



Cabinet
14 April 2015

**Report from the
Chief Operating Officer**

Wards Affected:
[ALL]

Arboricultural Services Contract

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out options and identifies a preferred course of action for the future procurement of the Council's Arboricultural Services Contract.
- 1.2 The Council has two realistic procurement options for this contract, which expires in March 2016: Re-tendering the contract, with the procurement exercise commencing immediately after Cabinet decision; or extending the contract by two years. The latter is recommended as the preferred option in order to improve the Council's market position, and facilitate greater long-term efficiencies, service improvements and savings.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet agrees:

- 2.1 To extend the Arboricultural Services Contract by two years to 31 March 2018, noting the rationale for doing so as set out in this report;
- 2.2 To accept the negotiated service improvements offered by the incumbent contractor for the contract extension period (summarised in paragraph 5.9);
- 2.3 To commence a programme of removal and replacement of lime trees in the poorest condition, to improve the quality of the Council's tree stock; and
- 2.4 To the establishment of an intra-authority and intra-service working group, aimed at sharing knowledge and securing a formal Trees Partnership ahead of future tree maintenance procurement.

3.0 The Current Contract

- 3.1 The current street trees maintenance contract with Gristwood & Toms was let in 2012 for a term of four years (to April 2016), with an option for the council to extend the contract by up to 2 years. The contract was priced according to the estimated volume of work being delivered against the tendered schedule of rates, covering the full range of activities undertaken to maintain the street tree stock. The 2015/16 value of the contract is £450k p.a. There are no concerns over the quality of the contractor's work, and it is considered that the 2011 contract award process was sound and represented good value for money.
- 3.2 The Contract Specification breaks down specific work activities (e.g. pruning, pollarding, planting, etc.), and sets out the Council's expectations for the undertaking of technical maintenance works; this is aimed at ensuring that works are delivered to a standard which does not prejudice the health of the tree stock. The majority of these works are undertaken as part of an annual programme, but some works are undertaken on an ad-hoc basis where there is a requirement for immediate action to eliminate potential risks.
- 3.3 There is also an element of fixed cost in the Contract, associated with ground works. These works ensure that the Council meets its statutory requirements by keeping the highway clear. They include the removal of epicormic (basal) growth from the Council's lime trees, and the removal of low hanging branches which may impede the footway or carriageway.
- 3.4 There is provision within the contract for the Contractor to coordinate and undertake emergency works; the importance of this service was underlined in the 2013/2014 financial year when a series of storms felled a number of trees on the Highway.
- 3.5 Tree planting is carried out on an annual basis under the provisions of the contract. The Parking and Lighting service retains a small budget for tree planting, although additional external funding can be secured from a variety of sources.

4.0 Soft Market Testing and Partner Opportunities

Soft Market Testing

- 4.1 Soft market testing was carried out with support from Procurement in February 2015, to assist in identifying the future service requirements for the Council's street trees contract and identify any obstacles to greater competition.
- 4.2 Three established arboriculture companies were consulted, specifically chosen to have the capacity to manage the borough's entire tree stock and with sufficient business experience to advise on the areas of questioning.

They were asked to provide responses to specific questions. The detailed results of the testing are set out in Appendix A.

- 4.3 Two companies were large organisations with a proven track record of delivering London-wide services. The third, a smaller company, is based in northern England and new to the London market.
- 4.4 Several consistent themes emerged from the results of the Soft Market Testing which should be considered.
- 4.5 The availability of a depot would make the bidding process more competitive. There are several sites within Brent parkland that may be suitable for this purpose. There is potential for a shared facility with Veolia.
- 4.6 A larger contract would generate economies of scale, either through the inclusion of housing land in the contract or by letting a contract covering at least two boroughs. In order to achieve competitive rates, there would need to be a commitment to a guaranteed volume of work for the term of the contract.
- 4.7 Programming work reduces cost. One-off ad-hoc work requires a crew to be diverted from their planned work area; this adds travel time and fuel costs as well as impacting on scheduled work.
- 4.8 Having the council's inventory stored on an asset management system would be advantageous. In-depth knowledge of stock improves the quality of programming, and would increase the productivity of operatives by facilitating clearer works orders.
- 4.9 The council would benefit from having a full survey completed before the Invitation to Tender goes out. This would increase the amount of programmed work, and enable cyclical planning to generate savings.

