



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

## Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

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|--|--|
| <b>Subject Heading:</b>                              | <b>London Boroughs Legal Alliance, Solicitors Framework</b>  |
| <b>Decision Maker:</b>                               | Kathy Freeman, Strategic Director of Resources   |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>                               | Chris Wilkins. Cabinet Member for Finance  |
| <b>SLT Lead:</b>                                     | Gavin Milnthorpe Deputy Director of Legal and Governance   |
| <b>Report Author and contact details:</b>            | Jo Swinton- Bland, Head of Business Operations, Legal and Governance<br>Email:<br><a href="mailto:jo.swintonbland@onesource.co.uk">jo.swintonbland@onesource.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Policy context:</b>                               | Enabling a resident focused and resilient council. Manage resources well.  |
| <b>Financial summary:</b>                            | The spend for the London Borough of Havering over four years (three years plus optional one) is estimated at £294k   |
| <b>Relevant OSC:</b>                                 |  |
| <b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b> | It is a non-key decision by a member of staff  |

**Non-key Executive Decision**

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

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Support residents to stay well and safe           | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| A great place to live ,work and enjoy             | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Enabling a resident focused and resilient council | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## Part A – Report seeking decision

### **DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION**

For the reasons set out in the report, the Director of Legal and Governance is recommended to agree to:

enter into the London Boroughs' Legal Alliance (LBLA) Solicitors Framework to call off services as and when required for an initial period of 3 years, until 7 January 2029 (plus a further year, in the event that the London Borough of Haringey (as the Lead Borough) exercises the option to extend the Framework).

### **AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

Havering Scheme of Delegation- Scheme 3.3.3- Powers Common to all Strategic Directors:

4.2 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**

At a time when councils are facing an unprecedented scale of financial pressures and growing demand for services, never has the need to secure savings and cost efficiencies been more acute.

The London Boroughs Legal Alliance (LBLA) Solicitor's Framework will support the council meeting its commitment to a resident focused and resilient council by achieving value for money through the maintenance of competitive rates and quality assured legal services.

In addition to securing highly competitive pricing, the solicitor's framework is particularly comprehensive and allows the Council to obtain specialist advice on the wide breadth and complex nature of work undertaken by the authority. The Framework requires all panel solicitors' firms to comply with their legal obligations under UK discrimination and equal opportunity law and will also give members access to an extensive range of social value benefits in support of our resident and community initiatives.

Under the previous Framework and in line with the legal services improvement plan, senior lawyers within in the in-house legal team have achieved greater capacity to undertake more complex work delivering savings and benefits to the people of Havering.

It is important that the Council's complex legal needs can continue to be supported by some of the country's best legal minds at competitive prices.

## Non-key Executive Decision

The Council gains access to the Framework as a member of the LBLA, which comprises of 33 London boroughs and a few out of London boroughs who have joined purely for access to the frameworks.

The new agreement replaces the current Framework utilised by the Council. The London Borough of Haringey has acted as lead authority for the LBLA for the re-procurement. The report outlining the procurement process is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Using the Framework, Legal Services can deliver corporate savings to the Council when work or advice from external solicitors' firms is required. The service is provided on a call off basis, so the council is not obliged to instruct solicitors from the Framework.

In practice, Legal Services use the LBLA Solicitors Framework to save on costs, when the internal legal department does not have in house specialist expertise, where the matter is particularly complex or where there is not sufficient in-house capacity, with the permission of the Director or Deputy Director of Legal and Governance.

The Framework commences on 8 January 2026 and will continue for a period of three years, subject to the London Borough of Haringey's option to extend the Framework for a further period of one year.

The services from solicitors are divided between the following lots with the firms identified in Appendix A appointed to each Lot:

- Lot 1 – Regeneration
- Lot 2 – Full range of legal services
- Lot 3 – Housing
- Lot 4 – Planning and Property
- Lot 5 - Employment

Compliance with the Framework is monitored by a specialist company engaged by the LBLA that checks bills from the firms, deals with disputes and provides information on the overall spend on the Framework, together with estimated savings achieved, broken down by lot. This provides valuable management information for planning and managing future spend. For the period 8 July 2022 to 31 October 2025 (the current framework agreement has been extended for 6 months to end on 07.01.26), savings for Havering are estimated to be £237k with a total spend from the Framework of £257k.

The Council's annual Framework spend on external solicitors over the past 3 financial years is as follows:

- 2022/2023 - £27k
- 2023/2024 - £107k
- 2024/2025 - £96k
- 2025 to October- £28k (6-month extension to 07.01.26)

Costs can vary with the complexity and number of cases in any one year. The estimated spend for the London Borough of Havering under the new Framework over four years (three years plus optional one) is estimated at £294k.

In addition to cashable savings, the bidders have agreed to provide a range of Value Added and Social Value Benefits. Mandatory requirements are a minimum of 1 training

### **Non-key Executive Decision**

session for each Lot to which they are appointed, monthly management information and 20 minutes free advice for each potential new instruction. Bidders have also offered a range of additional free benefits including additional bespoke training sessions and seminars, legal updates, legal research facilities, secondments, legal surgeries, volunteering time, fundraising events in support of local authority initiatives, active engagement in supporting voluntary and community organisations, apprenticeship and work experience placements, online services such as training or legal advice services and interview training.

The use of the Framework will deliver value for money for the Council.

Whilst the Framework is primarily aimed at the provision of legal services, as indicated above all the solicitors' firms involved in the framework have offered value added benefits, some of which may provide opportunities to promote the Council's community wealth building strategy. These include opportunities for work shadowing and experience for young people in Havering in solicitors' firms to provide valuable experience of working in the legal profession. Once we are signed up to the Framework, we will work with firms and Council services to seek to maximise access to these opportunities.

