

Library Stock Procurement

To:	Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee
Meeting Date:	23 March 2023
From:	Head of Libraries, Archives and Culture, Gary Porter
Electoral division(s):	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward Plan ref:	2023/043
Outcome:	To agree the way forward for purchasing 'core' library printed stock from April 2024 onwards.
Recommendation:	<p>The Committee is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Agree to the procurement of library stock through the East Midlands and Mid Anglia consortium;b) Delegate the authority to the Service Director of Policy and Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, to award and execute the contract once procurement has been completed; andc) Delegate the authority to the Service Director of Policy and Communities to approve all necessary legal documentation relating to the contract award, along with any transactions, associated arrangements and their formal executions.

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1. Background

- 1.1 In order to provide a comprehensive public library service, the Council purchases book stock in order to meet the needs of the community. Following previous procurements, the majority of this stock is purchased through library suppliers who can make the book 'shelf ready' and provide significant discounts.
- 1.2 This report details considerations towards purchasing of core library stock. This is defined as mass market publications covering adult and junior printed stock, and not including specialist materials such as large print, spoken word, foreign language or digital stock.
- 1.3 The current contract comes to an end in March 2024, and this report details considerations and recommendations on procurement from April 2024 onwards.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The current four-year contract started on 1 April 2020. Cambridgeshire libraries is on track to spend £275k on this contract in 2022/23, with previous years seeing reduced spending due to the pandemic and a switch towards digital loans. The Council used the East Midlands and Mid Anglia consortium (EMMAC) for the procurement of this contract, as it allowed the sharing of the procurement, legal and evaluation costs across ten local authorities, and made use of expertise across these services.
- 2.2 The Council is looking to tender for four years with a contract that will provide flexibility in its annual spend, to reflect the volatility of local government finances at this time. Despite this, it is estimated that the value of the contract will be up to £1.5m. This is due to anticipated capital spend in addition to revenue, most notably to equip the new large library expected at Northstowe.

Options Considered

- 2.3 Tendering alone
 - 2.3.1 Tendering as a solo entity was explored. This can potentially afford the Council greater flexibility in specifying the servicing it requires. The challenge would be the capacity needed to complete all the work alone, managing the contract, legal costs and the reduced discount likely due to both unique servicing and reduced purchasing power. The Council previously held a solo contract and saw an increase of 3%-8% in its discounts by purchasing in the consortium. It is not recommended to pursue this option unless other models fail.
- 2.4 Donations
 - 2.4.1 It was considered whether the service could be run without such a large expense on stock, and receiving donations of books from the public. It is not thought that donations would provide the stock needed to meet the requirements of equality and library legislation. The Council would simply end up with large amounts of yesterday's bestsellers and house clearance material, often many years out of date. By failing to meet demand, the service would see a fall in use, and would potentially be in breach of equality legislation if it could

not provide a varied range of stock in the correct locations.

2.4.2 It was found that donations still require significant work to make them ready to loan, and without the infrastructure and capacity to do this, staff time would need to be diverted from frontline delivery. It is estimated that the average book would cost in excess of £8 an item to make shelf ready, which is more than the cost of an average paperback book from new with the current discounts that the Council benefits from.

2.5 Alternative suppliers

2.5.1 It was also considered how the Council might use more generic book sellers, such as Amazon or local bookshops, to fulfil its needs. Much like donations, it was found that the task of making books library-ready would fall on local staff, with the same costs as detailed in Paragraph 2.4.2. It was noted that discounts were far lower than those the Council currently enjoy, with the current contract averaging 43% off the regular retail price, compared to an average of less than 20% with Amazon. It was also found that the breadth of work available varied, with local suppliers not always having access to the same range as national suppliers.

2.6 Consortium purchasing

2.6.1 This is the Council's current model, working with other library services to pull together a single specification and contract that can be used by all in a single open tender, to create a framework that all members of the consortium can call off from.

2.6.2 Pooling resources helps to reduce legal and procurement costs, as well as providing a greater purchasing power to gain best value. Different consortiums were considered, from the largest (e.g. Central Buying Consortium) to regional (e.g. Wales and Northern Ireland).

