives good practice advice and support to groups, identifies training needs that are shared with the service.
4. The partnership is key in providing Leeds City Council with assurance that the collective turnover of TARA's (£176,000 during 2014/15) is well managed and is a positive influence in terms of attracting new funding from external sources.
5. The service is proposing the value of the partnership with Housing to be the equivalent to 188 hours at £46 per hour - £8,648 in total. The responsibilities and monitoring requirements of the partnership are outlined in a full partnership agreement (see attached).

Recommendations

5. That the Chief Officer for Housing Management agrees to a partnership with WYCAS to the value of £8,648.00. In line with the following Contract Procedure Rule Guidance 7.1:

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To seek Chief Officer approval for a 12 month partnership agreement with West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service (WYCAS), including the participation of BITMO if/when required. For the provision of free (at point of use) accounts checking and accountancy advice for all Tenants and Residents Associations and community groups working for the benefit of tenants of Leeds City Council and the wider community.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The service has for a number of years partnered with WYCAS to provide independent account checks to the growing number (currently around 80) Tenants and Residents Associations and community groups that the Housing Service support
- 2.2 The offer of a free accounts health check is an important part of the TARA Service Offer - supporting and developing the cities Tenants and Residents Associations. The accounts check by WYCAS is also a requirement to enable the service to provide a group with their annual support grant to help cover the running costs of their association.
- 2.3 The partnership adds value as gives good practice advice and support to groups, identifies training needs that are shared with the service, and WYCAS are active participants in forums and groups aimed at TARA audiences.
- 2.4 The partnership is key in providing Leeds City Council with assurance that the collective turnover of TARA's (£176,057 during 2014/15) is well managed.
- 2.5 The service is proposing the value of the partnership to be the equivalent to 188 hours at £46 per hour - £8,648 in total. The responsibilities and monitoring requirements of the partnership are outlined in a full partnership agreement (see attached). This amounts to the same value of partnership as in the previous year.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 No appropriate Internal Service Provider, Exclusive Supplier, existing provider, LCC Approved Framework Agreement or Approved Framework Agreement exists. The service provided by WYCAS is also unique within the West Yorkshire area.
- 3.2 With an estimated value of below £10k the relevant Chief Officer is able to make a direct appointment without the need for competition, providing that a written record of the decision, along with reasons, is kept.
- 3.3 Value for money and the benefits of the partnership are reviewed quarterly. As the Strategic Tenant Body develops it's forward work programme, it is also envisaged that this tenant lead forum will be updated with progress, help review the benefits and help design any future years partnership to ensure it meets the needs of TARAs collectively. No Internal Service Provider is able to act in an independent capacity, or to the required degree of local support (including home visits) to carry out the undertaking and/or has the specialism in support voluntary or community groups.
- 3.4 The Service Offer for TARAs will be compromised if the partnership is not approved. This will risk damaging the relationship with TARAs and the new function of the TARA Panel and Leeds Tenants Federation who have a reinvigorated role of spearheading the TARA movement to empower TARAs to be as effective as they can be.
- 3.5 No advertising is to be undertaken as there are no other registered charity providers of this service, specialising in the support within the Leeds region for voluntary and community groups.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation has been ongoing with TARAs, who review, along with officers, the input and support from WYCAS on an annual basis. The results of which are shared with the service. WYCAS are active participants at TARA events, most recently at the launch of the TARA Service Offer.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 The proposed partnership helps develop cohesive and harmonious communities. TARAs themselves are often the foundation of local community activity and are supported by Leeds City Council to go about their activity in an open and inclusive way. All TARAs that receive annual support grant funding from Leeds City Council do so on the basis that they are able to evidence an inclusive and open approach to their activities so that no groups or individuals are disadvantaged from participating.

4.3 Council policies and city priorities

- 4.3.1 The continuation of this partnership supports a range of Council and Housing Priorities, in particular, the Best City for Communities priority of increasing a sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities. The Housing Strategy Priority to create sustainable communities where every area is a place where people want to live, now and in the future is bolstered by the contribution of TARAs.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 A budget at the beginning of the financial year was identified and is included within the Tenant and Community Involvement Service in anticipation of this partnership. Value for money and the benefits of the partnership are review quarterly as stated in the partnership agreement and there is scope for an increased level of tenant involvement in the future design of the partnership to ensure the service meets the needs of TARAs. Added value is provided by WYCAS in the form of identifying any additional support or training needs. Any 'unutilised' time is able to be used to deliver tailored training to groups or individual TARAs as required. The partnership ensure that the turnover of the many TARAs is well managed – a fundamental in helping groups with fund raising ambitions apply and be successful in identifying external funding in addition to the Council's annual support grant.

4.5 Risk management

- 4.5.1 There are very limited risks in entering a partnership with this unique provider – one that has been engaged with the former ALMOs for a number of years. The risks of not entering into a partnership are significant in terms of ensuring robust financial practices are adopted by TARAs in managing their funds (part of which comes from LCC).

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The proposed partnership with WYCAS is key to enhancing our relationship with TARAs and empowering them to secure additional funding from external sources.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Chief Officer of Housing Management is recommended to approve the proposal for the partnership agreement with WYCAS to a value of £8,648.00. In line with the following Contract Procedure Rule Guidance 7.1:

6.2 Where no appropriate ISP, Exclusive Supplier, existing provider, LCC Approved Framework Agreement or Approved Framework Agreement exists, Contracts Procedure Rules Part 4(i), competition (three written tenders) is required for procurements with an estimated value of below £10k. If the relevant Chief Officer believes that it represents Best Value for the Council to make a direct appointment without the need for competition, they may do so providing that a written record of the decision, along with reasons, is kept.

7 Background documents

7.1 Please see attached the proposed 2015/16 Partnership Agreement.