

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET MEMBER SIGNING HELD ON THURSDAY, 19TH APRIL, 2018, 1.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Claire Kober (Chair)

58. FILMING AT MEETINGS

Noted.

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

60. URGENT BUSINESS

Noted.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

62. GRANTING OF EXTENSION TO HOUSING REVIEWS LTD CONTRACT FROM 01.06.18 TO 30.11.18

The Leader considered a report requesting approval for the extension of the contract with Housing Reviews Limited for the conduct of reviews of allocation and homelessness decisions under Parts VI & VII of the Housing Act 1996, which expires on 31 May 2018. Approval would extend the contract for a period of 6 months, commencing from 1 June 2018 to 30 November 2018.

RESOLVED

- i. that the extension to the contract with Housing Reviews Limited for the reviews of allocation and homelessness decisions for a period of 6 months from 1 June 2018 to 30 November 2018 at an estimated cost of £15,000 be approved, in accordance with Contract Procedure Rule 16.02;
- ii. to note that the re-tendering of the homelessness review function was underway, to ensure seamless provision at the end of the life of the current contract; and
- iii. to note that a further report would be required to seek authority to contract out the homelessness review function to the winner of the tender.

Reasons for decision

The Council has statutory responsibilities under Parts VI and VII of the Housing Act, which it can either carry out itself, or delegate to third parties under the terms of the

Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996.

The current contract expires on 31 May 2018; so an extension of the contract to HRL for 6 months is required to avoid disruption in the review process. This will also allow for all reviews contracted to HRL to be determined while Officers begin the tender process. Failure to do so would pose a significant risk to the Council.

The rates for conducting reviews will be fixed for the duration of the contract and the contractor will be paid in arrears upon completing a review.

The cost of employing HRL to carry out the Housing Review function was £19,179 in 2017/18. It is expected to cost approximately £15,000 from 1 June to 30 November 2018, depending on the number of reviews requested. The cost of carrying out the function within the Council would be approximately £50,000 per annum. Employing the external provider will therefore deliver significant savings to the council.

Alternative options considered

Asking HRL to continue undertaking reviews beyond the term of the contract: If the contract with HRL is not extended for 6 months while re-tendering is taking place, HRL will not be authorised to carry out reviews on behalf of the Council and any reviews conducted by HRL would be open to legal challenge. As the contract is due to expire officers are working on re-tendering the contract and will submit a further report for approval.

Bringing the reviews function back in-house: If the contract was not extended, all cases currently allocated to HRL would have to be passed back to the council immediately to complete. The Council does not have sufficient staffing in place to deliver the statutory reviews function ‘in house’ from 1 June 2018, when the contract expires. Previous attempts to recruit staff to deliver this function have been unsuccessful. The lack of capacity to complete these reviews would result in delays, increased costs and likely further legal challenges. However, the potential for bringing the reviews function in-house will be reviewed again as part of the re-tendering process.

63. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR: Councillor Claire Kober

Signed by Chair

Date