



## **Report for: Cabinet**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	27 July 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Electoral Print Contract
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Jessica Farmer - Interim Director of Legal and Governance Services
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Stephen Greek - Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communications and Customer Experience  Councillor David Ashton - Portfolio Holder for Finance and Human Resources
<b>Exempt:</b>	No, except for appendices 1,2,3,4,5,6,6A, 6B which are exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 because they contain information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	Yes
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All
<b>Enclosures:</b>	<b>Appendix 1</b> Declaration (Exempt) <b>Appendix 2</b> SQ Scoring Methodology (Exempt) <b>Appendix 3</b> ITT Document Electoral Print (Exempt) <b>Appendix 4</b> Electoral Print Specification (Exempt) <b>Appendix 5</b> Draft Framework agreement (Exempt) <b>Appendix 6</b> Electoral Print Price Schedule (Exempt) <b>Appendix 6A</b> Electoral Print Price Schedule (Exempt) <b>Appendix 6B</b> Electoral Print Price Schedule (Exempt)

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out proposals for the Council to enter into a Framework Agreement jointly with the London Borough of Barnet for the provision of Electoral Services printing and postage requirements for a period of 3 years, with an option to extend for a further year. Electoral printing is highly specialised, therefore it has typically been arranged separately to the Council's main printing contracts.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Approve the re-procurement of a Framework Agreement jointly with the London Borough of Barnet (or by Harrow alone if Barnet does not proceed) for the provision of Electoral Services printing and postage requirements for a period of 3 years, with an option to extend for a further year.
2. Approve the tender documents.
3. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Legal and Governance, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communications & Customer Experience, and the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Human Resources, to make any necessary changes to the tender documents following approval.
4. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Legal and Governance to appoint providers to the Framework and to award call-off contracts from the Framework.

### **Reason:**

Entering into a framework agreement will provide clear and robust arrangements for:

- The 'best in class' levels of value-for-money, quality assurance, resilience and supplier service for its electoral print and postage requirements.
- Obtaining and awarding print and postage contracts for appropriate electoral services activities.
- A solution which efficiently supports and facilitates compliant electoral processes and the management and delivery of future elections and other electoral activities within the borough.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

Harrow currently has over 95,000 residential properties on the Electoral Register with 191,000 registered voters and of these, over 38,000 are currently registered to receive a postal vote.

## Background

1. In March 2019 the Council established a Framework Agreement jointly with the London Borough of Barnet for the provision of Electoral Services printing and postage requirements for a period of 3 years, with an option to extend for a further year. This procurement was facilitated and led by the London Borough of Barnet.
2. The Framework was entered into as electoral printing is highly specialised with only a limited number of suppliers able to provide the service and hence it has typically been arranged separately to the council's main printing contracts.
3. The framework lot structure is detailed in the table below:

Lot No.	Description
Lot 1	Elections Print and Post
Lot 2	Statutory Registration, Annual Canvass, Household Notification Letters (HNL)
Lot 3	Innovation, New Ways of Working and Ad Hoc Activity

4. These services procured from the Framework ensure the continued provision of:
  - Clear and robust arrangement for requesting, obtaining and awarding print and postage contracts for appropriate electoral services activities;
  - A solution which efficiently supports and facilitates compliant electoral processes and the management and delivery of future elections and other electoral activities within the borough; and
  - Value-for-money, quality assurance and supplier service for electoral print and postage requirements.
  - The service will meet the specific print and postage needs of any elections that are held within the contract period and the requirements of the Electoral Registration Service, to include Individual Electoral Registration, the Annual Canvass and the Absent Vote Identifier Refresh as well as any changes implemented as a result of the Elections Act.
5. Electoral Service requirements will include:
  - All borough-wide elections (including but not limited to: Parliamentary, Local, London Mayoral and GLA, Referendums, etc.);
  - Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and Annual Canvass , Household Notification Letters requirements;

- Absent Voter Identifier Refresh requirements; and
  - Other ad hoc requirements that may arise and also result from technology innovation or legislative changes.
6. The overall demand for this service can be affected by snap elections.

