

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

18 August 2026

The following report is attached for consideration and is submitted with the agreement of the Chairman as an urgent matter pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972

**5 CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - PURCHASE OF SYNERGY EDUCATION
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (Pages 3 - 14)**

Slightly amended draft Executive Decision and exempt appendix attached (exempt appendix not available to press or public).

**Zena Smith
Head of Committee & Election
Services**

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Notice of KEY Executive Decision containing exempt information

This Executive Decision Report is part exempt and Appendix A is available for public inspection as it contains or relates to exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. It is exempt because it refers to Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

Subject Heading:	<i>Procurement of Synergy Education Management System</i>
Decision Maker:	<i>Cllr Kevin Gill (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)</i>
Cabinet Member:	<i>Cllr Kevin Gill (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)</i>
ELT Lead:	<i>Tara Geere- Director of Starting Well</i>
Report Author and contact details:	<i>Jonathan Goodwin – School Admissions Team Leader 01708 431857</i>
Policy context:	<i>Education Services to award a new contract to their existing supplier for the delivery of statutory services in line with statutory functions set out under the Childcare Act 2006.</i>
Financial summary:	<i>The total cost of the contract including Wonde Integration with 98 school licences plus maintenance costs and running costs for 3 years plus a 2 year extension period is £861,104.38 excluding VAT (£1,033,325.26 Inc VAT) (£505,002.72 for years 1-3 (£606,003.26 Inc VAT)</i>

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	<i>and £356,101.66 for extension years 1 and 2 (£427,321.99 Inc VAT))</i> <i>This will be met from the centrally held Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget and traded income from the Free School Meal Checking Service.</i>
Reason decision is Key	<i>Expenditure or saving (including anticipated income) of £500,000 or more</i>
Date notice given of intended decision:	<i>22 March 2026</i>
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee:	<i>People OSSC</i>
Is it an urgent decision?	<i>No</i>
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	<i>No</i>

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well X

~~Place—A great place to live, work and enjoy~~

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council X

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Cabinet Member for Children Services is recommended to agree:

To award a contract to **Access UK** Ltd via Lot 11 (Education Management and Learning Systems) of the YPO Software Application Solutions Framework – 1095 for an education management system (Synergy), for a period of 3 years plus a 2-year extension period commencing 1 August 2026, at a cost of £861,104.38 *excluding VAT* (£1,033,325.26 *Inc VAT*) (£505,002.72 for years 1-3 (£606,003.26 *Inc VAT*) and £356,101.66 for extension years 1 and 2 (£427,321.99 *Inc VAT*))

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

*Part 3.2, Section 3.8: **The following Functions may be delegated to individual Cabinet members by the Leader.***

To approve the commencement of the tender process, to award contracts, agree extensions of contract terms where the value of such matter is between £1,000,000 and £2,000,000 subject to consultation with the Strategic Director of Resources. (Note: Pension Committee has powers to invite tenders and award contracts for investment matters within their terms of reference)

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This report seeks to direct award a new contract via the YPO framework to deliver an Education Management system to comply with the council's statutory requirements for 3 years (plus 2 year extension) at a cost of £861,104.38 *excluding VAT* (£1,033,325.26 *Inc VAT*) (over the contract period (5 years)).

Comparison of costs / services

A market review was undertaken to evaluate viable Local Authority Education Management Systems (LA EMS) capable of managing the Council's statutory duties including Co-ordinated School Admissions, Child Employment / Entertainment Licencing, SEND Finance management, Early Years, Education Welfare, and Free School Meals.

1. YPO Framework 1095 (Lot 11) Evaluation

Although four suppliers are listed under Lot 11 of the YPO Framework 1095, an initial technical assessment confirmed that only two suppliers offer a compatible Local Authority Education Management System:

- **Access UK Ltd (Synergy):** Compatible. Offers a comprehensive, fully integrated LA EMS designed specifically for managing local authority statutory obligations across education and early help.
- **Liquidlogic Ltd (EYES):** Compatible. Provides a dedicated LA education system via the *Liquidlogic Early Years & Education System (EYES)*.
- **Civica UK Ltd:** Incompatible. Civica does not offer a local authority education database. Their software portfolio is restricted to individual school-level operational, compliance, and school finance tools.

- **The Key Support / Arbor:** Incompatible. Arbor provides a school-level Management Information System (MIS) for individual schools and multi-academy trusts. They do not supply a local authority platform capable of delivering council-level statutory services.

2. Off-Framework Evaluation (G-Cloud Framework)

- **CACI Ltd (Impulse Nexus):** Compatible, but rejected on cost. CACI's *Impulse Nexus* system was evaluated as a technically viable alternative. However, CACI is not available via YPO Framework 1095. A detailed cost analysis was conducted using the G-Cloud procurement framework, but CACI was ultimately discounted as the submitted costings did not demonstrate equivalent value for money or overall cost-efficiency when compared against the framework routes available under YPO.

Consequently, Access UK Ltd (Synergy) represents the most functional, compliant, and cost-effective solution available to the Council.

Exempt Appendix A includes a comparison of the costs, split into each service area or module.

Why is it needed?

The system would enable the council to undertake and record various statutory education and children's social care duties which are dependent on this system. Thereby enabling Havering Council to discharge its statutory duties around the following associated functions:

- Special Education Needs Funding
- Early Years Funding
- Free School Meals Eligibility Checking
- School Admissions and Appeals Services
- School Attendance and Inclusions
- Alternative Provision
- Children Missing Education (CME)
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Service requirements

The system requirements have been set to meet all statutory duties, the needs of the service, and to ensure we can maximise income through government entitlements, such as the free early years childcare programme.

