

# Procurement of elections printing

## Strategy & Resources Committee Tuesday, 5 October 2021

Report of: Chief Executive

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Purpose: For decision

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Publication status: Open

Wards affected: All

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### Executive summary:

The report seeks approval for the tender and procurement of the Council's electoral print services for four years from 1 January 2022.

The current print supplier will withdraw from the electoral market on 31 December 2021. A contract to an alternative supplier must be awarded to ensure the statutory function is met.

The contract will be awarded to one supplier for a period of four years, expiring in 2025.

The value of the contract will be approximately £381,500.00 with an average annual spend of approximately £78,000.

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**This report supports the Council's priority of:** Building a better Council

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### Recommendation to Committee:

That the Committee:

- A) approves the tender and procurement of the electoral print services for four years from the current contract end date of 31 December 2021.

- B) Authorises the Chief Executive to procure and award the contract(s) necessary for the implementation of electoral print services in-line with the procurement routes.
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## **Reason for recommendation:**

The Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer has a statutory duty to produce electoral materials.

Some electoral printing is highly specialised, and it cannot be delivered within existing contracts or absorbed into in-house printing.

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## **Introduction and background**

- 1 A contract must be in place for the provision of electoral services print requirements, which requires specialist technical printing. The full range of printing material cannot be produced in-house and nor is it available within other print and post contracts that the council has.
- 2 The current print provider, Stephen Austin and Sons, is withdrawing from the electoral market on 31 December 2021 and a new supplier must be in place from 1 January 2022.
- 3 The value of the contract is £381,532.74 and is within existing service budgets or reclaimable.
- 4 Electoral printing is a highly specialist service with a limited pool or providers that necessitates the need for a dedicated tender. They specialise in electoral legislation and extracting and manipulating data from bespoke Election Management Software. Materials include legally compliant items such as ballot papers, postal voting packs and envelopes, and the annual canvass forms and notices.
- 5 Electoral printing is part of a statutory function of the council, the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer. This includes, but is not limited to, the requirement:
  - a. to conduct an annual canvass (Sec 10(1) Representation of the People Act 1983)
  - b. to appoint a Returning Officer (Sec 36 Representation of the People Act 1983)
  - c. to print ballot papers (Rule 16 Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006)
  - d. to print postal vote packs (Rule 22 Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006)
- 6 Without a procured contract, the Council would not be able to meet its statutory duties.

## **Other options considered**

- 7 It has been considered whether it is possible to produce electoral registration documentation in-house using existing facilities. A cost analysis would need to be undertaken alongside tenders from external suppliers, to identify if this would be a cost-effective route. However, due to the specialist nature of election printing, it would not be desirable to print election material in-house.
- 8 A contract for election and electoral registration printing must be in place and there is no viable alternative to procuring this service.

## **Consultation**

- 9 Consultation has taken place with the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer regarding the impact on the delivery of elections.

## **Key implications**

### **Comments of the Chief Finance Officer**

- 10 Election printing costs are charged to the Election Fees & Expenses District/Parish account code. Budgetary provision on this code for 2021/22 is £60,700. Any growth in the cost of printing will need to be offset by finding savings elsewhere or recharging the cost to partner organisations.
- 11 The Council is able to recover election costs from partners, such as Surrey County Council and Parish Councils, when conducting elections on their behalf. Grants are also received from central government when running Parliamentary and Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

### **Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council must provide the Electoral Registration Officer with sufficient resources to conduct the annual canvass of the electoral register and the Returning Officer with sufficient resources to conduct elections. If Members are mindful to agree recommendations, procurement will need to be tendered in accordance with relevant UK legislation and the Council's Contract Standing Orders. The Council has a duty to demonstrate best value in the award of contracts. This can be done through a compliant procurement exercise.

## **Equality**

This report contains no proposals that would disadvantage any minority groups.

## **Climate change**

The specification will invite suppliers to evidence their sustainability and this will be considered during the evaluation process.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background papers**

None

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