



Executive
17 June 2013

**Report from the Director of
Children and Families**

Wards Affected:
[ALL]

**Authority to tender a contract for Information Advice
and Guidance for families attending Children's Centres**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report concerns the procurement of Information Advice and Guidance for families of children aged 0-5 attending Children's Centres in Brent. This report requests approval to invite tenders in respect of information, advice and guidance for families of children aged 0-5 attending Children's Centres, as required by Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89.
- 1.2 The report seeks the Executive's approval of the project timetable and selection criteria for the procurement exercise as set out in section 4 below.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the pre - tender considerations and the criteria to be used to evaluate tenders for an Information Advice and Guidance Service at Children's Centres as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report be approved.
- 2.2 That officers be authorised to invite tenders and evaluate them in accordance with the approved evaluation criteria.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Council currently provides through its Children's Centres free information and advice to families on a range of subjects which is confidential, impartial and independent. The service provides advice to families on benefits, training, debt, housing, immigration and other challenges. The aim is to diminish the inequalities suffered by families with very young children and more specifically to tackle child poverty. The service contributes to meeting the strategic priorities outlined in the Children's and Young People Plan and Children's Centres commissioning strategy outcomes:

- Safeguarding health and well being
- Accelerate the rate of improvement of underachieving groups, narrowing and eliminating gaps
- Improve access for the most vulnerable groups.

3.2 The service is currently delivered by the Council's provider, the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), through 12 Children's Centres with half-day weekly sessions at each centre. In all there are 728 sessions a year held. In 2012/13, 1,208 individual parents and carers were provided with assistance.

Children's Centre	Carers Reached
Alperton Children's Centre	120
Church Lane Children's Centre	107
Curzon Crescent Children's Centre	125
Fawood Children's Centre	122
Granville Plus Children's Centre	65
Harmony Children's Centre	68
St. Raphael's Children's Centre	94
The Willow Children's Centre	108
Three Trees Children's Centre	158
Treetops Children's Centre	112
Welcome Children's Centre	122
Wembley Children's Centre	93
Total number of individual Carers Seen at an Activity*	1,208

3.3 The service involves one to one advice and information sessions at each Children's Centre for 0.5 day per week. These sessions are booked in advance and available to families with young children with benefits, debt, housing and/or immigration needs. The service provider is paid a fixed annual fee and assists parents and carers with access to

full benefits and other income entitlements for their family, take up of training and childcare opportunities, develops and helps implement strategies for managing debt including rent arrears, completes applications for suitable housing and for signposting appropriate legal and other advice regarding housing and immigration. The service is equivalent to that provided at CAB's offices but made accessible to (mainly) women who find attendance at a Children's Centre far more accessible than any other venue. Current take-up is mainly around debt and poverty, reflecting the economic climate. In 2013, a total of 14,705 children are registered at a Children's Centre, with 1,904 categorised as disadvantaged. In our most disadvantaged areas such as Wembley and Harlesden over 60% of children classified as disadvantaged are registered with a Children's Centre (and this percentage has been increasing year on year) so it is clear that the centres are a good way of targeting services such as advice and guidance.

3.4 The current intention is to tender a service on the same specification as the current one. However as the budget for 2014/15 becomes clearer, it may be that the service requires some reconfiguration to take account of reduced resources. This might involve reducing the availability of delivery from some children's centres or operating a locality approach with prioritisation of support in localities such as Harlesden and Wembley where need is greatest. In such circumstances, tenderers may be asked to submit two bids (Option A on current budget estimate and Option B on a reduced budget estimate). Alternatively, provision may have to be made within the contract itself that allows for variation in scope once the contract has been awarded.

3.5 The recent Brent parent impact and satisfaction study involving 1100 local families with children aged 0-4 years interviewed 120 accessing the current CAB services. In more than two thirds of cases, families identified specific beneficial impacts associated with this service. This includes assistance with access to benefits entitlements, childcare, housing assistance and improved management of household debt. Given that Job Centre Plus staff are now attending in some Children's Centres, in the new contract period officers will work towards the services being more oriented towards getting parents into employment as a sustainable solution to poverty.

4.0 Pre-tender considerations

4.1 In accordance with Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89, pre-tender considerations have been set out below for the approval of the Executive:

Ref.	Requirement	Response
(i)	The nature of the service.	Provision of Information, advice and guidance for families of children aged 0-5 attending Children's centres in Brent.

