

## Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Award of Contract for an Online Booking System for the Registrar Service to BookingLab
<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Mark Duff, Director of IT, Digital & Customer Services / Customer Services Transformation
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Middleton Lead Member for Customer Services and IT
<b>ELT Lead:</b>	Mark Duff, Director of IT, Digital & Customer Services
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Poppy Khanam, Project Manager <b>Poppya.khanam@havering.gov.uk</b>
<b>Policy context:</b>	This report seeks approval to award a contract to BookingLab to implement a digital booking and payment platform for the Registrars. This platform will support a consistent, accessible, and user-friendly- experience for customers, while enabling the service to increase online transactions and reduce manual processing. The solution will ensure compliance with digital, financial, and data standards, and will provide a modern, efficient approach to managing bookings and payments. The product also has the potential to be rolled out to other service areas, supporting wider organisational efficiencies.
<b>Financial summary:</b>	<b>£53,500</b>
<b>Relevant Overview &amp; Scrutiny Sub Committee:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Board.
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision.

Non-key Executive Decision

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

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council [X]

***Place an X as appropriate***

This Executive Decision to Award of Contract for an Online Booking System for the Registrar Service to BookingLab.

Resources: the implementation of BookingLab delivers a modern, efficient, and resilient online booking system, ensuring the Council remains resident-focused while maximising resources.

**Part A – Report seeking decision**

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

This report seeks approval from the Director of IT, Digital & Customer Services / Customer Services Transformation:

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To award a contract to BookingLab Limited (11764238) for a total value of £53,500. The contract will run for an initial period of 1 year, with the option to extend for a further 1 year (1+1 years).

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

### **Part 3 of the Council's Constitution**

#### Part 3.3.3

Powers common to all Strategic Directors

#### 4 Contracts

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**

This report seeks approval to award BookingLab Limited (BookingLab) a contract to deliver a modern, compliant, and efficient online booking system for the Council's Registrar Service. The system is essential for improving customer experience, reducing operational pressures, and enabling the service to generate income in line with the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Following a discovery report that took place in October 2025, it was noted that the current registrar processes were heavily manual, relying on emails, Outlook calendars, and fragmented workflows. This limits appointment availability, creates administrative burdens, increases error risk, and restricts income growth. Delivery of a digital platform is now required urgently to secure projected income from weddings and ceremonies for 2026/2027.

BookingLab provides an immediate, proven, off-the-shelf solution that meets all statutory registrar requirements. It offers end-to-end ceremony and appointment functionality, payment integration, automated reminders, real-time availability, and clear booking journeys. This will streamline operations, support staff, improve customer access, and reduce the risk of administrative error.

Alternative options were considered, including internal development using Microsoft Dynamics 365. However, internal capacity is limited at this stage, and a bespoke build would require investment and could not be delivered in time for roll-out in 2026/2027. Delays would directly impact income generation and prolong operational challenges. Continuing current processes was also rejected due to inefficiency, limited scalability, and customer impact.

Following a desktop evaluation and a Crown Commercial Service G-Cloud 14 (RM1557.14, Lot 2) assessment, BookingLab was identified as the only supplier which meets all service requirements, offers registrar-specific functionality, and represents best value for money. The framework also enables a direct award, reducing delivery time and avoiding the cost and administrative burden of a full tender.

Proceeding with BookingLab on a 1+1-year contract is the most financially responsible

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and operationally sound option for the Council. It enables rapid delivery, prevents further income loss, supports the Council's strategic priorities, and maintains flexibility for future internal development or integration with corporate platforms in line with the Council's strategic direction. As set out in the Online Bookings Discovery Report ([Online Booking Project - Options Paper\\_v2.docx](#))

Quote from the Superintendent Registrar (February 2026)

*“During our General Register Office assurance visit this week, our Compliance Manager highlighted the future direction of registration services and the importance of prioritising resources towards delivering ceremonies to deliver income. A key focus was enhancing customer choice.*

*We were advised that offering online booking is increasingly essential to meet modern customer expectations. The ability for couples to select and book their ceremony at any time, from any device—mobile, laptop, or tablet—is now a critical component of delivering a competitive, accessible, and customer centred service.”*

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

#### **Option 1 – Out-of-the-Box Registrar System**

This option delivers a quick, compliant solution for Registrars, but it is not suitable because it cannot scale across other services and would lock the council into an ongoing third-party dependency. The short-term benefit does not justify the long-term limitations.

#### **Option 2 – Build an In-house System**

While this would create a fully scalable, futureproof platform, the organisation is currently unable to develop and deliver this solution for 26/27 and cannot meet urgent requirements for Registrars. The long-term benefits do not offset immediate delivery pressures, at this stage

#### **Option 3 – Do Nothing**

Although this option avoids short-term cost and disruption, it is not suitable because it fails to address operational issues, income loss, and poor customer experience. Any minor benefit is outweighed by significant long-term service and reputational risks.

Therefore, all options above were considered and rejected.

