
REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	19 January 2017
Subject:	Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Sue Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information, Advice & Advocacy Strategy2. Equalities Impact Assessment3. Procurement process

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out a new Council strategy on Information, Advice and Advocacy, the procurement route for awarding the new information and advice service contract and a new targeted support grants programme to be devolved to the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Organisation (HCA) to administer.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Approve the Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy 2017 - 2021
2. Cabinet to agree to commence procurement of a General Information and Advice Service
3. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Resources and Commercial, following consultation with the PH for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement to award the contract for a general information and advice service
4. Delegate the administration of the tapered fund to the VCS infrastructure organisation – Harrow Community Action (HCA) to allocate to the VCS according to the aims and objectives of the information and advice strategy
5. Delegate authority to the Director of Adult Social Care, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People, to:
 - a) extend the three Care Act contracts for 1 year until March 2018
 - b) re-commission the above contracts for a 1st April 2018 start date.

Reason: To ensure continued and more effective provision of Information, Advice and Advocacy services to the residents of the borough

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

This report sets out a new 4 year Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy (IAAS) for the Council and the commissioning arrangements for:

- a general information and advice service;
- targeted support grants programme;
- statutory Information and Advice and Advocacy contracts some of which come to an end on 31st March 2017.

Work has taken place since April 2016 to develop an Information, Advice and Advocacy strategy in partnership with the VCS. 45 different organisations have been consulted and engaged in the data gathering and service mapping exercises and been involved in 3 different co-production workshops. A cross-council project team led by the Policy Team has overseen this work with representatives from People's, Revenues and Benefits and Housing all involved.

This report should be considered alongside the VCS funding proposal cabinet report which sets out how this new model will be funded and the Emergency Relief Scheme cabinet report which recommends that an amended Hardship scheme policy be included in the general information and advice service to be administered.

Options considered

- 1. To create an information and advice strategy, commission a general information & advice service, introduce a tapered fund for targeted services and continue with statutory information, advice and advocacy contracts.**

This option would provide certainty to the sector through the sustainable funding of 3 year contracts for services whilst also allowing time to transition to a situation where the council is no longer providing discretionary grants and core funding to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. It would ensure we are meeting a growing need for information and advice, facilitate service improvements and align all information, advice and advocacy provision to a common set of aims and objectives via an IAAS. It also protects the statutory services the Council has to provide.

This option is recommended.

- 2. Do nothing**

If we did nothing the Council would continue with the current model of multiple separate contracts, no council wide IAAS and an annual budget setting process which offers no certainty to the VCS and risks one council department cutting funds that would undermine an organisation's ability to deliver services for residents commissioned by other departments in the Council.

This option is not therefore recommended

- 3. To combine the multiple separate contracts into a single commission.**

The specialist nature of the Care Act contracts, children's information and advice contracts and advocacy contracts that the council currently lets and some of the specialist information and advice provision in the borough means it was not felt appropriate to merge them all into a single commission able to be delivered by a single service. There was a strong feeling at the co-production events that a one-size fits all model would not work and that it would be better to retain specialist services and specialisms.

This option is not therefore recommended

Background

The borough does not currently have an IAAS or a clear and co-ordinated way in which we commission these services. Data analysis also demonstrates a growing need for this service due to welfare reforms, increasing homelessness, an aging population, the changing demographics of the borough and the increasingly complex needs people are presenting with. For example currently over, 30,000 Harrow residents are thought to be experiencing income deprivation. The provision of high quality information and

advice is therefore vital to support residents and enable earlier resolution of potential problems that without intervention could lead to more complex and distressing circumstances for residents which could have been prevented.

The Council currently funds over 20 different VCS organisations through a range of budgets to provide information, advice and advocacy services (for example around 50% of small grant and around 70% of Outcomes Based Grants (OBGs) fund projects that have elements of information and advice in them), but there is no IAAS to bring all this provision together in the collective pursuit of joint outcomes.

Having a strategy would enable us to join up services and improve the resident experience as well as set out a clearer understanding of need and how this can be best met. The Council also feels it is appropriate to review the service model now given the changes in technology, the way in which people access advice, the need to improve access and referral pathways and create a more co-ordinated offer so people get the right information and advice first time and we ensure we create a sustainable financial model for these services going forwards. This is also an opportunity for us to consider and implement our policy and legislative responses to welfare reform and the Care Act 2014 and a more efficient and effective way to deliver the Hardship Scheme cash payments.

Consultation

The IAAS has been co-produced together with the VCS between April and October 2016. In total 45 different organisations and many service users have been involved in the process. The methodology we used was:

- A mapping and data gathering survey was undertaken in April 2016 to understand the range of information, advice and advocacy services provided by the Council and the VCS in the borough. There were 16 responses.
- This was followed up in May to July with 20 telephone interviews with service providers.
- To get the views of service users we attended user groups or recreational meetings. Questionnaires were also available for service users to complete, there were 53 responses from 16 different organisations.
- The first stage of interviews and meetings with service users were presented to the VCS at two repeat (morning and evening) events on the 23rd May. 18 organisations attended.
- An open discussion meeting took place on 13th July 2016. 10 organisations attended. Some of the key areas of discussion and questions included budgets/commissioning, tendering, grants process, consultation findings, definitions of IAA, customer journey map and

experiences, joining up services and being more efficient, digital portal, needs analysis and the Care Act.

