



**Cabinet**  
23 February 2015

**Report from the Strategic Director of  
Environment and Neighbourhoods**

For Action

Wards affected:  
ALL

**Libraries Stock Contract**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the process for re-tendering of the stock contract for the Library Service. The current framework agreement with the Central Buying Consortium ends in March 2016. There are two potential new frameworks that Brent could join. This report addresses that and also suggests a contingency arrangement, should the setting up of the frameworks be delayed.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Council should express an interest in joining both the new Central Buying Consortium (CBC) and London Libraries Consortium (LLC) frameworks, while reserving the right to tender independently should the new frameworks not meet our requirements.
- 2.2 That, while the new frameworks are being renegotiated, the Council enters into an agreement with a stock supplier for six months from April 2016 to September 2016.

**3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 The current libraries stock contract, for up to £550,000, commenced in April 2012 and is with the Central Buying Consortium (CBC) for the purchasing of library stock. The CBC is administered by West Sussex County Council and consists of 45 local authority library services across the country (mainly in the south east).
- 3.2 By combining buying power with 45 other local authorities, the Council is able to ensure a higher discount from book suppliers and therefore better value for money.

The consortium is able to provide:

- Electronic data invoicing linked to our library management system. This enables a more streamlined process, saving staff time.
- Shelf ready stock processed to include library barcode, security tag, jacket protection and identifying label. When books arrive at the library they are ready to be put on the shelves immediately.
- Required titles in required formats and headings most notably: adult fiction, adult non-fiction, children's fiction, children's non-fiction, reference material, DVDs, spoken word material and periodical subscriptions.

3.3. The contract does not include specialist items, such as stock in other languages, e-books or downloads. These are purchased outside of the contract from specialist suppliers.

3.4. The current contract and framework ends in March 2016.

3.5 The current contract offers the following benefits to Brent:

- Significant discounts negotiated with suppliers through buying power of the consortium.
- Shared procurement and monitoring of suppliers between members of the consortium, meaning the process of tendering can be shared across Councils.
- Shared performance indicators between services, allowing for greater scrutiny of supplier performance.
- Joint meetings to discuss and decide on actions on issues as and when they arise.

3.6 Two routes have been identified:

Option 1 – Undertake an independent procurement exercise

Brent could undertake a formal tender on the open market, detailing the specific requirements for the Council.

Option 2 – Access a compliant Framework Agreement

Frameworks provide an opportunity for local authorities to aggregate their purchasing requirements and jointly contract for specific commodities, with a view towards achieving improved procurement terms that may not otherwise be available to a single contracting authority independently.

3.7 There are two major existing frameworks which Brent could access in order to fulfil the requirements in this commodity area.

These are outlined below:

- 3.7.1 Central Buying Consortium – a collection of 45 local authorities. This is the current framework accessed by the Council for supply of library stock. This framework expires in March 2016 and is currently being re-negotiated. The proposed timeline for the award of contract is November 2015 allowing four months mobilisation period for any slippage. CBC consortium has been in place since early 2000 and there has been a good track record of the framework being put in place before it relapses.
- 3.7.2 London Libraries Consortium – a collection of 7 London boroughs. As the Council is a member of LLC for its library management system (LMS), it is considered that the authority is already benefiting from external aggregation and collaboration. Clearly, if Brent's LMS membership continues, it would be beneficial for the Council to explore the LLC stock consortium membership as well. This framework also expires in March 2016 and is currently being negotiated.
- 3.8 While the two frameworks (CBC & LLC) are being renegotiated there is a risk that these frameworks may not be ready by March 2016. This delay could potentially cause a break in the supply of library stock from April 2016 onwards. Officers will begin negotiation with the suppliers in April 2015 to establish an arrangement to ensure continuity of stock supply to libraries.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1. The current budget for library stock amounts to £550,000 and the majority of this budget is spent on purchasing items through the CBC Consortium contract.
- 4.2. A savings proposal to reduce the Council's spend on library stock by £100,000 will be considered by Cabinet in February 2015. Entering into a new contract provides a timely opportunity to increase purchasing power and source efficiencies to minimise the impact of the reduction in the budget.
- 4.3. As the contract value is above OJEU requirements, a formal procurement process will be required in order to make the spend legislatively compliant and reduce the risk of challenge.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, section 7, states; 'It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'. The duty arises in relation to persons who are resident, work in or are in full time education in the borough. In fulfilling its duty the Council shall in particular have regard to the desirability of:

- i) securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and
- ii) securing that facilities are available for borrowing books, records, films etc sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the needs of all, and the special requirements, of adults and children.
- iii) encouraging adults and children to make full use of the service and provide advice .

## **6.0 Diversity Implications**

The library service is a universal service for all residents. Specifications are carefully drawn up, monitored and reviewed using demographic and service usage data to ensure that the needs of all residents are identified. When we are unable to use the CBC to buy stock in community languages or for other identified groups, a proportion of the stock budget is retained and used to purchase the books from specialist suppliers.

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