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 1.1. Undertake an individual procurement exercise for the provision of services by solicitors' firms. This is not recommended as it is unlikely to benefit from the discounted rates that firms are prepared to give to a group within a framework.
- 1.2. Procure solicitors on a "case by case" basis so far as this is compliant with the Council's procurement rules. This is not recommended as the Council would not receive any discount save through individual negotiation on cases. (NB the Council may still instruct "non-Framework" solicitors where this is appropriate or desirable such as a specialism not covered by the Framework).
- 1.3. Join a different Framework. There are no competitive alternatives, and the Council has paid for free access to the Framework through its membership of the LBLA.

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

None

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

## Non-key Executive Decision

Name: Jo Swinton-Bland

Designation: Head of Business Operations, Legal and Governance



Signature:

Date:07.01.26

## **Part B - Assessment of implications and risks**

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Council has the power to enter into contracts under the general power of competence contained in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which allows the Council to do anything that an individual may do subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers.

The Council has the power under this section to agree to the proposals in the recommendations.

The potential value of call off contracts under the Framework Agreement is £294K for London Borough of Havering over 3 years (plus an option to extend for a further one year).

Local Authorities are individually considered a Contracting Authority for the purposes of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA) and it is noted that the London Borough of Haringey has carried out the procurement for the Framework Agreement in accordance with the rules of the PA.

London Borough of Havering should comply with the rules of the Framework Agreement when entering into individual Call off Contracts under the Framework Agreement.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

For the reasons set out in the report, the Director of Legal and Governance is recommended to agree to enter into a call off contract with the London Boroughs' Legal Alliance (LBLA) Solicitors' Framework from January 2026 for an initial period of 3 years, until January 2029 (plus a further year, in the event that the London Borough of Haringey (as the Lead Borough) exercises the option to extend the Framework).

The estimated amount of spend over the 3+1 years is £0.294m. This estimate is based on prior years' activity (i.e. £0.258m of spend over 3.5 years). The exact amount of spend will depend on the amount and type of services required over the 3+1 year period, which is difficult to predict with certainty at the outset of the contract.

Spend is instructed by the Director of Legal Services on behalf of the Council's wider services. Limiting instructions to the Director of Legal Services ensures spend is essential and provided at the appropriate level. Costs are funded by the services who initiate the requests. Spend with the framework is usually incurred in relation to complex cases, niche specialisms and/or when there is insufficient in-house capacity.

## **Non-key Executive Decision**

The framework provides discounted rates. Management information provided by LBLA reports that Havering spent £0.258m over the course of the previous contract on services worth £0.494m representing a saving of £0.237k (nearly 48%). Access to the framework is afforded by virtue of the Council's annual membership to the LBLA (for which it pays £5,674 per year). Each year the Council receives a small rebate based on the amount of spend incurred via the framework which goes some way to offsetting the cost of the LBLA membership; for 2025 Havering received £1.4k. Although entering this contract does not preclude the Council from utilising alternative frameworks, there are no known equivalent frameworks available.

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

None

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising its functions. This includes the provisions sought in this report, to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not. This is the public sector equality duty. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

"Due regard" is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances. The weight to be attached to each need is a matter for the Council. As long as the Council is properly aware of the effects and has taken them into account, the duty is discharged.

There are no equalities implications or risks arising in the use of external legal services.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

None

### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

None

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Financial information on the overall total of external solicitors spend and estimated savings for Havering through the current framework for years 2022 to 2025 from the London Boroughs Legal Alliance.

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Detail of Lots under the framework with participating solicitors' firms  
Appendix 2 Detail of the procurement process carried out by the London Borough of Haringey on behalf of the other participating authorities.

**Non-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

**Details of decision maker**

Signed

Name: Kathy Freeman

SLB Member title: Strategic Director of Resources

Date:

**Lodging this notice**

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

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

**Non-key Executive Decision**

**Appendix 1**

|                              |   |  |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>Lot 1</b><br>Regeneration | <b>Solicitors Firm</b><br>Antony Collins Solicitors LLP<br>Ashfords LLP<br>Bevan Britton LLP<br>Capsticks Solicitors LLP<br>Geldards LLP<br>Pennington Manches Cooper<br>LLP<br>Sharpe Pritchard<br>TLT | <b>Lot 2</b><br>Full range of legal services | <b>Solicitors Firm</b><br>Antony Collins Solicitors<br>LLP<br>Birketts LLP<br>Capsticks Solicitors LLP<br>Freeths LLP<br>Pennington Manches<br>Cooper LLP<br>Sharpe Pritchard<br>TLT<br>Weightmans LLP |
| <b>Lot 3</b><br>Housing      | <b>Solicitors Firm</b><br>Ashford LLP<br>Bevan Britton LLP<br>Birketts LLP<br>Capsticks Solicitors LLP<br>Devonshires Solicitors LLP<br>Judge and Priestley   | <b>Lot 4</b><br>Planning & Property          | <b>Solicitors Firm</b><br>Bevan Britton LLP<br>Birketts LLP<br>Capsticks Solicitors LLP<br>Devonshires Solicitors LLP<br>Pennington Manches<br>Cooper LLP<br>Sharpe Pritchard                          |
| <b>Lot 5</b><br>Employment   | <b>Solicitors Firm</b><br>Antony Collins Solicitors LLP<br>Bevan Britton LLP<br>Devonshires Solicitors LLP<br>Sharpe Pritchard  |  |  |

**Appendix 2 – separate document**

**Non-key Executive Decision**