- A needs analysis was undertaken and shared
- Two co-production workshops were held on 18th July and 17th October to design the key principles for a future information and advice service and a vision of what this service would look like and how the Council and the VCS could work together to implement this vision. (15 organisations attended in July and 20 in October)

Through the co-production events and VCS funding consultation the following points were made regarding the IAAS:

ISSUE	RESPONSE
<i>Why is the Council choosing to focus spend on Information and advice</i>	The case for an Information, Advice and Advocacy strategy is set out in this cabinet report
<i>The definitions of general and specialist advice need to be clarified</i>	We have re-drafted the definitions to be used in the strategy to take into account this feedback and clearly articulate what the Council means by the use of these terms and ensure a clearer distinction. So for example, we are no longer referring to 'specialist' information and advice services, but 'targeted services' and provided a broader description as to what this would cover. We are keeping the term 'General Information and Advice' as it is a term widely used by many local authorities but again provided a clearer description of what the Council means by this.
<i>The need to engage the CCG and police in the strategy</i>	The council is aware of the need to engage with the CCG on the Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy. We have requested a meeting with the CCG to discuss impact and appropriate actions to mitigate any loss of income and services and we will seek to engage them and the Police in the implementation of the Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy going forwards.
<i>The budgets for General Information and Advice Service and tapered support fund should be merged</i>	The Council has decided not to merge the budgets for the general information and advice service and the targeted support grants because we have tightened up our definitions and broadened the remit of the tapered fund so that there is now clearer distinction between them.
<i>The taper on the targeted support fund should be extended</i>	The Council has considered extending the taper but has concerns about how much value can be achieved from less funding being available over a longer period of time.
<i>Not to commission everything</i>	We have listened to this feedback and come

<i>via a procurement process</i>	up with a proposal that combines our legal obligation to meet contract procedure rules with our ability to be able to award grants. We are proposing that the targeted support grant fund be devolved to the VCS infrastructure organisation to administer and have chosen a negotiated procurement process as it provides the greatest flexibility for bidders and the Council to be able to agree the best delivery model, which could include partnerships or alliancing.
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The full report on the consultation findings which summarises all the points made during the consultation and the Council's response to them is appended to the cabinet report on VCS funding.

Current situation

A review of current provision was undertaken in April 2016 to understand the contractual arrangements of existing services commissioned or provided by the Council. This also highlighted issues and opportunities to consider when developing a new service model, such as keeping statutory advocacy services separate from general information and advice provision due to the specialist nature of those services which requires particular skills and qualifications from the providers.

In 2015/16 the Council's on-going spend was around £1.5m on statutory and non-statutory information, advice and advocacy services from over 20 different VCS providers including around 50% of small grant and around 70% of OBGs projects which have elements of information and advice in them. Housing also currently spend £26k from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to commission Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to provide statutory advice to the homeless under the Housing Act 1996.

The Emergency Relief Scheme is currently administered by the Council. Proposed changes to the scheme, a revised policy and the option to incorporate cash payments into the General Information and Advice service are the subject of a separate cabinet report.

Why a change is needed

Needs Analysis

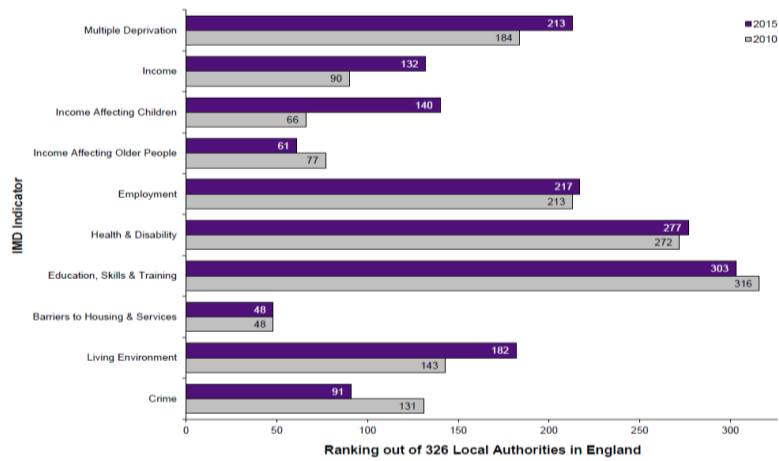
Indices of Deprivation – Harrow Summary 2015

Harrow is ranked 213th out of 326 Districts in England, an improved ranking since 2010, when the borough was ranked 184th, where 1st is the most deprived

Harrow is ranked the 6th least deprived borough out of the 33 London Boroughs, an improvement of one place on the 2010 rankings and three places on the 2007 rankings

