

## Coroner Service Toxicology Provision

To: Communities. Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 23 March 2023

From: Coroner Service Business Manager, Rachel Lovelidge

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2023/034

Outcome: The procurement of toxicology provision for the Coroner service.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Approve the commencement of the procurement process for toxicology provision, as set out in Section 2 of the report;
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, to award and execute a contract once the procurement process has been completed; and
- c) Agree an extension to the existing waiver until 30 June 2023.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 For the HM Coroner to be able to fulfil their statutory duties associated with determining the identity of the deceased together with how, when and where they became deceased, it is necessary to have arrangements in place for toxicology services. It is the responsibility of the Council to provide the Coroner with such services.
- 1.2 Toxicology samples are collected from the deceased by pathologists in the mortuary. These can be blood, urine, vitreous fluid and stomach contents. Toxicological evidence is sometimes needed to help the pathologist to determine a cause of death.
- 1.3 In 2022, 3,186 deaths were reported to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Coroner service, and during this period 322 toxicology samples were taken.
- 1.4 Imperial College Projects Limited has been conducting the services on behalf of the Coroner, however this has not previously been subject to any competitive procurement.

## 2. Main Issues

### Extend the current waiver

- 2.1 There is currently a contract waiver in place to allow the service to continue to use the current supplier.
- 2.2 The waiver is to the value of £170,000, and is due to expire on 31 March 2023. The waiver therefore requires an extension to allow the procurement process to take place.
- 2.3 As it has now been established that there is a market for the service, it has been decided to carry out a procurement, rather than continue to make use of waivers.

### Procurement of a new contract

- 2.4 Currently there is no contract held with Imperial College Projects Limited, however a waiver is in place until 31 March 2023. The completion of a full procurement exercise would provide an opportunity to implement contract terms with the successful service provider, including limiting potential cost increases during the term of the contract.
- 2.5 In line with other contractual arrangements for the Coroner service, the intention is to go out to tender with a three-year contract offer, with no extension options.
- 2.6 Social value criteria will be included and will be weighted at 5%. It is being explored whether this could be evaluated through the Social Value portal.
- 2.7 The market for hair analysis is restricted, so the procurement will therefore be divided into two lots:
  - 1) General toxicology; and
  - 2) Hair analysis

## Services required

- 2.8 Investigations / examinations: the successful provider will be required to complete toxicology and other investigations / examinations as required by the Coroner, including interpretation, reporting and advice. This will also involve forensic toxicology and post-mortem toxicology.
- 2.9 Storage: sufficient storage space must be put in place by the successful provider for all samples referred for analysis by the Coroner.

## 3. Alignment with Corporate Priorities

### 3.1 Environment and Sustainability

As part of the tender process, there will be an evaluation question that will relate to environmental, carbon or climate.

### 3.2 Health and Care

Outcomes of toxicology examinations feed into the wider coronial investigation, of which findings can help inform improvements required in working practices of partner agencies, and can consequently prevent future deaths and improve the lives of others.

### 3.3 Places and Communities

The Coroner service plays a role in supporting bereaved family members and friends, helping them through a challenging time during a coronial investigation. Adequate mortuary facilities across the County ensures that individual cases can be dealt with in a timely manner.

### 3.4 Children and Young People

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 3.5 Transport

Outcomes of toxicology examinations feed into the wider coronial investigation, and lessons learnt can help inform future arrangements to keep Cambridgeshire's roads, footways and cycle ways safe.

## 4. Significant Implications

### 4.1 Resource Implications

This cost of this contract is budgeted for within the Coroner's budget. This is a key decision due to the contract value.

#### 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Procurement will be fully compliant with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.  
The cost of this contract is budgeted for within the Coroner's budget.  
This is a key decision due to the contract value.

#### 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The local authority has a statutory duty to provide the necessary resources to deliver the Coroner service. This is also a high-profile service and therefore carries reputational risk implications.

#### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.7 Public Health Implications

Toxicology supports the role of the Coroner, who has an important public health role in terms of monitoring deaths, identifying any untoward issues, trends, and avoidable deaths. A robust service is essential.

#### 4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

There are no significant implications within this category.

##### 4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Status: neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

##### 4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Status: neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

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

Status: neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Status: neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Status: neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

#### 4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Status: neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category.

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

Status: neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

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 and Commercial? 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: Karen White

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

Name of Officer: Steve Cox

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: Sue Grace/Steve Cox

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