

Approval to procure: Electoral Services Printing Contract

Date: 15 October 2021

Report of: Head of Electoral Services

Report to: Chief Officer, Elections & Regulatory

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

Electoral Services require a contract to be in place for the printing of all statutory documents in connection with the 2 main functions of the Service, namely electoral registration and elections. The contract is required to assist the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer to exercise his statutory functions. The current contract is due to expire on 1 January 2022.

A project team has been established to undertake a new procurement exercise which is now required to ensure a new contract is in place following the expiration of the current one.

This contract will support the best council plan's priority for safe, strong communities by ensuring that those who are entitled to participate in the democratic process can do so.

The contract will be for up to 4 years, commencing on 28th February 2022, expiring in 2024 (with provision to extend for up to two further years). The approximate value of the contract will be £500k per annum, however this may increase/decrease depending on which elections take place during the life of the contract.

Recommendations

- a) That the Chief Officer, Elections & Regulatory gives approval to procure a new printing contract via competitive tender.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

The contract is required to facilitate production of all specialised electoral documents required for elections, referendums and electoral registration on behalf of the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer appointed by Leeds City Council (Tom Riordan).

The register of electors currently is comprised of over 588,000 electors across 374,500 properties. There are approximately 200,000 electors that have an absent voting preference in place.

The printing of all documents which for the elections/referendums includes: -

- ballot papers

- poll cards (ordinary, proxy & postal)
- postal vote packs
- polling station stationery (corresponding numbers list, polling station registers)
- envelopes

The printing of all documents in connection with electoral registration includes:

- statutory registration forms
- PI refresh
- envelopes

There is a need to have a contract in place to ensure that the printing requirements of Leeds City Council's Electoral Services are adhered to and the project team consider the best approach is to undertake a competitive tender exercise to procure a supplier to fulfil the printing requirements.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

An equality impact screening form has been completed and is attached as appendix 1. There were no issues raised by the screening.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

A project team has been established which include representatives from the Electoral Services team and Procurement and Commercial Services.

Details of the requirement for the tender was included in the key decisions list and published on www.leeds.gov.uk for the required period of 28 calendar days.

What are the resource implications?

The value of the contract is an approximate spend based on previous years spend, although does depend on the number of elections/referendums to be held during the financial year.

Evaluation will be 100% on quality and those companies/organisations that meet the minimum quality thresholds will be shortlisted. The price evaluation will then take place on the shortlist and the lowest-priced bid wins, ensuring that a contract with high quality at the lowest price is awarded.

What are the legal implications?

Exemption from call in and the 5 day report publication period before a decision is taken has been approved by the Executive Member and Director of Communities, Housing and Environment.

Exemption is necessary as the decision is urgent. Immediate commencement of the procurement exercise is required to allow a new contract to be in place to cover the production of election materials for the May 2022 elections.

If the decision was delayed there would be a delay to the production of election materials and failure to meet statutory deadlines within the election timetable.

The decision could not have been taken earlier due to lack of resources to undertake the preparatory work for the procurement exercise within a shorter timeframe.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

Risk: no contract being in place in time for the elections/referendums held after the expiration of the current contract; failure to meet statutory printing provisions and legal challenges.

Mitigation: Approval to procure a new printing contract and by conducting a fully compliant competitive tender with a robust specification and within specified deadlines.

Due to the specialised printing of statutory documents the contract will be awarded to one supplier only with the requirements that the supplier has employees who are members of the professional body (The Association of Electoral Administrators).

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

Where possible we will request documents to be printed on paper with some recycled content or that a policy in place that addresses the environmental factors of mass printing.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

The Internal Service Provider was consulted to explore whether the printing services could be provided in-house however this has been declined (although it may be revisited in the future when new software has been installed and thoroughly tested). Consideration was also given to combining these requirements with those of Revenues and Benefits but due to the specialised nature of the printing required for electoral services this option was also not considered viable.

How will success be measured?

It is good practice to provide planned contract monitoring and management for all contracts, this will assist the Council in achieving value for money and supporting a positive working relationship with the Contractor. A contract management plan will be developed once the contract has been awarded.

What is the timetable for implementation?

October 2021	– scoping, drafting tender documentation and approval to procure
November 2021	– Tender publication
December 2021	– Tender evaluation and Standstill period
February 2022	– contract award procedure and contract mobilisation - contract commencement

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Equality screening form

Background papers

N/A