Harrow's Rank in relation to the National Deprivation Rankings

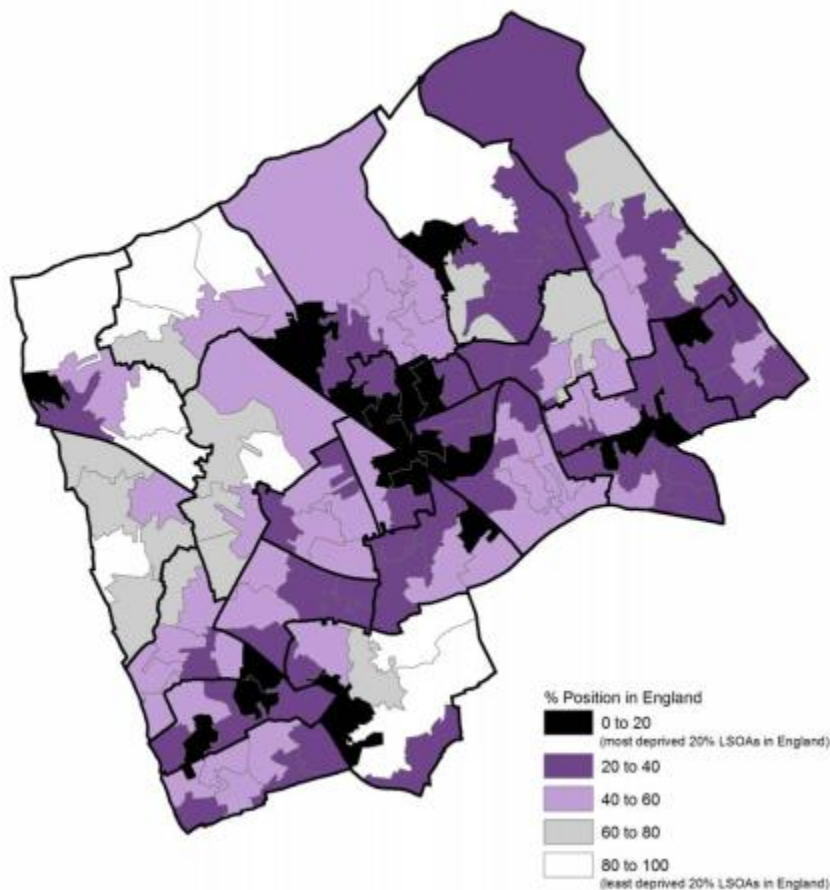
Source: CLG, Indices of Deprivation 2010 and 2015, Crown Copyright



Whilst at a borough level Harrow appears to be doing well, this masks some severe pockets of deprivation within the borough particularly in Wealdstone, Marlborough, Roxbourne and Greenhill where health inequalities, income deprivation and barriers to housing are much more acute.

Income, 2010

Source: CLG, Indices of Deprivation 2010, Crown Copyright



Housing and Homelessness

Over the past 5 years in Harrow, there has been an increase in the number of households approaching the Council for housing-related assistance – with the

figure reaching 2,000 for the year 2014-15 (Harrow Ambition Plan, 2020). Harrow has one of the smallest social housing stocks in London and the 'Right to Buy' scheme has caused significant reductions in the number of Council homes available. Of the total amount of occupied dwellings in the area, 10.6% of Harrow's households live in social rented housing and 21.7% of households live in private rented accommodation. Approximately, 10% of Harrow's household live in social rented housing. On top of this, house prices in the Borough are high and rising faster than the average growth in income. There are still a high number of families dwelling in temporary accommodation. Harrow is nationally ranked 24th for overcrowding, where 1st is the most overcrowded. Harrow also ranks poorly (48th/326 Local Authorities in England - where 1st is the most deprived) for the 'barriers to housing' deprivation domain – Harrow's lowest score across all IMD domains (London Borough of Harrow, 2015). There have also been significant increases in cases of homelessness in the Borough, resulting in more families being placed in B&B's, at an average cost to the council of £7,000 per family per year. Specifically, B&B numbers as of 1st April 2015 were 153, and had increased by the end of the 2015-16 to about 310 although there has been a decrease in this level in 2016.

Further changes in Youth Housing Benefit include the removal of automatic entitlement to housing support for new claims in Universal Credit from 18-21 year olds who are out of work. The introduction of Youth Obligation include daily requirements for unemployed people with sanctions for non-compliance, this may lead to an increase in demand for information and advice around homelessness in this age range.

Economic and Welfare Reform Impacts

Currently, over 30,000 Harrow residents are experiencing income deprivation¹, and over a fifth of residents are in low-paid jobs. More people experiencing income deprivation is likely to increase the numbers seeking advice services in the future over a wide range of areas; such as finance, health and housing - as perhaps demonstrated by the fact that service providers have reported a rise in the number of users accessing their services due to financial difficulties. It seems that income-deprivation is high in Harrow, particularly for older people.

A common view throughout the user questionnaires, telephone interviews and consultations conducted over the summer was that the main factors driving an increase in demand for advice services in Harrow were the extension of the Government's welfare reforms.

The Department of Work and Pensions has forecast that a total of 464 households in Harrow will be capped under the new Benefit Cap that has just been implemented, however it is anticipated that this number will reduce as rules around exemptions are applied, such as for carers (Harrow Economic & Welfare Reform Impacts Dashboard, 2016).

¹ The income deprivation domain measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income. The definition of low income used excludes both those people that are out-of-work, and those that are in work but have low earnings (and who satisfy the respective means tests).

The introduction of Universal Credit, access to which will be digital by default, could mean more people might require support to access and use the online services. Many people will also be receiving more income directly rather than payments direct to landlords and therefore may need new support for budgeting and setting up bank accounts.

There is also an on-going process of re-assessing Disability Living Allowance claimants and transferring them to Personal Independence Payments (PIP). As part of this process, a quarter will not be eligible for any PIP and many others will see their payment reduced. Many of those who lose out will lose eligibility for other benefits. It is likely that the current demand for PIP related information and advice will continue until 2018/19, when re-assessments should all be completed.