## **Current situation**

7. In April 2023 the Council directly awarded a call off contract to Civica Election Services under the framework for all the Council Electoral Print requirements for a period of 6 months with the option to extend a further 6 months at the discretion of the Council. This temporary arrangement was agreed to allow the council to maximise the benefits from the existing agreement and allow time for a service review, governance process and facilitate the tender of a replacement framework.
8. This report is to seek agreement to re-procure a Framework Agreement jointly with the London Borough of Barnet for the provision of Electoral Services printing and postage requirements for a period of 3 years, with an option to extend for a further year. The proposed Framework agreement will cover any printing requirements as a result of the implementations of the Elections Act (i.e the new format of the Poll Card).

## **Environmental Implications**

9. Any identified suppliers to the Framework will be required to demonstrate their commitment to the London Borough of Harrow's target to be carbon neutral by 2030.

## **Data Protection Implications**

10. Any identified suppliers to the Framework will be required to sign a Data Sharing Agreement with the Authority.

## **Risk Management Implications**

11. Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? - Yes
12. Separate risk register in place? - No
13. The relevant risks contained in the register are attached/summarised below. The following key risks should be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
The existing services provided by Civica Election Services will cease on 30th October 2023, before a replacement framework is live.	<p>The existing services contract contains a 6-month extension option for the continuation of service up to 29/04/2024.</p> <p>A project and evaluation team will be formed by officers from both Councils to oversee the award of the tender and will review timelines every two weeks when meeting to ensure relevant deadlines are met</p>	<b>Green</b>
Unsuccessful or delayed procurement process causing a gap in service delivery	<p>The existing services contract contains a 6-month extension option for the continuation of service up to 29/04/2024.</p> <p>A project and evaluation team will be formed by officers from both Councils to oversee the award of the tender and will review timelines every two weeks when meeting to ensure relevant deadlines are met</p>	<b>Green</b>

## Procurement Implications

14 The previous joint framework is seen as successful and therefore agreement is sought to continue this working arrangement.

14.1 In August 2023, it is proposed The London Borough of Harrow on behalf of itself and the London Borough of Barnet will issue an Invitation to Tender (ITT) to all interested organisations as set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. A project and evaluation team has been formed by officers from both Councils.

14.2 On 9th May 2023, a Prior information notice (PIN) was issued on the Find a Tender service to notify the market of the upcoming procurement (prior information only). The intention of the PIN is to warm the market and ensure a good tender response.

14.3 The Council would conduct the procurement using an open procedure as set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, as amended (the "Regulations") for the purpose of procuring the Supplies & Services described in the Specification. The value of the service is expected to be above financial

thresholds for Supplies & Services and will be advertised and tendered via the London Tenders Portal with the appropriate UK Notices.

## **Options considered**

**Option 1: To not replace the expired Framework and continue with the current supplier of the Printing and Mailing Services detailed in this report.**

This means the Council would purchase these services on a spot basis after the current arrangements expire, leaving the Council open to potential challenge by not meeting its obligations regarding the selection of suppliers and the award of contracts.

**Option 2: Use of an external “Print Services” Framework to facilitate a further competition to procure Printing and Mailing Services.**

This means the Council would facilitate a further competition with pre-appointed providers, awarded onto a Framework owned and managed by an external organisation. Using an external framework would limit the Council's ability to tailor the service to its requirements and standards.

There would also be associated framework fees potentially increasing the service cost when using an external framework.

**Option 3: To procure a replacement Framework**

A Framework owned by the Council will allow for alternate organisations to be awarded if the lead provider is unable to meet its obligations, in addition to allowing for future innovation on Lot 3. It would also allow the continued partnership with The London Borough of Barnet in relation to these services.

**Option 3a: To procure a replacement Framework following the “Restricted Procedure” to facilitate a full tender exercise.**

This means the council would issue an ITT and Selection Questionnaire (SQ) on the London Tenders Portal allowing 30 days (minimum) for response.

Stage 1: SQ responses would be submitted, assessed and a set number of the highest ranked organisations who meet the specified criteria would be invited to Tender and allowed an additional 25 days (minimum) for response.

