

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES

TO:	PERSONNEL COMMITTEE		
DATE:	10 DECEMBER 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	4
TITLE:	CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR LOVELOCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP
SERVICE:	HUMAN RESOURCES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	CHRIS BROOKS/WARREN KING	TEL:	0118 937 2602
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES/INTERIM HR AND PAYROLL SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	chris.brooks@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details of the procurement process to be undertaken in order to put in place a contract for an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), and seek delegated authority to award a contract following a procurement exercise.
- 1.2 The current EAP contract expires on 31 March 2016 and needs to be re-let in accordance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That authority is delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to enter into a contract for the provision of an EAP provider for a period of eighteen months.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 As part of its policy on the wellbeing of staff the Council needs to have an EAP service in place.
- 3.2 Reading Borough Council currently has a contract with Optum (formerly PPC) to provide an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to employees. Optum has provided the service since October 2003. The current contract expires on 31 March 2016.

- 3.3 The current service has been with the same provider for some time, and has never previously been the subject of a competitive tendering exercise.
- 3.4 The contract currently costs £30,000 per annum; the estimated lifetime value of the proposed contract is £50,000.
- 3.5 The services covered include counselling, online help and advice, debt counselling, legal and financial services; all are included in the cost of the programme. The current service is available to employees, their families and elected Members.

4 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 HR have consulted with HR colleagues from other local authorities to ascertain the possibility of a collaborative procurement process for the provision of an EAP service. Some other Berkshire authorities currently use in-house counselling services, whilst others use external providers. Of the authorities who have responded the majority are already part way through their contracts and therefore there is little possibility of a collaborative process.
- 4.2 HR have also investigated the possibility of using an available framework agreement for the required service provision.
- 4.3 Crown Commercial Service (CCS) currently has in place a framework agreement (FA) for an EAP service, and this was awarded in October 2012. There are 4 suppliers for Lot No. 2 (EAP service) on the framework and it is HR's intention to conduct a mini-competition in accordance with the terms and conditions of the CCS framework agreement, to procure an appropriate service.
- 4.4 The mini-competition will be conducted using CCS's e-sourcing portal and the award criteria will be based on the further competition procedure identified within the terms and conditions of the CCS framework agreement (RM932).
- 4.5 The timing of the mini-competition exercise may not be in line with the annual Committee cycle deadlines so delegated authority is being sought to allow for the award of the contract as necessary.

5. AWARD OF CONTRACT

- 5.1 Following successful conclusion of the mini-competition exercise, HR will notify the Leader of the Council and Head of Legal and Democratic Services of the outcome of the evaluation prior to notifying the successful supplier and issuing a contract award letter.

6. ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Not relevant to this report.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 7.1 Reading Borough Council can only effectively implement its strategic aims with a workforce that is valued and supported. This proposal will contribute to that.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

8.1 None relating to this report.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 Not required. The EAP service is provided for all Reading Borough Council employees.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council has a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) of a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees. This proposal will go a long way towards that aim.

10.2 The CCS framework agreement has been procured via an OJEU advertised tendering process in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (as amended). Lot No. 2 (EAP service) allows for a mini-competition in accordance with Reg 10 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (as amended).

10.3 In accordance with Contracts Procedure Rule (9) (3) it will be necessary to conduct a mini-competition utilising CCS FA (RM932).

10.4 It will be necessary to enter into a contract with the successful supplier in the form of a call-off from the CCS FA.

10.5 The contract will be for a period of eighteen months commencing from 1 April 2016.

11 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Based on information provided by CCS it is expected that the cost of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) will not be substantially more than the current cost of £30,000 per annum which is within the existing budget.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.