In 2017/18 the Tax Credits and the Universal Credit child elements will be limited to 2 children, for children born after April 2017 only. People starting a family (first child) after April 2017 will no longer be eligible for the Family Element in tax credits. Families will be further impacted by 2018/19 as support for mortgage interest will change from benefits to loans. Extending parent conditionality would mean that parents will be expected to look for work when their youngest child turns 3 (down from 5) this may lead to increased demand for childcare and information and advice requirements in these areas.

Finally the introduction of changes around Employment Support Allowance such as the removal of 'work related component' payments for those in 'work related activity group' will impact new claimants and could cause further increases in demand for advice services in the future.

From a skills and employment perspective, Harrow is one of 25 local authorities identified by the Department for Communities and Local Government as an area with high levels of need for English language provision. In 15.9% of households English is not the main language of any occupants (10th highest ranking nationally and far exceeding the 4.3% national average). Moreover, the 2011 Census showed that 1% of Harrow residents are unable to speak any English at all, compared with 0.6% for London as a whole and 0.3% nationally (Inequality Report, 2016).

For the Harrow Economic & Welfare Reform Impacts Dashboard, the council collects data from Harrow Citizens Advice Bureau on a quarterly basis on all enquiries to the CAB. This provides an understanding of the general information and advice needs within the borough, through residents approaching the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB.) This data shows that although the general number of issues dealt with have gone down, issues around: rent arrears, debt, benefits and homelessness remain the biggest areas of need, which tallies with our own needs analysis.

Health and Disability

17.3% of Harrow's working age population classified themselves as disabled in the 2011 Census - a total of 26,600 people (Office for National Statistics,

2012). 8,370 individuals, 3.4% of the population, receive Disability Living Allowance².

There are also significant geographical health inequalities across the borough. For instance, there is a 10 year difference in life expectancy between Pinner South and Wealdstone. There are also health inequalities related to ethnicity. With the exception of Black Caribbean and Irish populations, all other minority ethnic groups have lower rates of adherence to the Chief Medical Officer's recommendations for physical activity (Harrow Community Learning Strategy, 2015).

People with health conditions are likely to seek advice services if they feel that they are not receiving the necessary help. Numerous reports have recently claimed that there are currently long waiting times in the NHS nationwide and especially at Northwick Park and issues with getting GP appointments, something which may escalate people's need for information and advice.

1 in 4 adults in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year, whilst 1/100 people are predicted to be on the autistic spectrum. National IAPT data has estimated that 22,700 people (9%) of Borough residents currently have common mental health problems. Rates are particularly high amongst some BAME communities, particularly new arrival refugees (Afghan, Somali, Iranian, and Tamil).

Feedback from service users and providers suggested there is a high demand for advice over mental health-related issues in Harrow. Supporting people with mental health issues is complicated by the fact that many do not access advice services until their issues have reached 'crisis point'. When asked about the levels of need in their clients, service providers claimed that many of those requesting advice over mental health delayed approaching the advice services, due to a perceived stigma attached to having mental health problems, and were therefore in high need. Harrow Carers for instance put forward that 'most service users' had 'high levels of need related to mental health and emotional issues', whilst an increase in sections and acute mental health issues were widely reported by providers during consultation. Furthermore, 9/28 of users, when asked 'Do you have a disability?' stated that they had a disability related to mental health. To improve advice services, 5 users later called for more service advice provision related specifically to mental health, whilst in consultations a common view was that there should be mental health advocacy specialists, and this was listed as a gap in service provision.

Ageing Population

Nationally the population is living longer. The Borough's population is ageing at a faster rate than average across the rest of Greater London and it is expected that by 2020 in Harrow there will be a 14% increase in people over 65 and a 26% increase in people over the age of 85.

There is also an impact on carers - Harrow Carers have noted that the main change in customer needs noticed within the past 5 years is a growing

² Rate calculated using the ONS 2013 Mid-Year Estimates

number of ageing carers with a diverse range of needs³ (this diverse range also being listed by the organisation as their most time-consuming factor in delivering advice services). Similarly, during consultation over summer, a 'main user needs change noticed within the past 5 years' reported by service providers was a growing number of older people with issues around social isolation. It seems that an ageing population is likely to increase demand for information and advice services from elderly and disabled people. Furthermore the Harrow Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016 has highlighted that Harrow has a skills gap in the caring services, and that this is likely to be an important sector in the future as the average age in the population increases.

Child Poverty:

A further potential development in the future which may create demand for information and advice services is child poverty. There were 3.7 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2013-14 – that's 28 per cent of children or 9 in a classroom of 30. London is the area with the highest rates of child poverty in the country. On a scale measuring the proportion of children in poverty in all 326 local authorities in England (2015), Harrow is ranked 213th (where 1st is the most deprived), which is an improvement since 2010 when the borough was ranked 184th. After housing costs, there are 28.7% of children living in poverty in Harrow (London Borough of Harrow, 2015). This is particularly important, given that Harrow has a large child population, which is increasing. Children in large families are at the highest risk of living in poverty. There are a wide variety of reasons why a family may experience poverty, such as a rise in living costs, drop in earnings through job loss or benefit changes. Children in poverty are likely to attain lower grades than their peers. Children may also suffer lower educational attainment if their parents have poor English language skills, as this can lead to isolation, poor communication between parents and schools, resulting in cultural dislocation (Harrow Community Learning Strategy, 2015).

