

## Report to Cabinet

Thursday, 25 January 2024

By the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

### DECISION REQUIRED



**Horsham  
District  
Council**

Partially Exempt

Appendix 1 exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of  
Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

## Electoral Print Tender

### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek authority to award a contract, for the design, supply, print and postage of all relevant material in relation to elections, and electoral registration, to the winning bidder (identified in Appendix 1, exempt) following a robust procurement process which has taken place. The contract will commence 1 April 2024, for a 6-year term. The total contract value is approximately £1.5m. The cost of elections conducted on behalf of other authorities is reimbursed.

### Recommendations

That the Cabinet is recommended:

- i) To approve the award of the contract for electoral print to the highest scoring bidder, on the terms recommended, as detailed in Appendix 1 (exempt);
- ii) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive/Electoral Registration Officer/Returning Officer, in consultation with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to finalise terms and conditions of and enter into a contract with the highest scoring bidder for the electoral print contract

### Reasons for Recommendations

- i) The Council must competitively tender if the value of the goods or services exceeds the current threshold of £213,477 (inclusive of VAT). The current annual spend on electoral print exceeds this threshold.
- ii) To obtain authority to award the subject contract to the winning bidder pursuant to a legally compliant procurement process.

**Background Papers** None

**Wards affected:** All wards

**Contact:** Aisha Nottage, Democratic Services and Elections Manager.

## **Background Information**

### **1 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 The Council has a Specialist Print Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) with an electoral print category to call off electoral print and mail contracts; this specific category expires on 31 March 2024.
- 1.2 A separate contract is to be put in place for Electoral Print and Mail services, for 1 April 2024, to formalise and improve contract management arrangements, assess the quality of suppliers' provision of goods/services, and ensure greater control over costs during the contract term.
- 1.3 The total spend on print and post services for the electoral cycle of 2022-23 was £182k. Based on the cycle of elections over a 6-year period, it is anticipated that the total contract cost would be in the region of £1.5m. A 6-year contract period was agreed, to ensure that the contract would cover the delivery of two UK Parliamentary General Elections.
- 1.4 Several other local authorities had a similar requirement and we therefore decided to undertake a collaborative procurement with Crawley Borough Council, Mid Sussex District Council and Mole Valley District Council.
- 1.5 Due to the specific requirements of each Council, we decided that each contract would be awarded separately.

### **2 Relevant Council policy**

- 2.1 The approaches are compliant with the Council's Procurement Code and supporting policies such as the Sustainable Procurement Charter.
- 2.2 As part of the procurement process, the organisations which submitted a tender for each contract were assessed on the basis of their approach to a number of factors including health and safety and sustainability.

### **3 Details**

- 3.1 The intended procurement processes were presented to the Finance and Resources PDAG on 15 August 2023 by email.
- 3.2 The tender documents were issued on 16 October 2023 via the Council's e-tendering portal. The specification included the provision of design, supply, print and post or delivery services in relation to poll cards, postal votes, ballot papers, and electoral registration forms and letters.
- 3.3 The Council received four bids prior to the deadline of 27 November 2023.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 (Exempt) details the outcome of the evaluation process.

- 3.5 The tender documentation included a contract in a draft form. This ensures that all contractors understand the nature of the contract that they will be expected to enter into. A pricing schedule was provided to each bidder to ensure a price was provided for each service required.
- 3.6 During the tender preparation processes, suppliers raised clarification questions, which were answered. Clarification information was shared with all bidders through the procurement portal.
- 3.7 Bids were evaluated on the basis of the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT), which combines price and quality. The financial viability of the bids received was assessed by authorised officers from each authority. In addition, service representatives from the councils independently evaluated each bidder's quality submission. Bids were evaluated on a 60:40 quality to price basis.
- 3.8 The individual quality scores were presented at a moderation meeting by the service representatives from the Councils, which was attended by a Senior Procurement Officer. The scores were moderated and agreed at this meeting.
- 3.9 The price scores were added to the quality scores to identify the winning Tenderer, who will be awarded the contract.

## **4 Next steps**

- 4.1 The winner bidder has been identified, as detailed in Appendix 1 (exempt).
- 4.2 The contract will be awarded to the winning bidder and all necessary legal documentation will be completed to reflect the award.

## **5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and outcome of consultations**

- 5.1 Electoral Services Managers responsible for overseeing these contracts were part of the project team and were responsible for defining the requirements. Managers and Senior Solicitors from all collaborating authorities were consulted on the approach to the tender and assisted in the development of the tender documents.
- 5.2 Members of the Finance and Resources Policy Development Advisory Group were consulted by email, prior to the commencement of the procurement process.
- 5.3 The Electoral Registration Officer/Returning Officer, Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) and Director of Resources have been consulted, and any recommendations have been incorporated into the report.

## **6 Other courses of action considered but rejected**

- 6.1 The option not to conduct a procurement process, and enter into a 6-year contract, would result in increased costs, and uncertainty for the delivery of print services. As such, this course of action was rejected.

## **7 Resource consequences**

- 7.1 Entering a 6-year contract will provide more cost certainty to the Council. The costs of print and post for UK Parliamentary General Elections and Police and Crime Commissioner elections are reimbursed by central Government. The cost of West Sussex County Council and Parish Council elections are reimbursed by the relevant authority.
- 7.2 Horsham District Council is required to fund the cost of printing and postage for District Council elections, and the costs associated with electoral registration. The current budget has provision for these activities.
- 7.3 The Council is not expecting any significant cost increases in the future, however the costs of postage services are determined by the sub-contractor supplying this service.

## **8 Legal considerations and implications**

- 8.1 The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that (i) the Council has effected a legally compliant procurement process, (ii) the Cabinet has the authority to approve the award of the contract to the winning bidder, and, (iii) the decision to procure the design, supply, print and postage of all relevant material in relation to elections, and electoral registration, sits within the Council's budget and policy framework.
- 8.2 The Electoral Registration Officer/Returning Officer has a duty to deliver the elections, and electoral registration processes, which requires the provision of print and postage services.

## **9 Risk assessment**

- 9.1 There is a low risk that the suppliers would be unable to deliver the print and post services. The documents provided in response to the tender outlined capacity, options for sub-contracting, and details of business continuity arrangements.

## **10 Procurement implications**

- 10.1 The Council has complied with all necessary Procurement Regulations and the Council's Procurement Code. The procurement processes have been overseen by the Council's Senior Procurement Officer, supported by a Senior Solicitor ensuring compliance.

## **11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

- 11.1 The tender documentation and contract ensure that the resulting contractor has a duty to comply with all equalities legislation and pays due regard to any possible future impacts on human rights.

## **12 Environmental implications**

- 12.1 Suppliers were assessed on their approach to sustainability (for example carbon reduction and neutrality, waste, sustainable material etc.) as part of the quality evaluation process for each tender.

## **13 Other Considerations**

- 13.1 Prospective suppliers had to demonstrate the details of arrangements with sub-contractors, where appropriate.