Stage 2: Tender responses would then be submitted, assessed and an award recommendation would be made.

This option is seen as unnecessary and will elongate the procurement process.

**Option 3b: To procure a replacement Framework following the “Open Procedure” to facilitate a full tender exercise.**

This means the council would issue an ITT and SQ on the London Tenders Portal allowing 30 days (minimum) for response.

The SQ and Tender responses would then be submitted and assessed in a single stage.

Following the “Open Procedure” to facilitate a full tender exercise is the preferred option. Electoral print is a specialist market, and few organisations can meet the necessary requirements of the larger print market. The previous tender to establish a Framework for these services in 2018 received a total of 12 expressions of interest and 5 tender submissions.

**Option 3 and 3b** are seen as the preferred Options to procure these services.

The top-level evaluation criteria will be:

**Price 30%**

There is healthy competition within the Electoral Print market and 30% weighting for price is seen as sufficient for achieving value for money. The prices contained in the Pricing Matrix will be fixed for the duration of the contract term.

**Quality 60%**

Quality is regarded as the key criteria for these services and has been allocated 60% of the overall score. This is due to the necessity of having a secure, resilient, and reliable supplier base for the Councils Electoral Print supply.

**Social Value 10%**

As required by council policy 10% of the weighting has been allocated to Social Value.

Appendix 1 of this report contains the proposed draft tender documents.

## **Legal Implications**

15 The ERO has a statutory duty to maintain a register of Parliamentary electors and a register of local government electors.

15.1 The RO is responsible for the running of an election and for ensuring that it is run in accordance with the law.

The proposed Framework Agreement will provide the necessary quality and assurance to ensure that the ERO and RO is in the best possible position to deliver their statutory electoral obligations.

15.2 A fair and transparent procurement procedure in compliance with public procurement rules is being followed to procure suppliers for Electoral Services printing and postage requirements.

15.3 HB Public Law will provide Harrow and Barnet with legal advice as required during the entire procedure from its conception and will continue to provide advice and support up until a contract is agreed and implemented.

## **Financial Implications**

16. Funding for UK Parliamentary Elections and Referenda is provided by the Government. Funding for Greater London Authority Elections is provided by Greater London Authority. However, funding for Local Government Elections and the maintenance of the electoral register must be met from Council resources. The value of the contract to be awarded via this Framework Agreement must be contained within the existing budget of Electoral Services.

## **Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

17. There are no equalities implications from the proposal as it relates to the selection of successful bidder(s) for Electoral Services printing and posting requirements

## **Council Priorities**

- 1. A council that puts residents first**
- 2. A borough that is clean and safe**
- 3. A place where those in need are supported**

The proposed agreement if implemented will contribute towards all of the Council's Priorities by seeking to achieve robust and reliable printing and postage requirements for Electoral Services. Elections provide residents with the opportunity to vote for democratically elected representatives who provide the political leadership for the Corporate Priorities.

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

### **Statutory Officer: Sharon Daniels**

Signed on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

**Date: 20/06/2023**

### **Statutory Officer: Stephen Dorrian**

Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date: 19/06/2023**

### **Chief Officer: Jessica Farmer**

Signed off by the Corporate Director



**Date: 19/06/2023**

**Procurement Officer: Martin Trim**

Signed on behalf of the Head of Procurement

**Date: 21/06/2023**

**Head of Internal Audit: Neale Burns**

Signed on behalf of the Interim Head of Internal Audit

**Date: 21/06/23**

**Has the Portfolio Holder(s) been consulted? Yes**

## **Mandatory Checks**

**Ward Councillors notified: NO, as it impacts on all Wards**

**EqlA carried out: NO - there are no equalities implications.**

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Vishal Seegoolam, Democratic, Electoral and Registration Services Manager, 020 8424 1158,  
[Vishal.Seegoolam@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Vishal.Seegoolam@harrow.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:**

- [Report Submitted to Cabinet on 17 January 2019 Electoral Print Contract](#)

**Call-in waived by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee - NO**