

Report of Head of Projects and Programmes

Report to Chief Officer Employment & Skills

Date: 6 June 2019

Subject: Online Assessments Provider Award

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: 10.4 (3) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of Main Issues

- 1 The Best Council Plan 2019-20, sets out the Council's ambition for Leeds to have a strong economy and to be a compassionate city, tackling poverty and reducing inequalities. Supporting residents into Adult Learning and work is an important contributor to this ambition. In 2018-19 the Employment and Skills service helped 5,127 people into work and 7,010 adults learn new skills.
- 2 The employment and Skills Service has been successful in tendering for several ESF programmes in Leeds City Region. For all programmes a robust and professional initial assessment is needed to find out about learner needs, identify a starting point to progress them into a positive outcome and to identify any particular aspects which might otherwise go unnoticed prior to the programme commencing. It forms an integral part of the RARPA (Recognising and recording progress and achievement) process used on non-accredited programmes. Depending on the subject or course to be delivered online screening tools can be used as part of this process to establish a level in English, Maths, ESOL, ICT, and employability. It is also an important tool for our internal apprenticeship programmes in assessing prior learning and knowledge.
- 3 In April 2019, a mini competition was published to all 16 providers registered on the Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) Category 5 (Professional Services) to procure a provider to deliver various assessments for

learners across the full range of programmes that E&S deliver. One provider submitted a response.

4 This report seeks authorisation to award a £0 value contract to Skills Forward Limited commencing on 1 July 2019 and running through to 31 December 2024.

5 Recommendations:

The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to:

- Approve the award of a contract to Skills Forward Limited, commencing on 1 July 2019 and running through to 31 December 2024. In entering this contract no volume guarantee has been granted by the Council
- Approve the recommended maximum annual allocation set out in Confidential Appendix 1 to allow individual provider orders to be raised on demand and in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules to enable effective programme management to maximise Council apprenticeships and adult learning outcomes
- Note, the Head of Projects and Programmes, Employment and Skills Service will be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report and, the management of Apprenticeships, ESIF and Employment and Skills Programmes and Adult Learning programmes on behalf of the Council.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks authorisation to award a 5 year £0 contract to Skills Forward Limited through the Council's Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) established in March 2018.
- 1.2 The recommended award to Skills Forward Limited is set out in Confidential Appendix 1.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Leeds City Council, through the Employment and Skills service, have received funding through the European Structural Investment Fund to deliver employability and skills programmes over the next 3 years. Managed by the Employment and Skills Service on behalf of the Council, this funding enables delivery of a wide range of activity.
- 2.2 Known as Employment Hub these programmes are used to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of residents between 15 and 64 coming from different backgrounds in order to:
 - improve their health and well-being, including mental health and/or;
 - progress towards and into formal learning or employment.
- 2.3 In order to ascertain the correct level/starting point for programme participants, a robust and effective basic skills assessment is needed. On line tools can then be used to help develop learners' skills and prepare them for study and associated tests needed to achieve qualifications.
- 2.4 Online employability training supports the face to face offer provided by our Employment and Skills Advisors, and allows learners and participants to continue their learning and development away from the formal learning delivered in classrooms and community settings.

3 Main Issues

- 3.1 To enable the Council to maximise programme impact, we are wanting to procure a provider to deliver assessments to learners and programme participants. This is compliant with Contract Procedure Rules and supports effective programme management.
- 3.2 The on-line assessments will be completed by the learner with full support from with their tutor/key worker. These materials can also be available on paper for those individuals that ICT or on-line is not suitable for again with one to one support from their tutor/keyworker
- 3.3 Once completed, the assessments will show the academic level the learner is at and can therefore be progressed to the right level of learning. During this period of learning Skills Forward Limited provide learning materials as well as practice tests to ensure the learner is ready to achieve the required level.

- 3.4 The learning materials will allow the learners to hone their skills as well as provide opportunity for further development to ensure they have the best opportunity to achieve their goals.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment was consulted in June 2019 on the proposals set out in this report.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 An equality screening was carried out on 10 June 2019 and is detailed in Appendix 2. The findings from this assessment are that equality, diversity, cohesion and integration issues have been appropriately considered in relation to the proposed award to Skills Forward Limited to deliver on-line assessments.

