
REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	21 April 2016
Subject:	Concessionary Travel Mobility Assessments – Award of Contract
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting, Corporate Director of Resources and Commercial
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Major Contracts
Exempt:	No, except for Appendix 1 to this report which is exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 as it includes information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council and the bidders.
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Analysis and evaluation of tenders including financials Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report requests authority to award a contract for the provision of clinical mobility assessments regarding concessionary travel applications, as required by Paragraph 6.4 of the Contract Procedure Rules.

This report summarises the procurement process for this contract and, following the evaluation of final tenders, recommends that the contract should

be awarded to Access Independent Limited.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the analysis and evaluation findings set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
2. Agree recommendation not to appoint a contractor regarding LOT 2, the general administration of the concessionary travel service.
3. Approve the appointment of Access Independent Limited to deliver LOT 1, namely the provision of mobility assessments / clinical assessments regarding non-automatic applications for Blue Badges, Taxi Cards and Freedom Passes.
4. Approve the appointment for an initial term starting on 1st June 2016 and ending on 31st May 2020 (therefore representing a period of four years of service provision), and enable contract documentation to be finalised expeditiously to ensure operational commencement from 1st June 2016.
5. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Resources, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Major Contracts, to finalise any outstanding contractual matters.
6. Agree that the Director of Legal and Governance Services can seal the contract on the Council's behalf when the contract documentation has been prepared.

Reason:

Cabinet approved the procurement of a contractor to support the assessment of applications for the concessionary travel assessment service (which includes Blue Badges, Freedom Passes and Taxi Cards) on 17th September 2015 with a view to establishing an operational commencement date of 1st June 2016.

Following the completion of the tender process, an analysis and evaluation of each bidder's tender was undertaken. Based upon these results, the above recommendations are proposed.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Introduction

Harrow Council provides the following concessionary transport services for eligible residents:

- **Freedom Pass:** The scheme allows free travel in the Greater London area on buses, tube, national rail (London network), DLR

and Tramlink, for older and disabled people who reside in the Borough. It also allows free bus travel on local bus services anywhere in England. The Harrow Discretionary Disabled Person's Freedom Pass only allows travel within Greater London.

- **Blue Badge:** The Blue Badge scheme gives free and dedicated parking close to amenities for drivers and passengers with mobility-related disabilities, or who are blind. Blue Badge holders are able to park on yellow lines for up to three hours and are also exempt from the central London congestion charge. A pass is valid for a maximum 3-year period when holders have to reapply;
- **Taxicard:** for people with serious difficulties with walking (including breathing problems and sight loss) to travel in taxis at reduced rates.

These services are funded by the Council and remain subject to review. Overall, Harrow contributes £9.83m annually towards the cost of Freedom Passes and spends several hundred thousand pounds more administering these services. Considering that demand for these services grows year on year (claimant numbers rising yearly in line with Harrow's growing older population), it is imperative that all new applicants are assessed for eligibility in order to ensure that residents remain properly entitled to the concession/s, and that Harrow Council reviews all existing holders periodically.

It is therefore imperative that there is no disruption to the assessment service and that this continues seamlessly, delivering travel concessions to some of our most vulnerable residents. The existing mobility assessment contract with Access Independent Ltd will cease in May 2016. A decision to procure a contractor to support the assessment of applications for the concessionary travel assessment service was agreed by Cabinet on 17th September 2015.

2.2 Recommendation

The Council invited tenders for the provision of Mobility Assessments using the Public Procurement Rules 2015. The value of the proposed Service is higher than the current EU financial threshold for Services and so the procurement and award of the contract is subject to the full application of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Harrow's contract was offered as a framework agreement to allow other authorities to join this contract. The headroom in the contract (up to £2m) allows for the potentiality of other local authorities joining Harrow's contract once awarded, but indirectly provides additional value for money for Harrow due to the "potential economies of scale" for providers.

The procurement process sought to appoint contractors for 2 Lot's, namely

- Lot 1: Comprising Non Automatic Applications for each of the three travel concessions;
- Lot 2: Comprising Automatic Applications for each of the three travel concessions plus full administration of the Concessionary Travel Service.

Services under Lot 1 are already delivered by an external contractor (Access Independent Ltd). Services for Lot 2 are currently delivered in-house.

Harrow is required by national guidance to

- have in place a mobility assessment contract with an independent company of health professionals. The contract considers all new applications and renewals under the non-automatic criteria &
- a concessionary travel administration service that considers and assesses automatic applications and administers renewals and reviews

Whilst the quality of the bids was of a high standard for Lot 1 (the mobility clinical assessments), the quality of the bids for Lot 2 was below the acceptable threshold set out in the evaluation criteria. As such the evaluation recommends appointment of a contractor for Lot 1 and recommends no appointment for the services under Lot 2; in effect keeping this service in-house.

The scope of the contract to be awarded re Lot 1 is comparable with that for the existing concessionary travel service and is scheduled to commence from 1st June 2016. It is for a four year term only.

Legal Implications

The Council's Legal Service (HB Public Law), have been involved in the project since it commenced and have advised on the procurement route, the procurement documentation and the contractual documentation. HB Public Law confirms that the procurement has been carried out in compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

Duty of Best Value - Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999, Local Authorities are under a general Duty to secure Best Value services. The duty is to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness." The recommendations in this report will assist with the achievement of Best Value.

The award of the contract is also subject to the Council's own Standing Orders in respect of High Value contracts and Financial Regulations. As a result, Cabinet approval will be required for the award of the contract and a mandatory ten calendar day standstill period will be applicable to the contract award. Additionally, contract finalisation arrangements will also need to be made before the contract can be signed.

Financial Implications

The contract provides the Council with a unit cost for different types of clinical mobility assessments for a specified annual volume of work. Unit costs allow the Council to only pay for assessments actually carried out. The contract is also flexible and caters for both a reduction or increase in mobility assessments.

The cost of this contract will be met from within existing budgets held by the Collections & Housing Benefits Service. No provision has been made within

the contract terms for annual price increases and consequently, bidders were required to factor any inflationary provision within their pricing, as appropriate.

The requirement for a parent company guarantee and performance bond was considered as part of the process but not required, as each of the five bidders that were shortlisted were assessed as having sufficient financial resources.

Performance Issues

The recommended option proposed within this report for the delivery of services is not anticipated to impact upon performance levels. However it is intended to sustain and improve on existing performance levels.

Environmental Impact

There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations set out within this report.

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? Yes

Equalities implications

Public Sector Equality Duty - Decision makers must have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions.

Consideration of the duties must precede the decision. It is important that Cabinet has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material. The public sector equality duty is set out at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and is as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) Tackle prejudice, and
- (b) Promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act. The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race,
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken and completed. A potential for adverse impact has not been identified for this proposal within the predictive Equalities Impact Assessment attached at Appendix A. .

Corporate Priorities

The recommendations contained within this report supports the Council's corporate priority of "Making a difference for the vulnerable". Appointing a contractor to continue assessing mobility claimants ensures those in need of concessionary travel concessions are awarded them quickly and are assessed fairly and in a consistent manner.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Sharon Daniels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 04 March 2016		
Name: Sarah Inverary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 09 March 2016		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO
EqIA carried out:	Yes
EqIA cleared by:	Yes Alex Dewsnap – Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Fern Silverio (Head of Service – Collections & Housing Benefits),
Tel: 020-8736-6818 / email: fern.silverio@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Call-In Waived by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	NOT APPLICABLE <i>[Call-in applies]</i>
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