

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 10 December 2012
Report of: Strategic Director, Places and Organisational Capacity
Subject/Title: Libraries Stock Procurement
Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Brown

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report requests authorisation to procure a new libraries stock contract. The existing contract expires on 31st March 2013. The new contract will be jointly procured with Cheshire West and Chester Council's library service, with a total contract value of £4 million over three years (with the option to extend for one year).

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 That the Customer Service and Libraries Manager is given delegated authority to award a new contract for libraries stock following procurement.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The existing libraries stock contract is due to expire on 31st March 2013. A new contract is required to ensure that Cheshire East libraries continues to provide stock that meets the needs and expectations of users, and ensures that the Council is able to fulfil its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All wards.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 Libraries provide a wide and diverse range of health and wellbeing activities, from Reading Groups to Health promotion activities to books on prescription, all of which require up to date stock to continue to be effective.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Director of Finance and Business Services)

- 7.1 The annual book fund budget for Cheshire East libraries is £708k. The procurement will ensure that there is flexibility within the new contract to enable annual spend to be reduced if required either to support in-year budget pressures or as a result of changes to the book fund budget.
- 7.2 The procurement process will be an 'open' invitation to tender, in line with European regulations. This will be conducted on the Chest and in collaboration with Cheshire West.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 A new libraries stock contract will be let according to the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, in liaison with Procurement and Legal advisors.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 Reputational risk is the main risk associated with any proposals to change a library service. While the role of libraries in communities is evolving, providing access to books and other media remain their core purpose.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 The existing libraries stock contract expires on 31st March 2013. The procurement of a new libraries stock contract will cover the provision of books, DVDs, games and CDs. The contract will not include the provision of eBooks or specialist items such as Talking Books. A business case for providing eBooks through our libraries is currently in development but any future provision would require a separate procurement as library eBooks are provided by a small number of specialist suppliers.
- 10.2 The contract will be jointly procured with Cheshire West and Chester Council. The two library services share a library management system which means that library users are able to search for and borrow or reserve items from either library service. This provides greater choice for library users and economies of scale for each Council.
- 10.3 The proposed contract term will be three years, with an option to extend for one year, and a total contract value of £4 million (combined for Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester).
- 10.4 The Council provides libraries in 18 communities in Cheshire East, supplemented by a mobile library and books on wheels service for rural communities and housebound customers that are unable to access a static library. Our libraries receive 1.8 million visitors and issue over 3 million books each year.

10.5 The Cheshire East libraries strategy defines the priorities for our libraries to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory duty while also contributing to the priorities for action set out in the Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy. The strategic objectives for our libraries are:

- Improve literacy
- Support informal learning
- Enable digital inclusion
- Provide information
- Promote libraries as community anchors

10.6 In May and June 2012, Cheshire East Council carried out a survey of their citizens' panel – the Influence Cheshire East (ICE) Spring 2012 Survey. The survey included a section on Libraries to assess residents' current library usage and to explore what their future requirements of libraries may be. 69% of respondents had visited a Cheshire East library within the last year, with 35% having done so at least once a month. 82% of respondents were satisfied with library services. Of those that had visited a library in the last year, 83% had visited to borrow/use books or multimedia, or buy second hand books. 77% of respondents agreed that libraries should continue to store and lend paper books as their main role and 69% of respondents disagreed that library services should become mostly digital.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Paul Bayley
Designation: Customer Service and Libraries Manager
Tel No: (01625 3) 78029
Email: Paul.Bayley@cheshireeast.gov.uk