

DECISION REPORT

Report for **Cabinet Member signing**

Item number:

Title: **Award of a 4-year for toxicology testing on behalf of the Coroners at the North London Coroner's Court**

Report authorised by: **Jess Crow**

Lead Officer: **Fiona Alderman**

Ward(s) affected: **n/a**

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** **n/a**

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the award of a contract for the provision of toxicological testing services on behalf of the Coroners at North London Coroner's Court, as set out in Appendix A (the procurement specification).
- 1.2 This is a very specialised service for the testing of blood for the presence of drugs and alcohol in cases where a post mortem examination has been held in order to establish the cause of death of the deceased. Approximately 1,800 post mortems are carried out each year for the North London Coroners of which approximately 350-400 require toxicological analysis.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

n/a

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services approves the award of a four-year contract for toxicological testing on behalf of the Coroners at the North London Coroner's Court, to the supplier with the highest scored bid. The recommended total aggregate value of the contract is £568,531 to allow for contingency (details set out in Part B of the report).

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1 Toxicology testing is a critical element of a pathologist examination report into a possible cause of death required by the Coroner.
- 4.2 The current contract comes to an end on the 4th May 2025.

- 4.2 Sheffield Teaching Hospital NHS Trust provided the most economical advantageous tender to the Council.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 Do nothing: the council is statutorily required to provide this service. The current contract expires on the 4th May 2025 and a new one must be put in place.
- 5.2 Extend current contract: the extension clause on the current contract has been used and in the light of good governance we cannot extend any further.
- 5.3 Carry out competitive tendering process: this will be the best option to follow to ensure an ongoing competitive service on both quality and price and to ensure an open competitive procurement process.

6 Background information

- 6.1 Under the provisions of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 Local Authorities are responsible for funding all aspects of the local coroner service. Where a Coroner area spans more than one local authority, one of those authorities is known as the 'Relevant Authority'.
- 6.2 The London Borough of Haringey as the Relevant Authority for the North London coroner jurisdiction invited Tenders for the provision of Toxicology Services. The current contract ends on the 4th May 2025.
- 6.3 A Coroner can ask a pathologist to conduct an examination to establish the cause of death. As part of that examination the pathologist may request that samples taken are submitted for toxicology analysis. The finding of the analytical tests is included in a report to the Coroner. Such analyses involves the safe and secure collection of samples as well as, detection, identification and quantification of toxicologically relevant substances.
- 6.4 This Open Tender was published on the councils procurement portal on the 9th September 2024. At close of tender on the 8th October 2024, 3 responses were submitted.
- 6.5 A moderation panel convened on the 5th November 2024 to evaluate the received bids. The assessment criteria were evenly split between price and quality, each constituting 50% of the total evaluation each. After a thorough review process, Bidder A emerged as the supplier with the highest final score, indicating a balanced offering that met the procurement objectives in terms of cost-efficiency and service quality. The final scores were as follows:

Table 1 Overall Bidder Scores

Organisation	Quality Score %	Price %	Overall Score	Ranking
Bidder 1	31	50	81	1 st
Bidder 2	30.31	25	55.31	2 nd

Bidder 3	32.91	19	51.91	3 rd
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- 6.6 The Method Statement template can be found at Appendix B and the Pricing template can be found in the Part 2, report Appendix C.

7 Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High level Strategic outcomes’?

- 7.1 This contract is not directly related to the high-level strategic outcomes of the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024. Its primary objective is to fulfil the Council's obligations under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and to ensure the coroners have the necessary toxicological testing services at their disposal to be able to establish the cause of death in those cases where a death certificate was not initially available, or acceptable to HM Coroner.

8 Carbon and Climate Change

- 8.1 This contract is addressing the immediate needs within the coronial system rather than proactive environmental strategies and it aims to ensure that the Council meets its legal responsibilities in supporting coroners, which, although important, operates independently of the initiatives aimed at reducing carbon footprint and addressing climate change.

9. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (including procurement), Assistant Director of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer), Equalities)

9.1 Strategic Procurement Comments

Strategic Procurement have been consulted in the preparation of this report. A procurement process compliant with CSO 9.01.2a), open tender process, was completed and led by Strategic Procurement. CSO 9.07.1d) requires that all contracts with a value greater than £500,000 may only be awarded by the Cabinet. Strategic Procurement support the recommendations in section 3 of this report.

9.2 Finance Comments

The cost of this four-year contract award for the provision of toxicological testing services on behalf of the Coroners at North London Coroner's Court is estimated to be £568,531 (including a 25% contingency to cover possible increases in future demand) which will be funded from the Coroners Service revenue budget. Costs are shared between the five boroughs of the North London jurisdiction on a per capita basis. Haringey's 17.3% share is £98,356.

9.3 Legal Comments

- 9.3.1 The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

- 9.3.2 Strategic Procurement has confirmed that a compliant procurement process in line with the Council's CSO 9.01.2(a) was carried out in relation to the procurement of the contract which approval to award is sought in the report.
- 9.3.3 Pursuant to the provisions of the Council's CSO 9.07.1(d), Cabinet may approve the award of a contract where the value of the variation is £500,000 or more.
- 9.3.4 Pursuant to the provisions of the Council's CSO 16.02, the Leader may allocate a decision reserved for Cabinet to the Cabinet Member having the relevant portfolio responsibilities and as such the recommendation in paragraph 3.1 of the report to seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services to award the contract is in line with the provisions of the Council's CSO provided that such a decision has been allocated to the Cabinet member by the Leader.
- 9.3.5 The Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) sees no legal reasons preventing the approval of the recommendation in the report.

9.4 Equalities Comments

None Sought. The service is provided to all and helping to establish a cause of death shows the service providers ability to meet community needs. The award of the contract does not change the service provided to the community.

10. Use of Appendices

Appendix A – contract specification

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

n/a