In addition to the needs of residents there are some other key policies, legislative and organisational drivers behind the need for an information advice and advocacy strategy. These are:

- The Care Act 2014, which encourages local authorities to develop local strategies for information and advice, and to report publically on the improvements they are achieving.
- Good public information and advice is a key building block in transformation as it plays an important early intervention and preventative role
- The Council's Grants programme has expired and needs reviewing.
- The need to respond to the implications of Welfare Reform

The reality is that these needs are not mutually exclusive and residents are increasingly presenting with multiple, complex issues as Council resource and

³ For instance, a statistical analysis completed by Harrow's BIU (Business Intelligence Unit) on the Carers Survey showed that the two most significant factors associated with carers feeling under excessive pressure (and at risk of breakdown) were: not being able to maintain social contacts and thereby becoming socially isolated, and feeling that they were not receiving enough encouragement and support.

capacity declines. There is an opportunity through the creation of the strategy and new service model to make sure we are meeting that need in the most efficient and effective way possible and work towards improving the customer journey by making it easier for more people to access and navigate their way to the most appropriate sources of information and advice in the first instance and at an earlier stage before their issues reach crisis point and so multiple needs are dealt with in an effective and holistic way.

The New Service Model

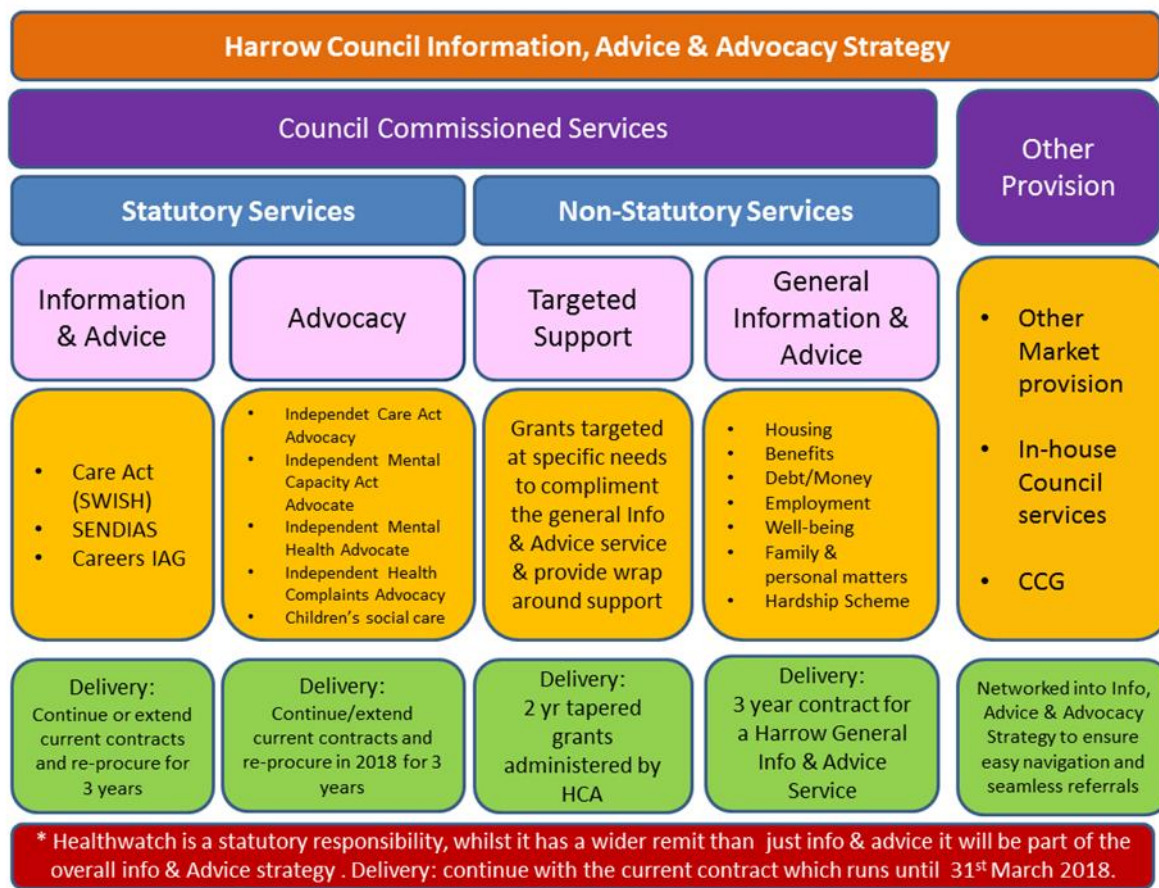
The vision in the IAAS is to:

'Deliver high quality, independent and co-ordinated information and advice services through a range of channels for Harrow residents in need that supports them to easily and seamlessly access the help they require at the earliest possible opportunity, and to continue to provide statutory services.'

The objectives of a new IAAS to be delivered over the course of the next 4 years are to:

- Improve access – removing barriers to access in terms of language, technology, disability, knowledge and awareness so people can access help themselves earlier
- Improve the quality and reliability of information and advice on offer by creating a network of all information and advice services and providers to create a holistic offer and ensure consistency of advice no matter where you go
- Ensure more effective triage and referrals system so people are not passed from pillar to post and multiple needs are able to be dealt with at first point of contact
- Enhance the digital offer, so those who are able to self-serve can
- Secure sustainable funding for the targeted support projects and services
- Co-locate, where service requirements would be more effectively delivered or it supports a reduction in cost base which can deliver further resource to front line

New service model



General Information & Advice – As part of the IAAS a general information and advice service would be procured from 1st July 2017 for 3 years at a cost of £226k/yr⁴. This would be a universal service open to any Harrow resident in need of information or advice. Access to the service will be based on what information and advice is needed and delivery should be tailored to the client's individual needs.