Partner Opportunities

- 4.10 A partnership with a neighbouring authority could potentially double the value of our contract and would provide an opportunity for savings generated through:
 - Economies of scale
 - Shared fleet & plant
 - Shared contract management
 - A shared operational base
- 4.11 The opportunity to partner with a neighbouring authority could offer significant benefits. Time would be needed to secure those benefits, however. We would first need to agree a contract with the partnering authority setting out the terms of our partnership, and then commence work on harmonising a service specification. This would need to be completed ahead of tendering. Failure to harmonise would reduce our ability to secure economies of scale (in effect, we

would still have two contract methods and the opportunity for efficiencies would not be realised).

- 4.12 The Council would also have the opportunity to ensure that other internal users of tree maintenance services could use the same contract. These include the Parks Service (with a small budget of £10k per annum) and the Brent Housing Partnership (BHP). The Brent Housing Partnership has a strong interest in partnering on procurement activities. BHP is extending its trees maintenance contract with City Suburban by one more year, and has highlighted a number of potential synergies and savings which could be achieved through specific collaboration with the street trees service (including shared client arrangements).
- 4.13 The London Borough of Ealing is currently exploring procurement options around its future management of tree services, and has been approached to explore the potential for partnership working.
- 4.14 The London Borough of Harrow has also been approached. Harrow let their trees maintenance contract in February 2015 for three years (with an option to extend by one year). The borough could therefore be a potential partner, and further discussion with LB Harrow will take place.
- 4.15 There are potential advantages and disadvantages of collaboration:
 - 4.15.1 **Advantages:** Potential economies of scale; contract overheads could be shared; increased opportunity for identifying depot space; reduced management costs. There could also be opportunities on the client side to share invoicing costs and contract management;
 - 4.15.2 **Disadvantages:** Risk of differing client interests; misaligned service specifications; differing strategic objectives; and differing tree stock

5.0 **Options Appraisal**

- 5.1 In order to provide the evidence base for an informed decision, a number of opportunities for service development and savings have been reviewed, as well as considering identified risks and service deficiencies. Steps that have been taken so far include:
 - 5.1.1 Negotiations have taken place with the incumbent contractor, Gristwood & Toms, to determine what added value would be provided to the Council should the current contract be extended;
 - 5.1.2 Soft market testing has been carried out with leading companies to better understand current opportunities and any barriers to securing wider market competition (see paragraphs 4.1 to 4.9 above);
 - 5.1.3 Internally, meetings have been held with Parks and the Brent Housing Partnership, which also have responsibilities for tree maintenance in the

borough. There is the potential to combine tree service provision across the authority, with the intention of letting a single service for the provision of maintenance to trees on the public highway, in parks and on housing estates.

5.1.4 Two neighbouring authorities, Ealing and Harrow, have been consulted on the potential for a joint contracting approach.

5.1.5 Account has been taken of the November 2015 Internal Audit report which made recommendations in respect of establishing a comprehensive trees database, and made a specific and relevant Priority 1 recommendation:

Centralised database of trees under the Council's Responsibility (Priority 1)

- *A record of all trees under the Council's responsibility and an indication on when they were last inspected should be maintained.*
- *The required frequency of work, the date of last work, and the date of when the next work is required should be recorded against all trees under the Council's responsibility.*
- *In addition, the basis on which works are prioritised should be clearly documented.*

5.2 The Council has two clear options available: extending the existing contract; or re-tendering the service immediately. There are a number of factors to be taken into account before making a decision. This evidence base is outlined below. The opportunity for partnership working with other boroughs and the Brent Housing Partnership is a significant development.

Re-tendering

5.3 The Council has the option to re-tender the contract using the existing specification. In order to meet tendering timescales, the council would need to revise the existing contract documents with minor alterations to bring the specification up to date (rather than draft a substantially changed Invitation to Tender).