4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The proposals set out in this report contribute to the Best Council Plan 2019-20 priorities around supporting Inclusive Growth by helping adults learn new skills to benefit from the economy to their full potential, and tackling poverty in priority neighbourhoods; building a Child Friendly City by supporting families to give their children the best start in life; helping parents and carers improve their young children's educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes.
- 4.3.2 The delivery of the ESF programmes will also help to deliver outcomes under other Council initiatives by increasing digital inclusion; supporting the early integration of refugees; engaging vulnerable and isolated adults and skills support to those with mild to moderate mental ill-health.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 The activities proposed will be funded through Employment and Skills ESF Programmes.
- 4.4.2 The awarding of a DPS call-off contract to Skills Forward Limited was influenced by a robust contract management process led by the Employment and Skills Service which assessed factors such as quality of provision, learner outcomes and cost per assessment to ensure the programme delivers value for money.
- 4.4.3 Payments made to the provider will be subject to the submission of invoices and satisfactory evidence of delivery and learner assessments. Assessments will be available online across all Employment and Skills Programmes.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 Following a competitive mini competition one provider was selected from the Council's Employment and Skills DPS and will be awarded five year £0 value

contract, commencing 01 July 2019 and running through to 31 December 2024 in accordance with the Councils Contract Procedure.

4.5.2 The Council Procurement Manager advises this decision to award contracts is an officer delegated Significant Operational Decision subsequent to the previous Key Delegated Decision in December 2017 to establish the DPS, and is not subject to call in. The information contained in Confidential Appendix 1 relates to the financial or business affairs of provider organisations and is therefore considered to be commercially sensitive. This information has been obtained through the contract management process which is still subject to negotiation in some areas. It is therefore considered that this element of the report should be treated as exempt under rule 10.4 (3) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Advice on the terms and conditions, award methodology and criteria to award contract has been sought from the Procurement Governance and Regulation Manager.

4.6.2 Advice on maximum award amounts has been sought from the Finance Manager in conjunction with the overall budget.

4.6.3 The contract awarded will be subject to robust financial and quality monitoring procedures led by officers in the Employment and Skills Service and in accordance with the Council's and the ESF's regulations.

4.6.4 The Contract will be closely monitored throughout the year and where necessary, adjustments will be made to ensure the programme is delivered within budget and that learner targets are achieved by the end of the academic year.

4.6.5 A GDPR compliant privacy impact assessment was carried out in May 2019 to ensure that the Council and its external providers on the Adult Learning Framework remain compliant with information governance policies and statute. The Privacy Impact Analysis is detailed at Appendix 3.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Following an open tender process where new providers can be added at any time, 16 organisations are currently on the Dynamic Purchasing System under Category 5 (Professional Support Services). In April 2019 those organisations were provided the opportunity to bid in a competitive mini-competition for a five year £0 value contract to provide on-line assessments for learners and programme participants.

5.2 The recommendations contained in this report will ensure the Council can continue to deliver professional support to learners and participants across Leeds, targeting priority learner groups and those living in priority neighbourhoods.

5.3 These ESF programmes make significant contributions to the delivery of the Best Council Plan 2019-20, which sets out the Council's ambition for Leeds to have a strong economy and to be a compassionate city, tackling poverty and reducing

inequalities. Supporting residents into Adult Learning and work is an important contributor to this ambition.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to approve:

The award of a contract to Skills Forward Limited, commencing on 1 July 2019 and running through to 31 December 2024. In entering this contract no volume guarantee has been granted by the Council

The recommended maximum annual allocation set out in Confidential Appendix 1 to allow individual provider orders to be raised on demand and in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules to enable effective programme management to maximise Council apprenticeships and adult learning outcomes

6.2 Note, that the Head of Projects and Programmes, Employment and Skills Service will be responsible for the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report and, the management of Apprenticeships, ESIF and Employment and Skills Programmes and Adult Learning programmes on behalf of the Council.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 There are no background documents

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.