The analysis of data from advice services and our own needs analysis highlighted that the biggest demand for information and advice is in relation to the following areas:

- Housing
- Welfare benefits
- Money /debt
- Employment
- Well-being (i.e health and social care not covered by the Care Act SWISH contract)
- Family & personal matters (counselling, bereavement, abuse, relationships, older people, carers)
- Immigration

Trends from the needs analysis suggest that these are likely to remain the key issues for Harrow residents over the next few years. These will therefore be the focus for the General Information and Advice service.

⁴ The option to include a £10k hardship scheme cash payments budget in this procurement is included in these figures. If that option is not taken the total value of the contract would be £216k/yr

There is also an option for the General Information & Advice service to have responsibility for administering the Hardship Scheme cash payments – where emergency payments can be made to support residents experiencing financial hardship. We believe there are synergies with the Emergency Relief Scheme and how it is delivered and the holistic work that the Voluntary and Community Sector does. Whilst it has been necessary to reduce the programme funding to the Emergency Relief Scheme, the Council is proposing integrating the delivery of this service with the Generalist Information and Advice contract to ensure the most efficient use of funds by delivering a smaller Hardship Scheme at the first point of contact for cash payments (the Council would retain the scheme for white goods and furniture).

The commissioning route for the service is outlined in annex 3 and will take the form of a Competitive Procedure with Negotiation and will be under the 'light touch regime. OJEU notice is required as the value of the contract over the 3 years plus options for extension take it over the threshold. It is currently planned that we will hold a market development day on 2nd February and the procurement will open on 10th February and close on 14th March. We would then have the opportunity to invite shortlisted suppliers to participate in negotiation before calling for final tenders in May. It is anticipated that the new service would start on 1st August 2017.

Information and Advice services commissioned in accordance with specific statutory requirement. The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to provide information and advice on adults social care. The Care Act Information and Advice service will continue to be provided by the Care Act SWISH⁵ contract. The SWISH contract expires on 31st March 2017, but will be extended for 12 months and will then be re-procured alongside the other Care Act and statutory advocacy contracts in 2017 for a 1st April 2018 start.

The Adoption & Children's Act 2012, The Children's Act 1989 and Children and Families Act 2014 require local authorities to provide information advice and advocacy services on children's services. The Council will continue to meet these obligations via the SENDIAS⁶ and Careers Information, Advice and Guidance services (CIAG) contracts. Their total value is £478,000. The SENDIAS service will expire in June 2017 and will be re-procured for a 3 year contract commencing July 2017. The Careers, Information, Advice & Guidance was recently awarded a 3+2 year contract which commenced 1st April 2016, there are no intentions to re-procure this until the end of the contract period.

These services should be networked in with the general information and advice service as set out in the overall IAAS.

Targeted Support – As part of the IAAS there will also be a £100k grants programme. This will be a tapered fund which will be available to the VCS to bid for. It will reduce by 50% in year 2 and then go down to zero in year 3,

⁵ Support & Well-being Information Service Harrow

⁶ Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Information & Advice Service

therefore this is being made available to help support the transition to more sustainable funding. Following consultation, we have refined the definition and broadened out the scope of the fund to support targeted support which people may be referred to from the general information and advice or other providers (such as projects to address social isolation for example) as well as complimentary information, advice and advocacy provision (such as specialist language or culturally sensitive provision for new arrivals or additional advocacy services for example.)

Administration of the fund will be devolved to the VCS infrastructure organisation (HCA). The VCS have often told us, and it as repeated in the most recent consultation, that they can deliver most services more effectively than the Council. They are 'often closer to the ground, have more direct interaction with their user base, and form more personal relationships with their clients. This leads to a greater understanding of need, and the ability to provide a more tailored and bespoke service.' Devolving this fund to HCA to administer complements their role to support organisations to secure external funding, which will be particularly important for these grant recipients due to the taper and the need to secure the future sustainability of the services and projects funded by the grants.

Targeted support fund criteria:

- i. The awards of funding should be made for the 2 years. The application process will run from January 2017 so awards can be made for services/projects to start from 1st April 2017.
- ii. The monies should be used to fund those services that deliver targeted support for information, advice and advocacy, which are linked to supporting the need identified in the Council's needs assessment.
- iii. Priority should be given to funding projects/services that meet the aims and objectives of the information advice and advocacy strategy in that they are preventative, they empower and help residents to be more self-supportive in the future and therefore lower demand on services both for public sector bodies and the VCS given that the fund is for two years and is tapered.
- iv. Consideration should be given to how the fund can be used for match funding from other sources in order to amplify the impact of the fund.
- v. Consideration should be given to how the fund can be used as a transitional fund to support sustainable service/project delivery.

In terms of the Council's role and expectations around involvement and reporting we would want to:

- i. Be involved in the decision making from an advisory perspective, but are clear that the executive decision on allocation would rest with HCA, subject to it meeting the above criteria; and

- ii. Receive reporting on the use of the fund both in terms of the allocation of it and the performance of services/projects who would receive the funding (reporting would be through the quarterly HCA meetings, not direct to the Council from the project/service).