2.6.3 EMMAC provides both, with geographic links and a matching procurement timetable, which allows the service to be a significant partner in the process. Membership at this stage means the Council will be a full partner in the tender process, helping to provide input into the specification before it goes out for an open tender, and being offered a place as an evaluator of the returned tenders to help choose successful supplier. The service will then call off from the resulting framework for its contract.

2.6.4 EMMAC was selected as the larger consortiums would see limited involvement for local needs, and would provide the Council with a smaller voice in the procurement. The problem with the consortium model has already been realised with many large consortiums leaving the market with only two operating library book suppliers.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Environment and Sustainability

Library books and lending material helps reduce waste as part of a circular economy allowing one purchase to benefit many people. We also purchase book stock to support this agenda and promote ways individuals can participate.

Our current contract has allowed us to work with other authorities and drive our supplier towards greater sustainability. Most notably in packaging and delivery. They have removed brown tape and plastic from their packaging, use electronic data invoicing and recycled paper delivery notes, which are double sided printed and have consolidated deliveries into fewer days. We are currently part of Libraries Connected, a national advocacy organisation for libraries, which is working with the supplier on further sustainable plastic use in protection of library books.

3.2 Health and Care

No significant issues beyond purchasing book stock to support this agenda, such as our Books on Prescription and other health resources purchased through our Community Health Information Service funded by Public Health.

3.3 Places and Communities

Libraries are local centres, and we are committed to purchasing stock that reflects our communities. This includes supporting the Council's equality and diversity work and supporting communities through local friends' groups in delivery of locally purchased materials.

3.4 Children and Young People

Children's use of libraries has been growing in recent years and accounts for around 55% of lending. This contract will give significant weighting to children's stock, to support children and young people throughout their development.

3.5 Transport

No significant impact.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

The current annual revenue impact of this contract is £275k. The value of the four-year contract is likely to be £1.5m. It is noted that some money comes from outside the library service core budget, with expenditure in delivering the grant funded 'Business and Intellectual Property Service' (BIPC) and Public Health funded 'Community Health Information Service'. There is currently additional capital forecast to be spent from Section 106 contributions to be in the region of £500k dependent on wider building works. It is noted that the proposed procurement allows for flexibility in spend to reflect the changes in local government finance and changes in priorities likely in the lifetime of the contract, and we are not committed to this spend.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

We have worked with the procurement team to outline the process required, including reviewing our options, delegated authority levels and timelines towards procurement. We have reviewed the timeline for EMMAC and believe it will have a new supplier in place in a timely manner to allow for any handover to new suppliers. As part of engaging with the

specification, we intend to share our best practice around incorporating social value into evaluation considerations.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The Council has statutory responsibility under the 1964 Public Libraries Act to: *'provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who live, work or study in the area.'*

The Department of Culture Media and Sport also recommend that in drawing up and delivering their library strategies and plans, councils should consider a number of legal obligations, including under:

- The Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Best Value Duty 2011 guidance
- Localism Act 2011
- The Human Rights Act 1998

Decisions made by councils about library services may also be subject to legal challenge by way of judicial review.

A failure to provide new library stock may be considered a breach of the above Acts.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment completed.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

We have successfully piloted purchasing stock to support the parish council run Community Libraries (formerly Library Access Points) and library Friends Groups (community groups who raise money to support their local library). We plan to continue this under the new contract.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category, although we have briefed the All-Party Library Steering Group in advance of this report.

4.7 Public Health Implications

The library service provides community health information service under agreement with Public Health in Cambridgeshire. This involves purchasing book stock such as the national books on prescription scheme, as well as supporting local campaigns such as vaccination information for children. These purchases are covered by this contract.

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas:

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: No impact

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: No new impact, although well procured stock provided in local libraries / mobiles could reduce use of private cars to visit town centres.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: No impact

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: No new impact as is, however potential if further work to reduce waste is built into contract. Library stock and re-use of books above purchasing for sole use does reduce waste and could potentially increase if library sue increases.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: No impact

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: No impact

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: No impact

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Linda Walker

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?

Yes

Name of Officer: Andrew Stoter

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Lisa Riddle

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Val Thomas

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5. Source Documents

5.1 None