5.4 There are a number of advantages and disadvantages associated with retendering a new contract to commence next year. These are listed below:

5.5 Advantages:

- This would secure the best market price for the service exactly as it is now, and would be unlikely to significantly worsen our position.
- The immediate impact on service delivery would be minimal.

5.6 Disadvantages:

- Inflation has not been applied to the contractor's rates for the duration of the existing contract. There is therefore a risk that the cost of running the service

would increase as tenders will be priced to make up ground since the beginning of the current contract, and to provide for future inflation.

- Limited time is available before the tendering process would need to commence. This would restrict our ability to assess whether or not the current specification is fit for purpose to meet our future needs.
- The possibility of including smaller suppliers in our new service could also be considered. At present, little is known about the potential impact of using local suppliers (see Section 6 below). It is possible that smaller contractors may be able to offer competitive prices; but this may be at the cost of increasing client demands to control a more complex pattern of services. The current specification emphasises the cost advantages of using larger contractors; seeking to amend it without further market research would incur potential risks.
- The Council would not have accurate enough data on its tree stock to institute a five year planned programme of works. This would generate savings through being more cost-effective than an ad-hoc approach. The lack of an adequate trees database was highlighted as a Priority 1 recommendation in a recent Internal Audit inspection of the service (see paragraph 5.1.5 above).
- The Council would still have to fund the cost of survey work, and meet the cost of implementing an asset database; this is estimated to represent an additional cost of over £60k to the Council.

Re-tender as a framework contract

- 5.7 The Council's current Contract was let as a framework, to enable other authorities and partners to access it. However, allowing other authorities to access the contract after the commencement date would not provide a clear benefit to the Council, as the contract would already have been priced for a single borough, i.e. without potential economies of scale. Soft market testing has indicated that it would be more beneficial to identify a greater intended volume of work within the contract term from the outset, to secure a better price.

Option - Extend the contract

- 5.8 The Council has the option to extend the existing contract with Gristwood & Toms by up to two years. A series of meetings have been held with Gristwood & Toms to negotiate additional value for the Council should an extension be granted. The Procurement team has provided support throughout these negotiations.
- 5.9 Gristwood & Toms has indicated that there is little opportunity for movement on the contract rates that the Council currently pays in respect of service

delivery. It was noted that there is no provision within the contract to link rates to an inflation index; and that inflation has not been applied since the beginning of the contract. Gristwood & Toms has accepted that the rates paid by the Council would be frozen as part of any extension, representing a cut for the contractor in real terms. In addition the company has formally offered to:

1. Purchase a bespoke tree management system
2. Pay all fees and licence costs for the above until March 31st 2018
3. Supply data collection tablets
4. Provide an asset & condition survey for apx. 28,000 street trees
5. Prepare a work schedule to implement a lime tree replacement scheme, aiming to reduce maintenance costs over the long term.

5.10 **Survey Work.** If the Council decides to extend the contract, Gristwood & Toms have offered to undertake a full survey of the Council's tree stock using their wider company resources. The contractor has advised that the lack of a detailed inventory would result in a higher cost for operating the contract; this was also a finding of the soft market testing exercise. As noted above, this issue has also been identified as a priority by Internal Audit. Estimates indicate that should the Council procure a full tree survey as a stand-alone exercise, it would cost over £60k (at least £2.75 per tree surveyed).

5.11 **Asset Database.** The Council currently uses Symology (a highways maintenance ordering system) as an inexpensive method of logging and managing tree works, rather than securing a database specifically designed for managing tree stock. Gristwood & Toms have offered to supply and host a specified tree database as part of the contract extension offer. This relates closely to their offer to survey the Council's tree stock; the survey information would be used to populate the asset database, which would also be informed by the company's maintenance records. Gristwood & Toms have confirmed that the Council will then own this data (which could then be exported or migrated should they not retain the service in future). The value of the database licence is estimated at £15k, with hosting costs of £4k p.a.