Advocacy – In the new model the Council will continue to commission services to meet its specific statutory duties including:

- Care Act 2014 advocacy provided by community Solutions
- Statutory advocacy for Children’s Social Care and Independent Health Complaints Advocacy currently provided by HAD
- Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) currently provided by Voiceability and Independent Mental Health Act Advocacy (IMCA) currently provided by Powher.

The total value of these contracts is approx. £250,000/yr. All of the contracts, except the IMCA contract, expire on 31st March 2017. They will therefore be extended for 12 months and will then be re-procured alongside the other Care Act contracts in 2017 for a 1st April 2018 start.

Healthwatch – This is also a statutory responsibility, and whilst it has elements of information and advice, it does have a wider remit including enter and view. The current contract runs until 31st March 2018 and these services should be part of the information, advice and advocacy network led by the general information and advice service.

Commissioning summary:

Contract	Expires	Extend	Re-procure
Care Act – Information & Advice (SWISH)	31 st March 2017	Yes 12 months	In 2017 for 1 st April 2018 start, 3 year contract
Care Act – Advocacy	31 st March 2017	Yes 12 months	In 2017 for 1 st April 2018 start, 3 year contract
SENDIAS	31 st March 2017	No	In 2016 for 1 st April 2017, 3 year contract
Careers IAG	31 st March 2019	Potential to extend for 2 years until 2021	Depends on whether option to extend the contract is invoked or not
Independent Mental Health Advocacy	31 st March 2017	Yes 12 months	In 2017 for 1 st April 2018 start, 3 year contract
Independent Mental Health Act Advocacy	31 st March 2018	No	In 2017 for 1 st April 2018 start, 3 year contract
Independent Health Complaints Advocacy	31 st March 2017	Yes 12 months	In 2017 for 1 st April 2018 start, 3 year contract
Children’s Advocacy	31 st March 2017	Yes 12 months	In 2017 for 1 st April 2018 start, 3 year contract

Healthwatch	31 st March 2018	No	tbc
General Information & Advice	N/A	N/A	In 2017 for 1 st August 2017 start, 3 year contract

Implications of the Recommendation

Resources, costs

Capacity to run the procurements for the general information and advice service and the re-procurement of the specialist advocacy council contracts will be from within existing resource in the Policy team and People's commissioning team. They have deliberately been staggered to match the capacity available in the Council to run the procurement processes and the capacity of the sector to bid. We are confident those services we are extending are providing quality services.

Performance Issues

The strategy sets out expected outcomes and we will develop a way of monitoring these across agencies, including regular customer feedback which would be monitored along with the agreement of targets with the chosen provider(s) as part of routine contract management arrangements.

Our aim is that by 2020 a general information and advice service will achieve the following:

Outcome	Example Measures
1. More residents will report that they find it easy to seek information & advice for themselves at the earliest opportunity, before their need becomes severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enquiries fully resolved at first point of contact • Number and type of presenting issues per client • Number of repeat contacts for same client • User satisfaction/experience survey
2. Residents report that they get the right information and advice first time without being passed from pillar to post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of clients referred to another organisation following contact with the general information and advice service • User satisfaction/experience survey
3. Residents are able to access timely, comprehensive and high quality information and advice in a way that recognises everyone's needs are different	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average length of waiting time for appointment • Evidence of information and advice being tailored to meet clients' requirements • Number and value of targeted support grants awarded • User satisfaction/experience survey

<p>4. There is improved access to high quality information and advice through digital channels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enquiries via digital channels • Number of clients helped to access information online • Number of organisations inputting to the online resource/gateway • User satisfaction/experience survey
<p>5. Residents report higher satisfaction levels with the information & advice service they receive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User satisfaction/experience survey • Number of complaints received
<p>6. The provision of information and advice in the borough is joined up and co-ordinated resulting in the resolution of multiple issues at an earlier stage and a reduction in signposting and duplication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear joint communication strategy in place • Number of client referrals allocated appropriately (accepted and acted on the referral) • Number of organisations signed up to the Harrow Information and Advice Network • Number of organisations inputting to the online resource/gateway • User satisfaction/experience survey

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? No

The potential risks are:

- Capacity and resources are not sufficient to meet demand
The Council will review this through regular contract management and monitoring data.
- Outcomes and targets are not met
The Council will review this through regular contract management and monitoring data.

Legal Implications

The Council has a power to award grants and to commission services in fulfilment of its general statutory duties. There is no duty to provide grants or funding to the voluntary sector, however the Council must consider use of its power in a reasonable way and if proposing to reduce funding, must follow a fair process.

There are specific duties that are relevant to this proposal. This includes specific statutory duties to provide or commission services, which could be commissioned from the voluntary sector, for example the Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to establish and maintain information and advice services relating to the care and support for all people in its area. The statutory guidance confirms that to fulfil this duty, the local authority is likely to have to go further than providing information and advice directly by working to ensure the coherence, sufficiency, availability and accessibility of information and advice relating to care and support across the local authority area. Whilst this is not a duty to commission these services from the voluntary sector, if services are commissioned in this way, the Council must comply with the legislative framework and relevant guidance. The proposal is to continue to commission these specialist advocacy services separately from the general information and advice service.

There are a number of overarching duties that are relevant to this proposal. The Care Act 2014 contains duties to promote wellbeing and independence and reduce dependency. This includes consideration to providing universal services and giving universal access to information. One way of complying with these duties is to commission services from the voluntary sector. There are similar duties and powers in relation to children's services and public health. When making a decision to commission services in a different way, the Council must consider how it will continue to comply with its statutory duties, as well as considering the impact of the reduction.

