

Audit & Governance Committee

Date of Meeting: 24 September 2020

Report Title: Waivers and Non-Adherences (WARNs)

Senior Officer: Alex Thompson – Director of Finance and Customer Services - S151 Officer

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Audit and Governance Committee on the number of cases where, and reasons why, procurement activity has required the use of waivers and/or non adherences (WARNs). The report covers approved cases between the 1st July 2020 and the 31st August 2020.
- 1.2. The approved WARNs are published retrospectively for information on the next appropriate Audit and Governance Committee. The total number of WARNs to be presented to the September Audit and Governance Committee is 9 (consisting of 8 Waivers and 1 Non adherences).
- 1.3. All WARNs will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee without any information redacted. However, they will be presented in Part 2 of the Committee as they may contain commercially sensitive information and/or Officer Details.

2. Recommendation/s

That the Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1. Notes the number and reason for 9 further WARNs approved between 1st July 2020 and 31th August 2020 (20 in total to date in 2020/21).

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The Audit and Governance Committee has a key role in overseeing governance arrangements within the Council and has a requirement to retrospectively review all approved WARNs. The WARN process forms part of the Councils Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs), which are intended to promote good procurement and commissioning practice, transparency and clear public accountability.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. N/A

5. Background

5.1. All WARNs approved in the period between Audit and Governance Committees will be presented to the next Committee meeting. This report contains all WARNs approved from the 1st July 2020 to the 31st August 2020 (9 in total).

The WARN process records the following;

- Waivers to the Contract Procedure Rules – These are agreed waivers in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules, Part 5. Section 7.1-7.3.
- Non Adherence to the Contract Procedure Rules – This is a breach of the Contract Procedure Rules in accordance with Part 5. Section 7.4-7.10.

Waivers are a compliant part of the Contract Procedure Rules and are used where there is a genuine business case to direct award without the need for competition.

Table 1: WARNs have increased during 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak

WARNs	2016-2017	2017- 2018	2018-2019	2019 - 2020	Apr 2020- Aug 2020
Non Adherence	33	10	5	1	2
Waiver	40	20	16	17	18
Grand Total	73	30	21	18	20

5.2 The number of WARNs have increased during 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak. Currently 10 of the 20 WARNs completed were due to the outbreak and the Council needing to responding quickly to ensure goods and service.

For the same period in 2019 (April – August 2019) the Council reported 9 WARNs, so if we remove the COVID WARNs the numbers are comparable with the previous year.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. All employees must ensure that they use any Council or other public funds entrusted to them through their job role in a responsible and lawful manner.

6.1.2. Employees must also seek to ensure value for money and take care to avoid the risk of legal challenge to the Council in relation to the use of its financial resources. The Council's Officer Delegations, Finance and Contract Procedure Rules and Operating Procedures must, therefore, be followed at all times. This report sets out compliance with Contract Procedure Rules.

6.1.3. Advice should be sought from Legal Services on the application of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Guidance has been issued to contract managers on the content of PPN 02/20 Supplier Relief and advice should be sought from Legal Services on the contractual terms and conditions of current contracts and how they may be varied to reflect any relief given to suppliers.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. The Council's Constitution Finance Procedure Rule 2.30; Chapter 3 - Part 4: Section 2 explains that the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) are responsible for working within their respective budget limits and to utilise resources allocated to them in the most efficient, effective and economic way. This is supported by effective commissioning, procurement processes and appropriate contract management.

6.2.2. Along with comments from Procurement and Legal Officers, Finance Officers are invited to make comments in respect of each WARN, to help ensure Finance Procedure Rules are adhered to in this regard. The comments of Finance Officers focus on whether the Service: has identified sufficient existing budget to cover the proposal; and has also considered how to achieve best value for money via the particular recommended course of action.

6.2.3. With regard to procurement activity relating to Covid-19, the Council is closely monitoring all additional expenditure in respect of responding to the pandemic and – as required for all local authorities – is reporting summary financial information to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government on a monthly basis, in terms of Covid-19-related spending and loss of income. On 19 March 2020 the Government announced £1.6bn of additional funding to support local authorities in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic; this funding is un-ringfenced and is intended to help local authorities address any pressures they are facing in response the Covid-19 pandemic, across all service areas. On 18 April and on 2 July 2020, the Government further allocations of £1.6bn and £0.5bn respectively, in additional funding for councils. In total, the Council's share of this funding is £22.4m.

6.2.4. For information, the Government has also announced a compensation scheme, whereby it will contribute towards a proportion of councils' losses

in respect of sales, fees and charges income; and has also stated that any shortfalls in council tax and business rates income can be spread and accounted for over the next three years. The Council will continue to monitor and report on the financial effects of Covid-19 and the sufficiency of additional funding support provided by the Government, as part of its financial planning and forecasting through the year.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. N/A

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. N/A

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. N/A

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. The focus is the risk that processes are not complied with, which increases the likelihood of legal challenge causing financial and reputational risk to the Council. This includes procurement processes.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. N/A

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. N/A

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.

10. Contact Information

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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Appendix 1

CPR WAIVERS – CATEGORIES FOR INTERNAL REPORTING

Category Ref	Ref Description
A	Genuine Emergency - which warrant an exception to the requirements of competition
B	Specialist Education or Social Care Requirements
C	Genuine Unique Provider - e.g. from one source or contractor, where no reasonably satisfactory alternative is available.
F	No valid tender bids received; therefore direct award can be substantiated
G	Lack of Planning
H	Any other valid general circumstances up to the EU threshold
I	No time to undertake a tendering exercise, therefore extension necessary to avoid non-provision of deliverables
J	Procurement from any other source would be uneconomic at this time
K	Added value being offered by the Provider(s)
L	Extension is best option as highlighted in request form
D	Compatibility with an existing installation and procurement from any other source would be uneconomic given the investment in previous infrastructure
V	Covid-19 Exemption
E	In-depth Knowledge, skills and capability of project/services already in existence with consultants/providers carrying out related activity – therefore procuring new consultants/skills would be uneconomic given the investment in previous, related work.