(ii)	The estimated value.	The future estimated value of the contract over the maximum five year term of the contract is an estimated £875k. (3 years plus 2 year extension.)	
(iii)	The contract term.	3 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years.	
(iv)	The tender procedure to be adopted including whether any part of the procedure will be conducted by electronic means and whether there will be an e-auction.	<p>There is a relatively developed market for these services, however there are only a few providers operating within the market; therefore, officers recommend the use of a single stage tender procedure in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.</p> <p>As Social Care and education transactions are 'Part B Services', under the Public Contract Regulations 2006 ("the Regulations"); the Regulations apply only in part to the tender namely, (adoption of a technical specification and forwarding a Contract Award notice etc.)</p>	
v)	The procurement timetable.	Indicative dates are: Adverts placed Deadline for tender submissions Panel evaluation Report recommending Contract award circulated internally for comment Executive approval Contract start date	5 9 13 7 10 13 8 10 13-29 10 13 6 11 13-22 11 13 Dec meeting tbc April 2 14
(vi)	The evaluation criteria and process.	<p>A single stage tender process involves firstly evaluation of tenderers' responses to the Authority's PQQ (pre-qualification questionnaire) and then evaluation of the tender proposal. The PQQ evaluation is to ensure that the Council's minimum standards of financial standing and technical capacity are met. The panel will evaluate the tenders against the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenderers proposals for meeting the requirements of the specification • Ability to work in partnership with the Council and its stakeholders • Children's safeguarding issues • Price • There will be a 60/40 split in terms of quality and price 	
(vii)	Any business risks associated with entering the contract	No specific business risks are considered to be associated with entering into the proposed contract.	
(viii)	The Council's Best Value duties.	The procurement process and on-going contractual requirement will ensure that the council's best value obligations are met.	
(ix)	Any staffing implications, including TUPE and pensions.	See section 6 below	

(x)	The relevant financial, legal and other considerations.	See sections 5 and 7 below
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- 4.2 The Executive is asked to give its approval to these proposals as set out in the recommendations and in accordance with Standing Order 89.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council's Contract Standing Orders state that contracts for supplies and services exceeding £500k or works contracts exceeding £1million shall be referred to the Executive for approval to invite tenders and in respect of other matters identified in Standing Order 89.
- 5.2 The estimated value of this future contract is £175k per annum with an estimated value over the life of the contract (3 plus 2 years) of £875k. The current budget is £175k per annum. Value for money savings are expected to be achieved as a result of the competitive tendering exercise (target 3%).
- 5.3 It is anticipated that the cost of this contract will be funded from the Early Years and Family Support Services, Children and Families Budget

6.0 Staffing Implications

- 6.1 This service is currently provided by an external contractor (CAB) Citizen's Advice and there are no implications for Council staff arising from retendering the contract.
- 6.2 It is anticipated that if the tender is won by an external contractor other than the incumbent then the Transfer of Employment (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, ("TUPE") is likely to apply so as to transfer from the current to the new contractor those employees of the current contractor who spend all or most of their working time on the activities taken over by the new contractor.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The estimated value of the contract over its lifetime is in excess of £875,000 and therefore the procurement and award of this contract is subject to the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in respect of High Value contracts.
- 7.2 Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, the Council is under a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need, and

promote the upbringing of children by their families by providing a range of services appropriate to those children's needs.

- 7.3 The provision of information, advice and guidance services to families of children aged 0-5 attending Children's centres are classified as Part B Services under the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 ("EU Procurement Regulations") and as such are not subject to the full application of the EU Procurement Regulations (save that there must be a technical specification contained in the contract documents and on award of contract the Council must issue a Contract Award Notice in the OJEU within 48 days of award). The services are however, subject to the overriding EU Treaty principles of equality of treatment, fairness and transparency in the award of contracts.
- 7.4 Once the tendering process is undertaken Officers will report back to the Executive in accordance with Contract Standing Orders, explaining the process undertaken in tendering the contracts and recommending award.

8.0 Diversity Implications

- 8.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and on the basis that the service that is contracted is the same as currently provided, officers believe that there are no specific diversity implications.
- 8.2 However if, as indicated in paragraph 3.4 above, tenderers are invited to submit two alternative bids on the basis of two different scopes of service, then acceptance of the option with the reduced scope of service could have diversity implications. If officers go down this route, then any award report recommending a lower scope of service will need to address the diversity implications of that recommendation since the service is in place to address inequalities.

9.0 Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

- 9.1 Since 31st January 2013, the council, in common with all public authorities subject to the EU Regulations, has been under a duty pursuant to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to consider how the services being procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area; and how, in conducting the procurement process, the Council might act with a view to securing that improvement; and whether the council should undertake consultation. This duty applies to the procurement of the proposed contract as Part B Services over the threshold for application of the EU Regulations are subject to the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

- 9.2 The service being procured has as its primary aim improving the social and economic well being of some of the most disadvantaged groups in Brent. Users are regularly consulted to ensure the service meets their needs and as identified through the Parent Impact Study the support is positively rated by families with needs related to benefits, housing and related assistance.
- 9.3 There is a very limited market for the delivery of these services, however, officers will endeavour to describe the scope of service in such a way as to further meet the requirements of the Act (ie in addition to paragraph 10.2 above) during the procurement process..

10.0 Background Papers

- 10.1 A copy of the current specification for the service is attached.

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