

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

13TH SEPTEMBER 2022

**CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION:
COUNCILLOR FIONA BAKER**

Report Title	Recommissioning of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme
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List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Executive for the procurement of a supplier to coordinate the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme in West Northamptonshire in partnership with the Council from March 2023.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In order to support low-income families with children, the Department for Education has provided all upper tier local authorities with funding to deliver a Holiday Activities and Food Programme in their area. This programme should provide children who are eligible for Free School Meals with free activities, including a meal, during the Easter, Summer and Christmas School Holidays.
- 2.2 Since the programme launched in April 2021, West Northamptonshire has, jointly with North Northamptonshire, commissioned an external provider to deliver the service. This contract is due to end in February 2023, with no option to extend beyond this date.
- 2.3 An options appraisal has been conducted which recommended that West Northamptonshire Council continue to commission a provider to coordinate the programme but that the new specification should more clearly define the respective roles of the council and the provider.
- 2.4 It also recommended conducting two procurement exercises with one for West Northamptonshire and one for North Northamptonshire.
- 2.5 Section 7.1 details the possible scale of the procurement, indicating that Cabinet approval is required.
- 2.6 If approval from Executive is granted, officers will undertake a robust procurement process to find a provider to deliver the service and will consult with the Executive member for Children, Families, Education & Skills to award the contract.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Note the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme to date and its benefits to children, young people, and families in West Northamptonshire.
 - b) Approve the procurement of a supplier to coordinate the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme in West Northamptonshire in partnership with the Council from March 2023 in line with the Contract Procedure Rules.
 - c) Delegate authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services (DCS) to take any further decisions and actions required to conclude this procurement and award the contract.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- Delivering the Holiday Activities and Food Programme makes best use of resources from central government
- The programme will deliver benefits to vulnerable children, young people, and their families
- Commissioning a provider to coordinate the programme alongside the council will allow the Council to benefit from the expertise and experience of the successful provider in delivering similar programmes and working with Community and Voluntary Sector organisations that deliver holiday activity programmes whilst also retaining an element of input and control of the programme

5. Report Background

National Context

- 5.1 The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is a programme funded by the Department for Education (DfE). This funding is for the 152 upper tier local authorities to coordinate and provide free holiday provision including healthy food and enriching activities.
- 5.2 Following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020, the programme was rolled out to all upper tier local authorities including West Northamptonshire in 2021. Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families. For some children this can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from low-income households being:
- less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
 - more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health
 - more likely to experience social isolation
- 5.3 The HAF programme is a response to this issue, with evidence showing that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people.
- 5.4 The holiday provision is for school aged children from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals. Local authorities have discretion to use up to 15% of their funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals but who the local authority believe could benefit from HAF provision.
- 5.5 In October 2021, The Department for Education has confirmed a further investment of over £200 million per year over the following 3 financial years for the holiday activities and food programme. This means there will be funding available to West Northamptonshire Council until the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

Local delivery to date

- 5.6 Responsibility for the programme initially sat with the Northamptonshire Public Health service. Due to the very short turnaround between the Department for Education announcing the programme and the commencement of delivery, Northamptonshire Public Health directly awarded a contract to SSG Solutions for the Easter 2021 programme.

