

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 13 September 2018

Report of the Executive Director of Growth Environment Transport & Community Services

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
All

Procurement of Services to deliver the Lancashire Careers Hub

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Executive Summary

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership has recently been competitively selected by the national Careers and Enterprise Company to deliver one of 20 pilot 'careers hubs'.

This report proposes a waiver to the county council's procurement rules to complete a direct award contract with Inspira to the value of £120,000 for the delivery of the careers hub service. This will include the provision of a careers hub lead who will, amongst other duties, oversee the administration of the careers hub fund.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Approve the proposal to waive the procurement rules to allow the county council to enter into a contract with Inspira Cumbria Ltd (Inspira) for the delivery of the careers hub service.
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Finance and Director of Economic Development and Planning to finalise the contractual arrangements and funding principles, on behalf of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and the county council, as set out in this report.

Background and Advice

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership has been competitively selected by the national Careers and Enterprise Company to be one of 20 areas in England to deliver a careers hub pilot. The careers hub pilot is aligned with the recent launch of

the government's new careers strategy and provision of this additional service would add value to the existing Enterprise Adviser Network.

The Enterprise Adviser Network comprises of a senior enterprise coordinator and a team of enterprise coordinators. Their role is to match volunteer strategic leaders from local businesses with secondary schools, Special Educational Needs and Disability schools, pupil referral units and colleges to support the development of careers and enterprise plans.

The overall aim of the network is to increase the number of meaningful employer encounters that young people experience during their educational journey. At present the county council has 124 secondary schools, Special Educational Needs and Disability Schools, pupil referral units and colleges in the network matched to local businesses.

Central to the government's careers strategy are the 8 'Gatsby Good Careers Guidance Benchmarks. Gatsby is a Charitable Foundation set up by Lord Sainsbury in 1967. The eight Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance are:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

These benchmarks are a series of pragmatic actions designed to improve the quality and effectiveness of careers guidance in schools and colleges. They were established following extensive research by Sir John Holman on behalf of the Gatsby Foundation and have subsequently been incorporated into the government's new careers strategy.

The Enterprise Adviser Network is aligned to 2 of the benchmarks and provision of a careers hub will provide support to schools and colleges to achieve the full set of 8 benchmarks. The proposed careers hub in Lancashire will involve 31 schools and colleges in Burnley and Pendle and the 'Blackpool Opportunity' area. These areas have been selected following a review of 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' figures and attainment data by area. The maximum number of schools permitted to be part of a careers hub is 40. If the pilots are successful, the model is likely to be rolled out across the country.

The Careers Enterprise Company will provide funding for a careers hub lead who will support the schools and colleges and work together with the existing Enterprise Adviser Network; it will also provide limited funding for each of the schools and colleges to develop innovative approaches to achieving the benchmarks.

Match funding has been secured from the 'Blackpool Opportunity' area and the two district councils involved in the proposal; as a result, there is nil cost to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership or the county council.

The total amount of funding secured for the careers hub is £223,000 over two academic years available to the county council, as the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's accountable body, on 1 September 2018. The funding will include for the following:

- £120,000 for the careers hub lead (i.e. the contract that this report refers);
- £93,000 for the hub fund; and
- £10,000 for evaluation.

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and the county council will enter into a grant agreement with the Careers Enterprise Company to 31 August 2020 for delivery of the careers hub and are seeking to establish a contract with a supplier for the same period.

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and the county council currently contract with 'Inspira Cumbria Ltd' (Inspira) to deliver the existing Enterprise Adviser Network. Inspira were initially contracted to deliver a pilot of the Enterprise Adviser Network in January 2016. Following the success of the initial pilot and following confirmation of further funding there was a procurement exercise to establish an Official Journal of the European Union compliant contract from 1 March 2017 (with Inspira being the sole bidder). This contract currently delivers the Enterprise Advisor Network with staged growth, throughout the contract term (until 31 August 2020).

It is important that the careers hub is aligned with the existing Enterprise Advisor Network for a number of reasons: -

1. It is important that the careers hub is not fractured from the existing network and that the careers hub lead works closely with the senior enterprise coordinator (a recruitment process will be undertaken by Inspira for this position) to ensure good practice from the development of the hub is cascaded through the existing network and the foundations are laid for the roll out of the careers hub beyond 2020. This would be difficult if both services were not managed by Inspira and would if fractured introduce additional interface risk between the services.
2. The achievement of all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks through the use of the careers hub will build on the work already being completed by the existing network in achieving 2 of these 8 so far, therefore a strong link is required between the lead and the network to roll out the achievement of these benchmarks.
3. The new careers hub lead will line-manage two of the existing enterprise coordinators who support schools in Burnley, Pendle and Blackpool and are employed by Inspira as part of the existing contract.
4. The careers hub contract is expected to commence in October 2018 in-line with the funding application; delays to the start of the contract caused by procurement activity would reduce the time to achieve the contractual targets and impact on the support available to schools and colleges.

The overall contract value is £120,000 which falls below the Official Journal of the European Union threshold. It is therefore proposed to waive the county council's procurement rules and to complete a direct award contract with Inspira to the value of £120,000 for the delivery of the careers hub service. This will include the provision of a careers hub lead who will, amongst other duties, oversee the administration of the careers hub fund.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Procurement

The recommendation above has been agreed in conjunction with the Procurement Service. As the contract is highly linked with the service delivery of the existing Enterprise Adviser Network contract, the service area have advised that the approach outlined within this report will provide the most cost effective service delivery solution and furthermore, will allow the services to be delivered side by side and reduce duplication in contract management, information management and reporting on the delivery of outputs, as these will be highly linked between the two contracts. The procurement of the Enterprise Adviser Network contract (which includes similar services) only received one bid. As the services of the two contracts are highly linked it has been deemed unlikely that any other providers would be willing to bid for this contract.

The contract value falls below the threshold set by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 for the completion of an Official Journal of the European Union competitive process. The recommended provider has been evaluated under a recent Official Journal of the European Union compliant procurement process when awarded the linked Enterprise Adviser Network contract. Therefore robust checks have been completed in relation to Stage 1 criteria (financial and business standing) alongside ongoing performance and contract management. The waiving of procurement rules will ensure that the county council puts itself in the best possible position to maximise value for money in the initial pilot offered by the Careers and Enterprise Company.

Legal

Inspira will be required to enter into a contract for services with the county council and support for this will be provided by the legal services team.

List of Background Papers

None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A