

## Individual Executive Decision Notice

<b>Report title</b>	Hybrid Mail	
<b>Decision designation</b>	GREEN	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Ian Brookfield, the Leader of the Council	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Claire Nye, Director of Finance	
<b>Originating service</b>	Finance	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Tracey Richards	Head of Revenues and Benefits
	Tel	01902 552493
	Email	Tracey.Richards@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Directorate Leadership Team	7 July 2021
	Lead Cabinet Member Briefed	12 July 2021
	Cabinet Resource Panel	8 September 2021

### Summary

The Leader of the Council is recommended to approve the award of a contract for Hybrid Mail.

### Recommendation for decision:

That the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Finance.

1. Approves the award of a contract for Hybrid Mail following a further competition to Critiqom Limited, Document House, Phoenix Crescent, Bellshill, Lanarkshire, ML4 3NL. This will be for an initial term of three years with the option to extend for an additional two years with a contract value of £750,000.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature  
Ian Brookfield

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature  
Claire Nye

Date:

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Revenue and Benefits Service administer housing benefit, council tax support and discretionary housing payments, the assessment, billing and recovery of council tax, business rates, business improvement district levies and recovery of sundry debts. This requires the issuing of a variety of letters, demands and recovery communications, which is the purpose of the proposed new contract.
- 1.2 Communications are issued daily, which include demand notices and reminder letters, with larger volumes being generated when issuing summons notices and in March of each year, when a notification is issued to all domestic and business premises within the city. There is an average of 23,000 notices issued monthly, increasing to 130,000 in March for annual billing. This service has been provided by an external provider, Critiqom, since 2015, with the existing contract due to expire 31 March 2022.

## **2.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 2.1 Option 1 - Inhouse production of letters and mail. This has been considered; however, the resource intensive nature of bulk mail would be unlikely to achieve savings, as the economies of scales could not be realised with the current volumes.
- 2.2 Option 2 - Open tender procedure. Whilst this may have attracted several suppliers, following a soft market test, it was determined that the disparity in quality and price may have been a risk in achieving the desired outcomes.
- 2.3 Option 3 – Further competition via a Framework. This was considered the most appropriate route to market, as the due diligence and minimum quality standards have been pre-qualified by Crown Commercial Services. A maximum cap has been placed on suppliers prices, which will enable the Council to achieve savings against previous contract spend.

## **3.0 Reasons for decision**

- 3.1 The opportunity was advertised using the Council's e-tendering portal on 13 October 2021 with a submission date of 11 November 2021.
- 3.2 All suppliers on the CCS Framework RM6017 Lot 7 Hybrid Mail were invited to participate and of eighteen suppliers invited, seven submitted a bid.
- 3.3 Following evaluation of the tender submissions it was concluded that Critiqom Limited, Document House, Phoenix Crescent, Bellshill, Lanarkshire, ML4 3NL should be awarded the contract.

## **4.0 Financial implications**

- 4.1 Cabinet (Resources) Panel on 8 September 2021, approved the delegation of authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to approve the

award of a contract for Hybrid Mail. In line with the above delegated authority, this report seeks approval to award the Hybrid Mail contract to Critiqom Limited.

- 4.2 The contract is for an initial term of three years with an option to extend for a further two years. The total contract value is £750,000. It is anticipated that the annual contract cost of £150,000 will be funded from the £676,000 revenue budget currently set aside for running costs within the Revenues and Benefits service.

[GE/06122021/N]

## **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 The contract will be awarded in accordance with the Council's Constitution and relevant legislation.

[TC/02122021/D]

## **6.0 Equalities implications**

- 6.1 An initial equality analysis was completed at the commencement of the procurement, and no equalities implications were identified. This will be reviewed periodically through the management of the contract.

## **7.0 All other Implications**

- 8.1 Both Social Value and Sustainability have been included as part of the evaluation of bidders. 6% was allocated as a weighting for each of the following outcomes: Help local communities to manage and recover from the impact of COVID-19; Create new businesses, new jobs and new skills.

## **8.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 8.1 Cabinet Resources Panel Report

## **9.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Cabinet Resource Panel Report

**Councillor Ian Brookfield, The Leader of the Council**  
**Delegated Authority to Award a Contract – Hybrid Mail**

<b>Ref no: CWC21083</b>	
Council Plan aim	Strong, resilient and healthy communities
Originating service	Revenues and Benefits
Accountable officer	Tracey Richards, Head of Revenues and Benefits (01902) 552493
Leadership Team approval	7 July 2021
Accountable Lead Cabinet Member	Cllr Ian Brookfield, the Leader of the Council (01902) 550352
Date Lead Cabinet Member briefed	12 July 2021
Procurement advisor	Peter Holmes, Procurement Manager (01902) 556175

**Background**

The Revenue and Benefits Service administer housing benefit, council tax support and discretionary housing payments, the assessment, billing and recovery of council tax, business rates, business improvement district levies and recovery of sundry debts. This requires the issuing of a variety of letters, demands and recovery communications, which is the purpose of the proposed new contract.

Communications are issued daily, which include demand notices and reminder letters, with larger volumes being generated when issuing summons notices and in March of each year, when a notification is issued to all domestic and business premises within the city. There is an average of 23,000 notices issued monthly, increasing to 130,000 in March for annual billing. This service has been provided by an external provider, Critiqom, since 2015, with the existing contract due to expire 31 March 2022.

<b>Proposed Contract Award</b>	
Contract duration	3 years with 2-year extension option
Contract Commencement date	1 April 2022

Annual value	£150,000
Total value	£750,000

### **Procurement Process**

The Head of Procurement in consultation with relevant stakeholders will determine the evaluation scoring balance and ensure compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

The evaluation team will comprise;

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
Tracey Richards	Head of Revenues and Benefits
Jennifer Hoare	Lead Technical Specialist
Lee Overton	System and Development Manager
Diana Foster	System Team Leader

### **Financial Implications**

This contract is required to obtain the most cost-effective provision of the Hybrid Mail service.

### **Legal implications**

The procurement will be an above threshold procedure in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Council's Contract Procedure Rules

### **Equalities implications**

The contract will ensure that documents will be provided in an accessible format.

### **Recommendation**

Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to delegate authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to approve the award of a contract for Hybrid Mail when the evaluation process is complete.