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Formal consultation is not necessary, however, discussions have taken place with several key stakeholders throughout the review of potential providers.

The Superintendent Registrar, Head of User Centred Design and Digital Experience, Assistant Director of Customer, Registrations & Bereavement, and the Solutions Architect have all played a significant role in shaping and informing the service's preferred option.

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

Name: Poppya Khanam

Designation: Project Managers

Signature: Poppya Khanam

Date: 01/04/26

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

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

1. This report seeks approval to award a contract from the “G-Cloud 14 Framework (RM1557.14, Lot 2)” to BookingLab for the supply of a software platform.
2. The Council has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do, subject to any statutory constraints on the Council’s powers.
3. The value of the contract is £53,500. This is below the services threshold for the purpose of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA 2023). The contract is therefore not subject to the full rigours of the PA 2023.
4. The G CLOUD 14 Framework is a PA 2023 compliant framework, which as a local authority the Council is permitted to call off from. The proposed direct award is therefore PCR compliant.
5. The body of this report confirms that officers have undertaken a route via the G Cloud 14 Framework, and in accordance with the rules of that agreement, the procurement process is compliant and the Council may award the contract to BookingLab.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

This report is seeking approval from the Strategic Director of Resources to direct award a 1 year contract with the option to extend for a further 1 year (1+1) to BookingLab for a total value of £53,500 (including extension period and contingency).

Table showing cost breakdown:

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Implementation	£13,500	£0	£13,500
Licences	£15,000	£15,000	£30,000
Contingency (consultancy days)	£5,000	£5,000	£10,000
Total	£33,500	£20,000	£53,500

Funding for the Registrar Online Booking System has been provided as one-off growth of £200,000 within the Council’s 25/26 budget. It is noted that there is likely to be an underspend against this £200,000 budget of approx. £130,000 once all costs including those in the table above and internal project resources have been accounted for.

The Council’s MTFs included an on-going saving of £50,000 related to this investment in the Registrars online booking system. This has been based on an estimate that the system will free up existing officers time to perform approximately 10% more ceremonies per year. The expectation is that by year 3, the additional income will need to meet not only the £50,000 per year income target but also the £15,000 licence cost of the new system ie a total of £65,000 per year.

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Market assessment shows that registrar specific booking systems typically cost £30,000 per year, depending on configuration, integrations, and included functionality, therefore, BookingLab represents good value for money.

The procurement approach recommended, Desktop Evaluation, is considered the most cost-efficient route to market. It avoids the administrative overhead and extended timescales associated with a full tender exercise enables delivery within the required timeframe.

An internal solution developed within Dynamics 365 was considered but rejected at this stage due to the current review of D365 functionality and capacity to deliver a solution in line with Registrar online booking solution requirements. A 1+1 year contract with BookingLab will provide an immediate, off-the-shelf solution. This approach also allows the Council to gain practical insight into online booking processes, which can later inform and strengthen any future D365 build. Implementation of BookingLab will also simplify future data migration to a D365 solution, as information would transfer from a digital system rather than manual, offline processes.

Free or low-cost tools (such as Microsoft Forms) were explored as part of the options analysis but found unsuitable due to lack of registrar-specific functionality, absence of workflow automation, and inability to meet statutory and payment integration requirements. Reliance on such tools would increase long-term costs due to inefficiencies, manual handling, and compliance risks.

There is a risk that introducing BookingLab while retaining D365 for births and deaths initially, will result in operational pressures associated with running/managing two on-line systems, however, this is deemed to be less administratively burdensome than the current arrangement whereby births and deaths are online and ceremonies are manual.

There is a risk that the additional income estimated to be generated will not materialise; the estimate has been based on trends and reasonable assumptions around unmet demand as the service does not have exact data on missed enquiries within and outside service hours, however, it is noted that the investment will also free up officer time to proactively market the Council's Ceremony offerings which in turn will potentially drive more demand.

### **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;

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- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
  
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all 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 socioeconomics and health determinants.

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

There are no anticipated or identified environmental or climate change risks associated with this proposal.

The use of BookingLab supports the Council's commitment to the Havering Climate Change Action Plan (HCCAP) by providing an efficient and sustainable method of engaging with residents.

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

The procurement of the BookingLab online booking system is expected to have no negative impact on health or wellbeing. The current Registrar processes are heavily manual and can create avoidable stress for residents arranging significant life events. Implementing an online booking system will provide clearer information, timely updates, and easier access to appointments, supporting a smoother and more reassuring customer experience.

The system also promotes accessible and inclusive service delivery, enabling residents to book appointments online at their convenience while maintaining alternative support routes for those who need assistance. This approach helps ensure all users can engage with services in a way that meets their needs.

Automation of tasks and reduction in manual workload will help alleviate administrative pressure on staff, contributing positively to workforce wellbeing.

No adverse impacts have been identified.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NONE

### **APPENDICES**



**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

**Signature:** 

**Email:** mark.duff@haverling.gov.uk

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

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 \_\_\_\_\_