The system must have capability to ensure the following:

- Parents can apply through an online parent portal for the two-year-old offer & the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP).
- Requirements of the 30 hours codes of the Disability Access Funding (DAF) and EYPP are met.
- Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) and instant outcomes for the 2-Year-old offer must be integrated and compliant with all requirements of Universal credit entitlements.
- Information shared by parents and LA systems allow for the push of codes (2 year olds and 30 hours) so that when a Early years provider claims, the base line child level data is already present in the system.
- Requirements for 30 hours breakdown of universal hours and extended hours are met.
- Data requirements for the Department for Education Early Years Census can be met with all data fields related to child level and establishment data are formatted ready for transfer to the DfE COLLECT system.
- School Census data can be securely imported to allow the LA to have a centralised hub for all pupils.

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- Automated calculation of funding for providers can occur, enabling them to control their finances for government initiatives.
- Date parameters for term dates to be flexible, to prevent late returns from providers.
- Automatic calculations of the ages of children interfaces with termly date parameters, so children not eligible are identified.
- Local adjustments are not required for children who start after census closure and this is automatically managed therefore ensuring no further requirement for a funding transfer manual process.
- Maintain data requirements so there is no further need to send census exports or 30 hours childcare exports.
- Data requirements of the schools portal allows access to statutory school age and early years data on one platform.
- Specific functionality highlights and evidences over claims/duplicate data to reduce errors and any potential fraud.
- Data requests from Childcare works, DfE and HMRC and fully reportable.
- The school admissions module is fully compliant with Pan-London admissions configuration and protocol.
- The parent portal for school admissions, allows applications and notifications on outcomes for the main cohort of allocations and in-year applications.
- Schools will receive details of admissions applicants and self-rank them (so to apply any local admissions criteria) and allow data to return to the local authority through the system – for both main cohort and in-year applicants.
- Allocation of unplaced applicants to their nearest school with a vacancy is automated.

ICT Requirements

As The Access UK Ltd are the current providers of the system, the Havering ICT Business Partner have already supported this system. Technical and information security requirements have been satisfied. The system is Hosted remotely via Access UK Ltd and meets all Havering requirements.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do nothing – this option is not possible as the system would be out of contract and unsupported, and the Local Authority would not be legally compliant.

Option 2 - Undertake a wider procurement exercise – this option was rejected as there would be significant cost of changing systems along with a substantial disruption to statutory services such as the school admissions and appeals process. Additionally the entirety of the local primary and secondary schools sector would be required to have a new system which would require a significant re-training programme. This would create additional and unreasonable time and cost pressures on education services that cannot be mitigated.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

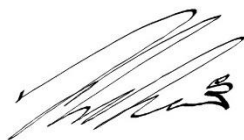
No formal consultation required.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Jonathan Goodwin

Designation: School Admissions Team Leader

Signature:



Date: 06/02/2026

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has a duty in section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. The Council is making a decision to make a contract for the provision of software for that purpose. The Council seeks to utilise the software provided through the contract to comply with that duty.

The Council has the power to enter into the contract under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which gives the Council the power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions

The Council may also award the contract under its general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to certain limitations. None of the limitations apply to this decision.

The contract value is above the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) threshold for service contracts of (£207 720). The procurement is caught by the full PA23 regime. PA23 permits award via call off from extant frameworks procured under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). The YPO Software Application Solutions Framework is a PCR 2015 compliant framework and as set out in this report, direct award via this framework is permissible. The award is therefore compliant with PA23.

For the reasons set out above, the Council may award the contract.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Revenue implications

The total cost of awarding a contract to Access UK Ltd via the YPO framework for the Synergy Education system is £861,104.38 (£1,033,325.26 inc VAT) over the full five-year term, comprising an initial three-year period followed by a two-year extension.

The system is funded from existing revenue budgets, specifically Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and traded income generated through the Free School Meals Eligibility Checking Service.

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The annual costs across the service areas are set out in Exempt Appendix A.

Funding is currently aligned to these statutory and traded functions, and the system costs are therefore fully contained within existing budget allocations.

Risks

The primary financial risk relates to the ongoing sufficiency of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding over the life of the contract. While the relevant statutory services are currently supported through earmarked DSG budgets, there remains sustained national pressure on school funding, with increasing demand and cost pressures potentially exceeding annual grant uplifts.

There is also an ongoing dependency on central government funding arrangements and policy decisions, which could impact DSG allocations in future years of the contract.

In addition, there is a specific risk relating to the Free School Meals (FSM) Eligibility Checking Service, which is currently funded through traded income. At present, interim arrangements are in place for the delivery of this function, and the longer-term operating model for the service has not yet been confirmed. Should the traded service cease or significantly reduce in scope during the contract term, there would remain a requirement to fund the associated system costs for the duration of the contract unless the relevant modules were removed or the contract was re-scoped. This could result in pressure on DSG budgets or require service redesign to align functionality with future service delivery arrangements.

These risks are considered manageable at present, but will require ongoing review throughout the contract period, particularly in light of any changes to national funding arrangements or local service operating models.

Capital implications

There are no capital costs associated with this procurement. The solution is fully revenue funded and hosted by the supplier, meaning no on-premise infrastructure or capital investment is required.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;

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- (iii) foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None identified

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None identified

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A	<i>Financial or business affairs</i>	<i>Exempt</i>
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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed

CLLR KEVIN GILL TO INSERT SIGNATURE

Name: Cllr Kevin Gill

Cabinet Portfolio held: Cabinet Member for Children Services

~~CMT Member title:~~

Head of Service title:

~~Other manager title:~~

Date: 31/07/2026

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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