

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Public notice contract award
Decision Maker:	Kathy Freeman, Strategic Director of Resources
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ray Morgon, Leader of the Council
ELT Lead:	Kathy Freeman, Strategic Director of Resources
Report Author and contact details:	Lorna Waters Commercial and marketing manager
Policy context:	Having used the ESPO framework to procure for a provider to place our statutory and non-essential advertising in newspapers we have followed procurement procedures and are now seeking permission to award the contract. This contract will be for 5 years with a 2 year run on.
Financial summary:	This contract will save us a minimum of 5% on our annual spend for advertising in the Romford Recorder and London Gazette.
Reason decision is Key	Over a potential seven years the spend with this provider will exceed £500,000 and is estimated to be a maximum of £700,000
Date notice given of intended decision:	29 July 2025

Key Executive Decision

Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Is it an urgent decision?	No
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	No

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

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

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

For the reasons set out in this report, the Strategic Director of Resources is recommended to approve the award of a contract to People Scout Limited with an estimated value of £700,000 from July 2025 for five years plus a two year (1 x 24 months) extension option for the provision of services relating to the purchasing of advertising space and placing adverts on behalf of the Council.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

Scheme 3.3.3 – Powers common to all Strategic Directors

To award all contracts with a total contract value of below £1,000,000 other than contracts covered by Contract Procedure Rule 16.3. This delegation shall include the ability to extend or vary a contract up to and including a value of £1,000,000 (provided that the extension is in line with the existing contractual provisions.)

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Currently, all Council departments buy space in local newspapers and the London Gazette for the advertising of public notices. The Council has special rates with Newsquest (Romford Recorder) and the London Gazette. Public notices are placed in these publications as a legal requirement and the amount of notices the Council places each week can vary depending on the demands of the service. The spend for the last three years with Newsquest is as follows:

21/22 - £71,040

22/23 - £80,029

23/24 - £88,322

Spending with the London Gazette is done via company credit cards and is estimated to be less than £12,000 per year. By purchasing through a media-buying agency, the Council will be able to save money because the media buying agency will format advertisements to condense content and minimise column space usage. Additionally, where possible, the agency will also negotiate better rates for publications. Based on the reduction in square column centimetres for each advert, the Council is projected to save 5%.

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The procurement was undertaken through the ESPO framework 3A-24 Lot 2 (Public Notices Advertising) and a mini competition was run with the following weightings:

Criteria Weighting Quality 50% Price 40% Social Value 10% Total 100%.
The highest scoring company was People Scout with an overall score of: 98

There were three bidders and scoring was as follows:

Bidder A 84

Bidder B 80

Bidder C 98

Due to the scoring, we would like to award the contract to Bidder C People Scout Limited.

After evaluating and scoring the bids by each supplier, People Scout Limited scored the highest, and officers recommend awarding the contract to them as this represents best value for the Council.

This has been approved by GRG.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Continuing the placement of advertising without a provider was considered, but this was rejected, as it would not save the Council any money.

Awarding the contract to another company was considered but due to the scoring system, this is not a viable option.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

Statutory consultation not required

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

Name: Lorna Waters

Designation: Commercial and Marketing Manager

Signature: *Lorna Waters*

Date: 13/6/2026

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has the power to award the contract under s111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which permits the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.

The Council also has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may generally do subject to any statutory limitations. The recommendation sought within this report is in accordance with this power.

The estimated contract value is above the threshold for services under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR). The contract is therefore subject to the full PCR regime. The PCR is relevant in this circumstance, as the framework was procured under these regulations and remains live.

As set out in this report, the contract was procured via the ESPO framework 3A-24 Lot 2 (Public Notices Advertising). In accordance with Regulation 33 of the PCR. This is a PCR compliant framework.

The ESPO Framework permits selecting a supplier via a mini competition or a direct award.

As set out in this report, officers have followed the framework process for selecting a supplier via mini competition, and now recommend awarding the contract to People Scout Limited.

The Council is a Best Value authority and has a duty to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”. As set out in this report, officers consider the proposals achieve Best Value.

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

For the reasons set out in this report, the Strategic Director of Resources is recommended to approve the award of a contract to People Scout Limited with an estimated value of £700,000 from July 2025 for five years plus a two year (1 x 24 months) extension option for the provision of services relating to the purchasing of advertising space and placing adverts on behalf of the Council.

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The Council are obliged by law to place public notices in local newspapers and the London Gazette for the purpose of advertising notifications in relation to Highways and Planning.

The amount of spend varies annually in line with the amount of notices which need to be placed, however, it is typically in the region of £0.1m per year. Spend is funded from the relevant services' budgets.

A full procurement process has taken place which has resulted in the Council achieving estimated minimum savings of 5% on our annual spend for advertising; this is more than the original 3.5% estimated at the start of the procurement process. Therefore, this new contract will mean that placing public notices in local newspapers and the London Gazette will now cost the Council £0.095m per year instead of £0.1m per year. This equates to a saving of approx. £35k over the full contract term. The annual saving of approx. £0.005m per year will fall to those budgets which currently fund the spend, i.e. predominantly Highways and Planning.

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

Under Section 149(1) Equality Act 2010 a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no health and wellbeing implications or risks to awarding this contract.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council will embrace the Environment and Climate Agenda both strategically and globally through its development of footprint reduction initiatives, Climate Action plans and externally delivered services. The Council will strive to minimise negative impacts and optimising positive opportunities delivering its Climate change action plan. Companies tendering for this contract will have to demonstrate their values align with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. There are no further environmental and climate change inclusion implications or risks from this decision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Key Executive Decision

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

Delete as applicable

Details of decision maker

Signed

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

ELT Member title: Strategic Director of Resources

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

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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