

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH & HOUSING CABINET BOARD**

**9 February 2017**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND  
HOUSING – N JARMAN**

**Matter for Decision**

**Wards Affected:** All

**PRE PAID CARDS TO SUPPORT DIRECT PAYMENTS**

**Background**

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires councils to promote Direct Payments. In addition Direct Payments have been Council policy for almost three years.

Most people who choose to take a DP use it to employ someone (a personal assistant) to provide services flexibly to meet their care and support needs.

However, some people also purchase services in addition, for the same reasons.

For the latter reason it is easier and more economic for people in receipt of DPs who also wish/need to purchase services, to do so using a pre paid card.

A pre paid card:-

- Is easier to use and requires less administration.
- Produces clear records of expenditure
- Puts people in control

To meet these needs, initially the Council contracted with Aquarium, after:-

- Visiting other Councils to find out about their own experiences.
- Authorisation from the Social Services Health and Housing Committee on 17 December 2015.

## **Contractual Issues**

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017, Aquarium contacted the council to inform it of their decision to withdraw from the local authority, pre-paid card market. Their decision was based on the revised costs that they are to be charged by their supply chain. Aquarium state that this makes it economically unattractive to them to continue to provide this service.

Aquarium has offered to facilitate a transfer of the existing user base to an alternative provider PFS, however this would not satisfy the procurement rules of the Council.

The Council needs rapidly to source an alternative provider through a compliant procurement mechanism and then manage the transition of service users presently using the Aquarium system to the new provider.

It should be recognised that the framework (managed by Surrey County Council) used to establish the agreement with Aquarium has recently experienced the withdrawal of three of its four providers leaving a monopoly.

To ensure the Council can demonstrate an open, fair and transparent procurement it is proposed to use an alternative framework managed by the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO).

This framework presently offers two providers and is available until January 2021. The agreement having been established following a full OJEU tender (Award Notice Reference: 2016/S 233-424604).

The same specification will be used for this procurement, with the only material change being that the cost of the cards will be met by the recipients of the DP rather than the Council.

## **Recommendation**

Members are asked to authorise officers to commence a procurement for the provision of a pre paid card service using the NEPO Framework referred to above.

## **Reason For Recommendation**

To ensure continuity for users of Direct Payments who also wish/need to purchase services to meet their care needs, once Aquarium ceases to offer this service.

To ensure maximum flexibility and reduce administration on transactions, where DP users need/wish to purchase services.

## **Implementation of Decision**

The decision will be implemented after the three day call in period.

## **APPENDICES**

**None**

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **OFFICER CONTACT**

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