

OFFICER DECISION NOTICE



Reading
Borough Council

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This notice is to be used for the following types of officer decisions. (Select one option).

A. Decisions taken by officers under a specific express delegation from Council or a Committee.

B. Decisions taken by officers under a general delegation from Council or a Committee, which relates to (i) a permission or a licence, or (ii) the rights of an individual, or (iii) a contract or expenditure **over £100,000**.

1. Title of decision:	Coroners Toxicology Procurement – Decision to Award Contract
2. Date of the decision:	06 January 2026
3. The decision maker:	Acting Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection

4. Decision details:

An open tender process was conducted by the Coroner's Service for the provision of toxicological analysis services, as the current contract is set to expire on 20th January 2026.

Following a comprehensive evaluation of all tender submissions, it is recommended that the contract is awarded to Toxicology UK.

5. Reasons for the decision:

The current supplier's contract, including all permitted extensions, ends on 20 January 2026, necessitating a competitive procurement process in accordance with Public Sector Procurement regulations.

Five suppliers submitted tenders. After a thorough evaluation against the published criteria, Toxicology UK achieved the highest overall score.

It is therefore recommended that a new contract be awarded to Toxicology UK for a three-year term, with the option to extend for two additional one-year periods.

6. Alternative options considered (if any) and rejected:

Further extend the current contract: Whilst this would ensure continuity of service, there are no further extension periods available within the current contract. Therefore, this option is not viable as it would not be compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2023.

Tender via a Framework: the previous contract was procured via the ESPO framework; however, they have advised that the Toxicology Framework was withdrawn in January 2021. There does not appear to be an alternative

7. List of open Background Papers:

N/A

8. List of confidential or exempt Background Papers:

N/A

9. Any other matters taken into consideration:

<input type="checkbox"/> Legitimate expectation of consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Procedural requirements
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Health implications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental or Climate Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management implications
<input type="checkbox"/> Transparency of Information (FOI etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Privacy Impact Assessments
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Act Duties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality Impact Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory duties	<input type="checkbox"/> EU withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces Covenant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Details of the matters taken into account:**Environmental & Climate Change**

Completion of the Climate Impact Assessment has given this procurement exercise an overall rating of 'Net-Nil.' The new supplier must arrange a courier service for transferring samples between Royal Berkshire and Wexham Park Hospitals. To minimise environmental impact, the existing model of consolidated, weekly sample collections will be considered for the new contract. The recommended supplier has also been evaluated on their commitment to achieving net zero emissions.

Equality Impact Assessment

Based on available evidence, there is no indication that the procurement of a new toxicology service will adversely or disproportionately impact any specific protected group. The coroner's service receives referrals in relation to individuals from all demographic backgrounds and toxicology testing is applied consistently based on clinical and investigative need rather than personal characteristics.

10. Legal considerations

The procurement exercise was subject to the Public Contract Regulations 2023 and as such the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment, transparency, mutual recognition and proportionality were applied.

In accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2023 and the Council Contract Procedure Rules, the opportunity was advertised on the Council's electronic tendering portal and via 'Contracts Finder.'

It is intended to enter into a contract based upon the most economically advantageous tender in accordance with the criteria stated in the specification.

Under the constitution of the council for contracts under £500k, the authority to award is by an officer with an appropriate delegated Authority as set out in the Delegations Register.

11. Financial considerations

The budget associated with the contract is approximately £100,000 per annum across Berkshire, with a total value over the contract period including extensions c. £500,000. The budget provision is within the coroner's service revenue budget.

Toxicology UK has submitted a bid which totals £490,875 over the contract duration, including extensions, and is therefore within budget.

The costs for the coroner's service are apportioned under a joint arrangement with the six local authorities in Berkshire: Bracknell Forest, Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Wokingham Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

12. Internal consultations

Procurement – Officers have authorised the Procurement Evaluation Report

Sections 13-18: To be completed only for Decision A (express delegation from a Committee)

13. The name of the Committee:	
14. Date of the meeting:	Click or tap to enter a date.
15. Minute number:	
16. The delegation given by the Committee:	
17. The name of any member of the committee who declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision:	
18. Any councillor or officer required to be consulted prior to the exercise of this delegation and details of their response.	