- 5.7 For the Summer Programme onwards, a full procurement was undertaken with Northamptonshire Sport being the successful bidder. The contract was for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year with an option to extend for an additional year, in February 2022 this option was taken, and the current contract is due to expire on February 28, 2023.
- 5.8 It was agreed that responsibility for the service would transfer to Children's Services from April 2022, to better connect the programme with other children's services.
- 5.9 Due to the contract being let by Public Health when it was a shared service, the programme has been delivered on a Northamptonshire-wide basis with a single contract. However, since April 2022, data has been collected and submitted to DfE separately for WNC and NNC. The contract management for the service is led by the Commissioning and Partnerships Team in Children's Services, which currently remains a shared service hosted by NNC. This may change during the period of the contract as part of the disaggregation process.
- 5.10 Northamptonshire Sport coordinate the delivery of the programme but work with local delivery partners who provide the activities and meals for participating children. There has been positive feedback around the quality and variety of activities on offer, the positive impact on children who attend and the provision of a free meal to low-income families during the holidays. Areas for improvement include the quality and nutrition of the food provided, engaging secondary aged children, and providing children and families with education around nutrition.
- 5.11 Data on the provision to date shows:
- There appears to be a trend towards more children attending provision as awareness of the scheme grows. 892 children attended the first Easter 2021 programme across Northamptonshire whilst 2435 (of which 1209 were in West Northamptonshire) attended the Easter 2022 programme.
 - Covid-19 has had an impact on attendance, especially during the Easter 2021 and Christmas 2021-22 holidays
 - Primary school-aged children are significantly more likely to attend than secondary aged children
 - Most children who have attended are eligible for Free School Meals, this has been between 93-98% each holiday which is above the DfE minimum of 85%
 - Around 15% of children who have attended each holiday have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)
- 5.12 To evaluate their delivery of the programme, Northamptonshire Sport commissioned the University of Northampton to undertake an evaluation of the programme. [The report is publicly available](#) and lessons from this report have been considered in the recommissioning project and options appraisal.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 Officers have reviewed the existing contractual arrangements in conjunction with colleagues from both the Legal and Procurement teams. This has confirmed there are no options to flex or extend the existing contract and therefore a new arrangement must be adopted in advance of 28th February 2023.
- 6.2 An options appraisal has been undertaken in two parts. The first part of the options appraisal considered the delivery model for the service into the future and whether WNC should deliver the service themselves or commission a third party to deliver the service. The second part of the options appraisal considered whether the service should be jointly commissioned with North Northamptonshire Council.
- 6.3 The option not to deliver the service was rejected. Not delivering the service would mean not taking advantage of funding available to the council and not delivering services to children from low-income families who would benefit from the programme.
- 6.4 The review of the service indicated that the council should commission an organisation to work with WNC to coordinate the programme. This would mean the council takes advantage of the skills and experience of an organisation who have worked with local community groups who deliver similar services.
- 6.5 However, the council will retain an element of control over the coordination of the programme and would work alongside the provider. This ensures WNC is meeting the terms of the grant from the Department for Education and allows the council to direct the provider to consider the Council's priorities when coordinating the programme.
- 6.6 The review found that the Council should undertake separate procurement exercises, one for the West and one for the North. Consideration was given to jointly commissioning the service; this was rejected because of a wish to see services that meets the needs of each local area and that the different governance processes at each council may delay the procurement being delivered to timescales.
- 6.7 There will be separate service specifications for North and West Northamptonshire Council. Learning from the previous contract, the WNC specification will better define the respective responsibilities of the provider and the council and will create a mechanism to manage performance.
- 6.8 It is recommended that the contract is awarded for a period of 2 years. This reflects the fact that the Department for Education has committed to funding the programme for the next two financial years.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 This service is entirely funded by the Department for Education grant for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. The Department for Education has confirmed that this programme will be funded until the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

7.1.2 The exact funding available for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial year has not been confirmed; for 2012/22 West Northamptonshire Council received £1,018,366.00 and in 2022/23 £1,055,190.00. It is assumed a similar amount will be available for the next two financial years with a slight increase each financial year.

7.1.3 As per the terms of the grant, 10% of the funding can be spent administration costs for the local coordination of the Programme. The remainder must be spent on the provision of free holiday club places for eligible children. In the current contract, 98% of the funding available for administration has been given to Northamptonshire Sport with the remaining 2% being retained by WNC. The commissioning review has found that the 2% does not accurately reflect the amount of time spent managing the contract and proposes WNC keeps 10% of the funding available for administration. This is summarised in the table below using 2022-23 funding as an indicative amount:

West Northamptonshire Budget breakdown	2022-23 funding
Maximum available provider management and administration fee (90% of management and administration fee)	£94,967.10
Funding kept by WNC for contract management and programme management (10% of management and administration fee)	£10,551.90
Total management and administration (10% of overall funding available)	£105,519.00
Funding available for service delivery and commissioning of delivery partners	£949,671.00
Total DfE funding	£1,055,190.00

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 There is no option to extend the current contract within the existing Terms and Conditions.

7.2.2 The procurement will follow a compliant procurement process, under the Light Touch Regime as set out in Schedule 3 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015, and the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules and Constitution.

7.2.3 In procuring the supplier, WNC will ensure that all money is spent in line with the grant agreement with the Department for Education.

7.2.4 The Legal team have been engaged throughout the procurement to ensure a full and appropriate contract is prepared to meet the requirement.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There is a risk to the timely commencement of the procurement and start of the service if delegated authority is not authorised, to enable further decisions and/or actions, without the

need to return to the Executive. If procurement is delayed, there is a risk that there is insufficient mobilisation time for the provider to set up the arrangements for the service.

7.3.2 This service is entirely funded by the grant provided by the Department for Education. Whilst funding has been earmarked for the next two financial years, there is a risk that due to a change in government policy future funding for the programme is withdrawn or reduced. Should this occur, the Council would either have to reduce the funding available to the provider, cease running the programme or fund the service from other sources. To mitigate this risk, it will be written into the contract that the contract can be terminated, or contract sum adjusted if funding for the programme is ceased or reduced by central government.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 No consultation was required or undertaken in respect of this proposal.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 The procurement process and/or any part of the requirement may be selected for consideration by Scrutiny.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 There is no climate impact arising from the proposal.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 There is no distinct community impact arising from this proposal.

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 A communications plan will be developed as part of taking the programme forward, and to cover all key milestones within the lifetime of the programme. Publicity agreement with chosen contract provider will be required to ensure WNC's involvement and contribution is reasonably reflected in any output.

8. Background Papers

8.1 [Holiday activities and food programme 2022 DfE Guidance](#)