Lime Tree Programme

5.12 The other significant offer from Gristwood & Toms, would be to undertake a proactive programme of works to better manage the Council's stock of lime trees. 'Ground works' are carried out by Gristwood & Toms as an annual programme; every street is visited in order to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations to ensure that the highway (including public footway) is clear, and that there is sufficient clearance for traffic to pass unhindered. The vast majority of tree-related 'ground works' are aimed at keeping lime tree growth under control; the main problem being that lime trees produce extensive ground level epicormic growth which presents a hazard. In addition, many of the current stock of lime trees are in a poor condition.

5.13 Gristwood & Toms have proposed undertaking a programme of replacing lime trees within existing budget constraints. The offer provides for the removal of

older lime trees, and replacing them with an alternative variety of lime tree which is not susceptible to epicormic growth. This would provide the Council with a potential efficiency saving of up to £36k p.a. on its Street Trees maintenance budget.

- 5.14 The Council's Street Tree Management Policy states that the Council will "...keep trees unless there are good arboricultural, environmental, or risk-related reasons not to do so". It is considered that the proposed lime tree removal and replacement initiative addresses the first and third categories, i.e. it would be a sound decision both on arboricultural grounds and through reducing the Council's financial risk. The service is currently spending a disproportionate amount of its limited resources on maintaining its existing stock of lime trees, rather than maintaining a healthy stock through a planned approach. In order to sustain the street tree stock over the long-term, a more planned approach would be advantageous. In order to help secure wider community acceptance of the changed approach, it is proposed to implement the new approach gradually with an emphasis on informing nearby residents of the reasons for replacing specific lime trees. This would limit savings in the first year of implementation to £25k.
- 5.15 **Community Involvement.** Gristwood & Toms has also offered to support increased engagement with local communities in caring for street trees. Where new trees are planted, residents will be invited to assist with their upkeep (including watering). This would help the Council to increase the survival of saplings, and work more closely with residents.
- 5.16 The offer made by Gristwood & Toms would deliver a full year 7.2% cashable saving if the change of approach to lime tree maintenance (and any policy implications) was accepted. More substantially, the value of the tree survey and establishing a full tree database makes the offer an attractive one; particularly given the risks involved in tendering without sufficient information about works programmes and tree stock.

Option: Limited extension for one year

- 5.17 Officers have explored with Gristwood & Toms what the company might be prepared to offer in return for just a one year contract extension. However, the company has indicated that they would only be prepared to make an offer on the basis of a two year extension. They have indicated that each of their offered efficiencies and improvements represents a cost to them which they would need to manage by depreciating costs over a three year period (including the final contract year).

Strategic Planning

5.18 Extending the contract for two years would release the offers tabled by Gristwood & Toms, and would present the Council with the time to:

- Establish a trees working group including the Brent Housing Partnership and any external partners;
- Review and redraft the service specification;
- Identify and establish an arboriculture depot to remove this barrier to competition;
- Complete a full survey of the council's tree stock, to provide an opportunity for a more efficient and effective future contract;
- Establish an asset database;
- Trial smaller, local tree maintenance businesses in local parks and other locations to provide an evidence base on the capacity of smaller contractors.

5.19 These processes will enable the Council to procure in a more strategic way than has previously been possible, and deliver a service capable of sustaining a high quality tree stock at a lower running cost.

5.20 It is proposed that a working group be assembled with relevant stakeholders, including Brent Housing Partnership and any potential external partners, to take forward the planning of a future tree service, considering options for:

- The feasibility of lots based upon geographical areas, with suppliers submitting prices per lot and the opportunity to demonstrate economies of scale if additional lots are successfully bid for;
- Opening the contract for other authorities to join, with a potential rebate to be paid to Brent for each new call-off based on its value;
- Stipulating how bidders must make use of and interact with local suppliers and contractors;
- Specifying the maintenance of a live database of the Council's tree stock, updated during planned and emergency maintenance;
- Placing an emphasis on the future contractor to generate income and innovate, for example through the sale of recyclable organic material, tree pulp, logs, or through external sponsorships; and
- Designing a method for how the contractor will improve quality, reduce costs and/or increase income on an annual basis;

5.21 Other nearby boroughs are currently considering their options regarding trees procurement and may be willing to explore future partnership working. A working group will enable knowledge sharing between potential partners.