The Council must comply with its Equality Act duties and in particular s.149, which states:

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- (3) Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—
 - (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

(c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

(4) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

(5) Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

(a) tackle prejudice, and

(b) promote understanding.

The duty is to have due regard to the stated aims and due regard must be had by Cabinet, as the decision maker. An EQIA is attached as at appendix 2 and the equality implications are summarised in this report. When dealing with a proposal to commission services in a different way, Cabinet must consider the nature of the new services to be provided, the difference in service provision, the limitations in what is currently provided, the advantages of a change in service provision and the losses from changing service provision. The focus should be on the change in service provision and the impact on protected groups, as opposed to the impact on a particular voluntary body. However, the views of the existing voluntary bodies will be relevant in assessing the impact on service users and the availability of services within Harrow. In assessing impact, the Council has taken account of the consultation responses from the voluntary sector and users of the services.

When making a decision, Cabinet must take account of its public law decision making responsibilities. This requires that Cabinet take account of all relevant information, comply with its legal duties and follows a fair process to reach a reasonable decision. The Council has consulted with the VCS in producing the IAAS and Cabinet must take account of those consultation responses.

The Council has identified a different way to commission services to ensure a more holistic approach, as well as providing an opportunity to provide services at a lower cost. The funding reduction to VCS is contained in a separate Cabinet, but is inevitably linked to this report. It is a matter for Cabinet to make a decision on how to commission services to the voluntary sector. If having considered the impact, it believes that the service cannot be commissioned within the budget proposed, Cabinet can amend the draft budget to be presented and recommended to full Council.

Financial Implications

The Cabinet report on the VCS funding proposals sets out how the Council would fund this strategy from savings made to the Adults SLAs, Community Grants and Emergency Relief Scheme (see separate cabinet report)

The contract value would be £226k/yr for 3 years which includes the optional £10k for the Hardship Scheme cash payments and £26k specifically for housing advice, which is funded through the HRA.

There will also be a £100k tapered fund for 2017/18 reducing to £50k in 2018/19 and zero in 2019/20 which will be administered by the VCS infrastructure organisation – HCA.

The Council will continue to spend approximately £1.5m on Information, Advice and Advocacy services under the new model.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

The equalities impact assessment suggests the proposals are designed to positively impact all nine protected characteristics as it is making it easier for people to access the right information, advice or advocacy at the right time. It also suggests there could be a minor adverse impact on the all of the protected characteristics relating to:

- Digital access
- Face to face access
- Language barriers
- New migrant communities
- Social isolation
- Attracting alternative funding
- Potential loss of specialist providers
- Closure of organisations due to loss of core funding

There are no anticipated major adverse impacts arising from this proposal.

In its new strategy for information, advice and advocacy, the council should:

- Recognise that one risk of procuring services (generalist and targeted) in a holistic way is the potential loss of specialist providers, and this may impact groups of particular protected characteristics, although the expansion of the tapered fund would mitigate this risk more than the original proposal.
- Ensure strategy links to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy where a priority action is around mental health provision in the borough.
- Ensure strategy links to volunteering projects (like V4Change) and include peer-to-peer advocate training within this.
- Identify a simpler pathway by which to navigate information and advice services.

In the specification for new services for information, advice and advocacy services, the council should:

- Ensure that digital access is one part of a multi-channel approach to future information, advice and advocacy services. Service providers to continue to provide face to face and telephone consultations.
- Include the provision of translation/interpretation support as part of the tender specification for the new information, advice and advocacy service.
- Ensure organisation(s) procured to provide the new service or awarded a targeted grant to demonstrate better coordination of referrals.

- Ensure the infrastructure organisation is able to support organisations of all sizes/specialisms to attract alternative sources of funding for their services.
- Ensure the infrastructure organisation (see separate report on VCS funding arrangements) for supporting the VCS is able to maximise volunteers into the VCS so as to build up capacity and knowledge of specialisms.

In addition, the council could:

- Use plain language in council communications.
- Continue to analyse demographic changes to the borough so as to meet the needs of Harrow's communities.
- Set up a Crowdfunding platform to support the VCS to attract alternative funding, as well as ensure the infrastructure organisation proactively supports organisations to identify alternative funding and submit robust applications for funds.
- Help the VCS explore avenues to exploit local philanthropy and tap into local businesses/communities for donations.
- Review impact of proposals within 12 months of the new contracts starting. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Policy Team, as contract managers for general advice and tapered fund, with overall responsibility resting with the Divisional Director for Strategic Commissioning.

Council Priorities

This strategy supports the Council's ambitions around Building a Better Harrow by safeguarding and putting into place services that support people in accessing the information and advice they need.

It also supports the ambition to protect the vulnerable and support families as they are the main recipients of information and advice services

It also contributes to the ambition to be more business like and business friendly as it puts all our contracts on a stable footing and provides certainty to the VCS

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Sharon Daniels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 14 November 2016		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 11 November 2016		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards
EqIA carried out:	YES
EqIA cleared by:	Alex Dewsnap Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Rachel Gapp
Head of Policy
0208 416 8774
Rachel.gapp@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

1. Data gathering exercise write up
2. Needs Analysis

**Call-In Waived by the
Chair of Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]