

Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Approval to make a direct award in favour of Cambridge House and Talbot; for the provision of a tenancy rights advocacy service, assisting the Local Authority in investigating and remedying breaches of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.
Decision Maker:	Helen Oakerbee Director of Planning and Public Protection
Cabinet Member:	Lead Member for Planning & Public Protection
ELT Lead:	Helen Oakerbee Director of Planning and Public Protection
Report Author and contact details:	Anand Punj, Public Protection Manager 01708 432 253 Anand.Punj@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	A great place to live, work and enjoy - Promote good private sector housing for local people.
Financial summary:	To approve a direct award of £0.024m per financial year to support the Tenancy Rights Advocacy Service £0.010m will be funded through the Homelessness Prevention Grant for illegal eviction referrals. £0.014m will be met from existing revenue budgets within the Service
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee:	Place OSC
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	<i>The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision</i>

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Non-key Executive Decision

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 [X]

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

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Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

For reasons detailed in this report the Director of Planning & Public Protection is recommended to agree:

1. To award a contract to Cambridge House and Talbot, for the provision of a tenancy rights advocacy service to the Local Authority.
2. To approve a total funding allocation of £0.024m per financial year, comprising:
 - £0.010m from the Homelessness Prevention Grant to support illegal eviction referrals.
 - £0.014m from existing revenue budgets within the Service.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

3.3 Scheme of Delegations – Functions delegated to officers

Scheme 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

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Introduction

The Housing Act 1996 (s195) places a duty on the local authority to take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available for individuals at risk of homelessness.

The London Borough of Havering is seeking to appoint a partner organisation (Cambridge House and Talbot), with the necessary expertise and experience to deliver a Tenancy Rights Advocacy Service. This service aims to tackle and prevent homelessness in the borough, particularly where it arises from illegal eviction and harassment by landlords and agents.

The service also provides an upstream intervention designed to reduce instances of homelessness attributable to illegal eviction or harassment and thereby help reduce the financial burden of providing alternative accommodation to those suffering from homelessness.

Background

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Illegal Evictions and Harassment are an issue which impacts Havering's expanding Private Rented Sector. Complaints related to illegal eviction and harassment have averaged 15 per year, over the last 5 years. This figure is predicted to increase in-line with the abolishment of no-fault evictions (section 21), via the Renters Reform Act 2025.

The Local Authority does not currently employ a specialist tenancy sustainment officer. The work to investigate and remedy breaches of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977, is currently undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Team. Approximately 50% of complaints can be resolved informally, and do not warrant any further action.

The Proposal & Costs

Cambridge House and Talbot's, Safer Renting programme offers specialist advice, support and advocacy to help protect tenants facing illegal eviction and harassment by their landlords or agents. The service operates on a per-referral basis, with local authorities paying a fee of £1,750 per referral.

The estimated value of referrals is £0.024m per annum. Due to this relatively low value, the Council's Contract Procedure Rules permit direct award of contracts without a tendering process. Furthermore, Cambridge House & Talbot are currently the sole provider of this specialist service to Local Authorities.

The Council proposes to award the contract to Cambridge House and Talbot as this represents the most economically advantageous option. Funding will be drawn from the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which is eligible to be used to prevent illegal evictions.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- **Option 1: Go out to Tender.** Having conducted market engagement officers did not identify any other organisation that can provide the Local Authority with a tenancy rights advocacy service, coupled with the low value of the service; Contract Procedure Rules permit a direct award to be made.
- **Option 2: Do Nothing.** The Housing Act 1996 (s195) places a prevention duty on the local authority take reasonable steps to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for occupation. Furthermore, complaints regarding illegal eviction and harassment within the borough affect the most vulnerable residents. In some cases, the Local Authority will have a statutory duty to provide those affected with alternative accommodation, so implementing an upstream intervention is essential to reduce this burden in addition to supporting residents and making Havering a great place to live.
- **Option 3: Employ a full-time tenancy sustainment officer.** Due to the current volume of illegal eviction and harassment complaints received by the

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service, it is financially prudent for the Local Authority to contract Cambridge House & Talbot's Safer renting programme. Market research indicates the cost of an officer is £0.067m per annum (Grade 8, including on-costs), equating to 33 referrals made to the programme. This level of service is not required, as we have significantly fewer referrals per annum. Even when factoring in an expected spike in illegal eviction complaints with the introduction of the Renters Reform Act 25025, this is more than double number of current complaints received by the service. Furthermore, it is highly likely, sourcing candidates with the relevant skills to experience will prove difficult. Therefore, this option has been rejected.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

None

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

Name: Anand Punj

Designation: Public Protection Manager

Signature: A.Punj

Date: 17/07/2025

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Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has the power to directly award this contract under the general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may generally do, subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers. None of the constraints on the Council's s.1 power are engaged by this decision.

The value of the procurement is under £25,000 and therefore does not fall within the remit of the Procurement Act 2023. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) allows the Council to award contracts under £25,000 without carrying out a procurement exercise.

The award of the contract to Cambridge House & Talbot is therefore in compliance with the CPR.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This report seeks approval to procure a Tenancy Rights Advocacy Service from Cambridge House and Talbot, specifically to address illegal eviction and harassment complaints received by the Local Authority.

The total annual cost of the service is estimated at £0.024m with funding allocated as follows:

- £0.010m will be met from the Homelessness Prevention Grant, as agreed by the Director of Living Well.
- The remaining £0.014m will be funded from existing revenue budgets within the Service.

Any unforeseen expenditure arising from this initiative will be managed within the overall Public Protection's budget envelope, ensuring no adverse impact on other funded commitments.

The decision to make a direct award rather than employ a full-time member of staff is expected to generate annual cost avoidance of at least £0.043m for the Council.

Given the Council's statutory duty to provide alternative accommodation for vulnerable individuals, early intervention through this service is both cost effective and essential to preventing homelessness.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

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(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

There are no Equalities or Social Inclusion implications arising from this decision.

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;
 - (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.
- (l) '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 socioeconomics and health determinants.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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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: 

Name: Helen Oakerbee, Director of Planning and Public Protection

Date: 14 May 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 _____