6.0 **WORKING WITH SMALLER SUPPLIERS**

6.1 The option of working with smaller suppliers in managing the Council's tree stock could also be explored. There is currently limited experience of the costs, benefits and risks involved in working with smaller suppliers, although some valuable insight has been gained by the Parks service.

6.2 This could open up opportunities for local businesses. It may also offer the Council competitive rates especially for smaller-scale works, as small companies may not be burdened with the overheads incurred by larger companies.

6.3 However, smaller contractors may not be as well equipped to deal with:

- Larger tree works requiring industrial equipment;
- Sustainable waste disposal (the current contractor's waste is used as biofuel, with some waste being used to heat the Olympic Pool);
- Managing or treating diseased trees;
- Coping with emergency situations, such as storms, or felled trees blocking the highway (the Council currently benefits from a responsive 24 hour service with specialist personnel and equipment made available).

6.4 There would also be some uncertainty over:

- Would a higher level of client support be required to procure and manage a number of smaller jobs?
- How would smaller suppliers qualify for work; what level of qualification should the Council require from employees; and how would this be vetted? What level of insurance would the Council require suppliers to carry? Could sufficient evidence of good financial standing be provided to limit risk?
- What savings could be achieved?
- How would the Council retrospectively deal with a smaller supplier if they under-perform, damage or kill a tree, or cause an accident?

6.5 These questions would need to be tested in order to ensure that these risks could be managed in the context of the contract specification. It is therefore proposed to carry out trial works in conjunction with internal partners to gain experience in managing smaller contractors and to limit risk.

7.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The effect of retendering the service could offer an improvement in prices, or could result in no change. The Council could even face a higher price Council, given the minimal change in the type of work or volume carried out, and that

existing rates have not been subject to price indexation. The incumbent contractor won the existing maintenance contract by approximately £200k over their nearest competitor in the previous tender exercise

7.2 Trees Budget.

In the last year the Council's tree stock has increased, whereas the budget for tree maintenance has been reduced by 10%. The budget is currently:

	2014/2015	2015/2016
	(£)	(£)
Ground Works Programme	92000	92000
Works	250000	250000
Planting	50000	25000
Ad-hoc	108000	83000
Contract Expenditure	500000	450000
Client Salaries	43000	43000
Budget	543000	493000

7.3 The savings proposed in this report have been captured in the above table and demonstrate how the service will meet savings committed to in the *Budget 2015/16 and 2016/17* report to Cabinet of the 15th December. The £50k saving, to take effect in the 2015/2016 financial year had been proposed to be achieved through retendering either in conjunction with another borough, or as a single authority.

7.4 The absence of an asset management database or tree stock survey is an ongoing risk to the authority. The estimated resources required to acquire this is estimated to be over £60k. This will be provided without charge should the current contract be extended for 2 years.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Arboricultural Services Contract expires on 31st March 2016.

8.2 The annual value of the trees contract would require a full EU tender exercise to be undertaken should the Council re-tender the service, in order to comply with Contract Standing Orders, and Public Contract Regulations 2015.

8.3 Regulation 46 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 requires contracting authorities to consider whether it is appropriate to split contracts into lots, and to justify a decision not to subdivide a contract into lots. The work envisaged in Section 6 of the Report will assist Officers in reaching a conclusion as to whether it is appropriate to subdivide the contract.

8.4 Contract Standing Orders require a Cabinet-level decision to sanction working in partnership to collaboratively procure goods and services.

9.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There would be positive diversity implications arising from the decisions recommended in this report.

9.2 Some species of trees, including lime trees, are susceptible to basal growth which impedes the footway. Problems also exist with some species of trees which cause root damage to the footway. Obstructive basal growth and root damage may seriously inconvenience: wheelchair users; parents and carers with young children; and people with visual impairment.

9.3 One of the purposes of programmed ground works maintenance is to ensure that the Council can meet its statutory requirement to keep footways clear for all users.

