

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 2nd February 2021

Report Title: Orbitas Bereavement Services Contract Extension

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Jill Rhodes, Public Health and Corporate Services

Senior Officer: Frank Jordan, Executive Director, Place

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to modify the contract between the Council and Council Company, Orbitas Bereavement Services, by extending the term by a period of one year, to 31 March 2022.
- 1.2. Bereavement Services have been delivered on behalf of the Council by Orbitas since the 1 April 2014 under a fixed term 7 year contract, due to expire on 31 March 2021.
- 1.3. The contract extension is required to provide continuity during the current pandemic emergency to allow the company to focus on its role as a key frontline provider. A review of future service provision will be completed during the extension period.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1. Agrees that the contract between the Council and Orbitas Bereavement Services be modified by extending it by a period of one year, to 31 March 2022.
- 2.2. Delegates authority to the Executive Director-Place to take all necessary actions to implement the above contract modification.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. The contract is due to expire on 31 March 2021. The contract is for a fixed term of 7 years and there is no option to extend that term within the contract terms and conditions. To provide for a further one year of service delivery the contract will need to be modified (and the terms and conditions varied) and the term extended.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. Without any action being taken to modify the contract and extend the term, the current contract will expire with no alternative arrangements in place.

5. Background

5.1. Orbitas Bereavement Services Limited was created in 2013 and is a wholly owned Company of the Council. It was awarded a fixed term contract to deliver services as agent to the Council, which contract is due to end on 31 March 2021.

5.2. Orbitas delivers:

5.2.1. Bereavement Services

- Burial
- Cremation
- Memoria
- Bereavement support services

- Handyperson Service
 - Small repairs and practical tasks to help older people remain living safely in their own home

5.3. Cheshire East Council pays Orbitas an annual operational management fee to deliver its services, with the income relating to those services being received directly by the Council.

5.4. The council has commenced a detailed review of Orbitas and the services it delivers in order to determine the most appropriate structure for the future commissioning and delivery of such services in order to best meet the requirements of CEC.

5.5. However, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic the timeframes for this review have been extended to enable Orbitas and the commissioner to focus their efforts on bereavement services during this period.

5.6. The proposed contract extension would enable the review to continue and allow sufficient time for the implementation of the recommendations arising from this review.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. The Legal Implications relevant to this decision are set out in Appendix A (exempt).

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. The one-year contract extension will not directly impact either the operational management fee expenditure budget or the bereavement services income budget within the Council's current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. Continuation of the current contract does not have implications for the Council Bereavement policy.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. Continuation of the current contract does not change equity impacts of the service.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. While we recognise any review process can be a source of anxiety for staff, the continuation of the current contract does provide a further 12 months of continuity during this pandemic emergency.

6.5.2. Any implications for staff that may arise out of the review will follow company HR policy and procedures.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. The Council has been advised of risk with the continued delivery of services under current contractual arrangements. This is considered to be outweighed however by a need to provide stability to a key frontline service in the current pandemic emergency.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. There are no direct implications for Climate Change Orbitas is included with in the Councils Carbon Action plan and will continue to assist the Council in achieving its climate change objectives.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. This contract is for delivering Council Bereavement Services across the Borough.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. Any relevant changes to future bereavement service provision following the conclusion of the current review will be subject to consultation with any affected.

9. Access to Information

9.1. Appendix A contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings) and is therefore not for publication.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Ralph Kemp

Job Title: Head of Environment Services

Email: ralph.kemp@cheshireeast.gov.uk