



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Finance and Governance
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Resources (SIRO)
DATE:	Thursday, 13 October 2022

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Finance and Governance
WARD/S AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
KEY DECISION:	Y

SUBJECT: Procurement of the Advice Services

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The current contract for the provision of Advice Services in the borough is due to finish at the end of September 2022. As an interim measure to ensure the existing contract can be reviewed and the specification developed for future years, the existing contract has been extended until the end of June 2023.

1.2 An independent external review of the current service and internal consultation with key departments has provided valuable insight into how the new contract should be designed for the forthcoming years.

1.3 This report seeks approval for the commencement of the procurement process and the award of the new contract for Advice Service provision. In addition, the procurement will include the delivery of housing support to residents covered in the Supported Accommodation Improvement Programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

2.1 Approve the procurement strategy outlined in this paper and;

2.2 Notes that following procurement the Strategic Director of Resources shall subsequently award a contract to an appropriately qualified organisation to deliver Debt, Welfare and Housing Advice Services, and partner with the council, in the delivery of the Supported Housing Improvement Programme.

3. BACKGROUND

The Advice Service is currently managed by a consortium of Shelter and the Women's Centre and is co-located within Blackburn Central Library, Darwen Town Hall and the Women's Centre. The current service specification includes the provision of general debt and welfare advice, and more specialist casework.

The ending of the current contract has provided an opportunity to undertake an external review of the service and consider how the specification should be designed from 2023.

Whilst the external review recognised the high quality service provision and the expertise of organisations delivering the service on behalf of the council, it was acknowledged that improvements could be made to integrate the service into the council's wider objectives.

Our overall aims of the new contract will be to continue to have a high quality co-ordinated and uniform advice service across the Borough that has a more robust governance structure to ensure there is closer working with all council departments.

The procurement process for the Advice Service coincides with the commencement of the government funded Supported Housing Improvement Programme. Included in the delivery plan is for the procurement of a partner organisation to assist with the support of individuals who reside in supported accommodation. The requirements for the provision of both Advice Services and the Improvement Programme will therefore be procured together in one contract award.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

4.1 Service specification

The revised Advice Service specification will continue to require the provider to deliver an all-round service that incorporates the preventative and early advice many customers to the service need, and, the high level expert casework for the more complex cases.

During the review of the current service provision and data, it has become evident that the majority of the customers have housing needs in addition to Debt and Welfare requirements. The new specification will therefore incorporate housing advice to ensure a full rounded service is delivered to the residents of the borough. Failure to incorporate this aspect of support would adversely affect customer outcomes, and potentially result in many customers being referred to other providers to receive housing advice.

4.2 Accommodation

The location of the Advice Service has been discussed for a number of years and it is expected that in the immediate future at least, the delivery of the advice service will remain at Blackburn Central Library.

It is hoped that an alternative location can identified at some time in the future. To ensure that this can take place, the contract will reflect the council's ambition.

4.3 Delivery approach

Where potential organisations do not have all of the necessary skills and experience to deliver against the specification, they will be encouraged to develop a co-ordinated, consortia approach to help deliver comprehensive advice services.

4.4 Tender and Timescales

The tender process will be an open procedure and be evaluated on the basis of 85% quality and 15% social value. The detail of the evaluation criteria will be approved by the Head of Service – Contracts and Procurement.

It is expected that the procurement of the new service will be completed by the end of November 2022. This time scale allows for the Supported Housing Improvement Programme element to commence in December 2023, and give any new supplier of the main Advice Service the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the contract in July 2023, and, if the current provider is unsuccessful, an appropriate period of time to plan relocation.

The contract will also allow for the expansion of debt, welfare and housing advice resources if additional funding is made available by the council.

4.5 Contract Length

The main contract will be for a 3 year period with the option to extend for 1 plus 1 years.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications arising directly from this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no plans to change the current Advice Service budget of £150,000 per annum.

The Supported Housing element will be £120,000 per annum for 2 years, 4 months. This funding will be allocated to BwD Council from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Procurements will be undertaken in line with the Council's Contract Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Contracts will be in a form approved by legal officers in the Contracts and Procurement team. It is likely that award of the contract to another provider would result in a transfer of staff pursuant to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA link here*)

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

10. CONSULTATIONS

There are no consultation requirements arising from this report.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
-----------------	----------

CONTACT OFFICER:	Andy Ormerod
-------------------------	---------------------

DATE:	13 th October 2022
--------------	-------------------------------

BACKGROUND PAPER:	
------------------------------	--