9.4 By adopting the approach outlined in this report, the Council would address this issue in a sustainable way. If the Council continues with the current approach to continued maintenance of older lime trees, costs would continue to escalate as the stock ages and further damage occurs. With further pressure to reduce expenditure, this would increase the risk of the Council not meeting its statutory obligations. The proposed lime tree replacement programme (as set out in paragraphs 5.12 to 5.14), would assist the Council to keep the footway clear in future.

10.0 STAFFING / ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The report identifies a commercial advantage in acquiring a depot rather than requiring potential contractors to source their own depot. This may stimulate increased competition when tendering.

10.2 Officers are assessing the suitability of available depot space in Roe Green Park, using a vacant plot (580 sq. m) and sharing facilities with Veolia.

10.3 There are no specific implications for Council staff.

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APPENDIX A – Soft Market Testing Results

Arboriculture – 03/02/2015

<p>What could we do to structure a better method of working to provide tree services in Brent? In your view, is it reasonable to package highway trees with Parks and Housing based work and why? What is your preferred contract length, and why?</p>	<p>Have a preference for all trees work to be packaged in one contract. A 5 year contract term is a preference (+2); fleet and equipment is depreciated over a 2-7 year period. The contract structure should be as flexible as possible – priced rates rather than fixed bills (future-proofing budget reductions). Separate rates for street trees from housing and parks (street trees tend to be cheaper).</p>	<p>The bigger the service, the more economical it becomes. Preferred contract length would be 5+5 (based upon how equipment is generally depreciated). Authorities should stipulate whether or not the budget provision is likely to decline from the outset. Dealing with Housing customers requires more attention. Build time for plant can be 6 to 8 weeks, and would require a mobilisation period.</p>	<p>A long-term contract for a larger asset would enable long-term planning of tree maintenance and ultimately a larger saving. Total asset management with the company empowered to control the spend on trees; a long-term contract on this basis would mean that the company could spend heavily on changing the stock in the first few years of the term, and recover the outlay through reduced maintenance.</p>
<p>The Council's trees budget is being reduced annually and this seriously affects the service as a whole but particularly tree planting. What challenges might this present to you, and how would you work collaboratively with Brent to accommodate these changes? How would you suggest sustaining or increasing the tree stock within the borough?</p>	<p>Placed an emphasis on tree survival; ensuring that planting was of a sufficient quality, and post-planting maintenance was in place. Have good (reputable) supply chain for new trees and source both in the UK and Europe. Up-front planning in order that all work may be programmed. Working on an open book basis would remove the need for contractors to price for risk. Would share the benefits of innovation through an open book.</p>	<p>Authorities should make the most of advertising opportunities as well as sponsorship. A need for ongoing maintenance (watering) of new stock.</p>	<p>Suggested that more thought needed to be given to maintaining trees. Funding being available for planting new trees – without budget growth for maintaining them.</p> <p>The authority could make a large saving by accepting the risk of skipping one maintenance cycle. This would provide £250k of capital to re-invest into proactively managing trees.</p>

How would your company add value over the life of the contract? What innovative idea(s) have you introduced recently in any of your contracts that have been very successful?

A good training programme; this is necessary as it is difficult to source trained tree professionals. They would also manage the Council's tree inventory. The company also cited good communication which adds value to their service, and can provide and manage a microsite to provide and share information with the Councils customers. The potential to barcode new trees as a monitoring function.

Would make the most of available technology. A contract for another large local authority was cited where works orders were issued and records were updated electronically as a means to reduce printing and paper costs, and administration costs (whilst increasing productivity of operatives).

Value could be added by managing the contract over a longer term; they would be prepared to make an up front investment in tree stock (removing expensive trees) recovering their costs through reduced maintenance over the contract term.

The Council is exploring the idea of joint procurement with neighbouring Boroughs; can you detail your experience in this regard and what do you perceive are the benefits and pit-falls of inter-borough collaborations?

The experience has been 'variable'. There is merit in introducing greater economies of scale – costs may be reduced. The key pit-fall is a lack of harmony between participating boroughs (at a strategic level). The company support the principle of the London Living Wage.

Supportive of the London Living Wage and cited the importance of retaining staff. Current experience of managing trees for authorities in the Midlands which are currently merging; self-preservation client-side was hindering progress of delivering savings. Specifications need to be merged – delivery methods vary by authority – to achieve savings, methods would need to be harmonised. **LATER** – stated that efficiencies could be found on a shared contract by sharing a Contract Manager, sharing an operational base, administrative costs and 1 software system.

The company is supportive of the London Living Wage. Cited problems with collaborative partners acting as two sets of clients. Suggested that a management system and strategy should be harmonised from the outset. Economies of scale would reduce the contract price. The prestige of willing a collaborative (dual London borough) contract would encourage competition.

<p>How would your operational plan ensure that you are reducing ad-hoc maintenance and reinvesting in trees over the life of the contract. How would you ensure remedial or urgent works are carried out in line with agreed KPIs?</p>	<p>Early programming of work is essential, to limit ad-hoc working. Programmes can be built upon tree survey information. A better contract price can be achieved through tendering with a complete survey.</p>	<p>Cited the importance of having good survey information – the emphasis being placed on effective planned works. The company referred to a case study where a programme of works was introduced at another local authority which reduced complaints by 25%.</p>	<p>Focus on programme / cyclical work. The less stock in a programme would result in an increase in ad-hoc works which attract higher rates.</p>
<p>The Council's Street Trees inventory urgently needs to be updated; what measures would you advise that the Council should take to rectify this problem at minimal cost?</p>	<p>There are many considerations: the level of data retained in the inventory; how data will be collected; will it be collected manually or digitally; where will the data be stored and managed – all factors contribute to cost. Suggested adding survey work as part of the tender as an option.</p>	<p>Having a full survey carried out at the outset would reduce the contract cost. The company recommended dividing tree into 7 categories rather than the existing 5 categories (reference to 'Series 3000' categories). More categories can help reduce the price. Suggested that a full survey of 22000 trees would require 4-5 months.</p>	<p>The company stated that they could provide the IT database to the authorities, host it, and manage it whilst providing the client with full access. It was recommended that the authority should invest in a full survey of the tree stock.</p>
<p>What provision do you have for recycling organic material and reducing waste?</p>	<p>All waste is recycled. ISO14000 accreditation.</p>	<p>14001 accredited. 100% waste material is recycled. The company suggested that they could offer a 50% return to the authority on the resale value of waste.</p>	<p>100% recycled. All waste goes to heating/power generation/landscaping material.</p>
<p>Brent will be unable to provide an operational base or depot. Would this affect your ability to bid?</p>	<p>No, it wouldn't. The company have an existing base in Watford. Mobilising a base would require a lead time. If the authority provides a base it may be worth £40-50k</p>	<p>No it wouldn't affect the ability to bid, but it would impact on how competitive they could be (other firms have an existing presence in the local area). Valued a base at £20-30k per annum. If the authority supplied a base it would increase their</p>	<p>No it would not affect their ability to bid. Would value a local base at approximately £15k p.a.</p>

		interest in the tender.	
From what (if any) knowledge you have of Brent, what would you see as our ideal maintenance regime – fixed maintenance cycles, wholly reactive, or something else?	Predominantly fixed.	A mixture of both. They would prefer full management of trees rather than providing an input based service.	Ideally, fixed maintenance cycles, but a blend is more realistic.
Have you had experience of reinstating pavements permanently after tree removal?	Yes and the work is undertaken in-house. For larger jobs work may be sub-contracted to a highways maintenance company.	No. A requirement to complete this work would not stop them from bidding, but they would subcontract this work.	Yes – cited experiences of undertaking permanent re-instatement works for other London local authorities. All re-instatement works would be carried out in-house.
What do you consider the most serious threats in terms of pests and disease during the life time of the contract? What provisions do you have in place to deal with them?	There are a number of threats at the moment which the company manages through rigorous and regular training and information gathering from relevant sources (such as Forestry Commission). Consider OPM as a Public Health issues as much as a tree issue.	Cited OPM and Ash Dieback as threats. Referred to another authority considering the proactive removal of Ash Trees from their stock.	Cited OPM as a threat.