

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	<i>Procurement of Synergy Education Management System</i>
Decision Maker:	<i>Tara Geere (Director of Starting Well)</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. (£505,002.72 for years 1-3 and £256,101.66 for extension years 1 and 2)</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>6 February 2026</i>

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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 Director of Starting Well is recommended to agree:

To award a contract to The Access Group Ltd, through the YPO framework for the Education 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 (£505,002.72 for years 1-3 and £256,101.66 for extension years 1 and 2).**

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Under Part 3, Section 3.3 (Powers of Second Tier Officers) of the Council's Constitution, the Director of Starting Well has delegated authority to award contracts for works, supplies, or services up to a value of £1,000,000, provided that budget provision is available:

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.)

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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 over the contract period (5 years).

Comparison of costs / services

Through market research there were 3 identified viable providers. Based on the pricings provided for the providers, a desktop evaluation was undertaken to see which provider could provide best value for money whilst still providing a full complement of Modules to cover the core business needs.

Below is a comparison of the costs, split into each service area or module.

Access (Synergy)					
Cost Components	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Ext. Year 1	Ext. Year 2
Admissions core, FSM, FIS & EY, Education Support.	£34,792.08	£34,792.08	£34,792.08		
Portals	£39,270.27	£39,270.27	£39,270.27		
Hosting with 165 RDS Licences	£67,376.89	£67,376.89	£67,376.89		
Customer Success Plan	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00		
Wonde integration, including 98 school licences	£11,895.00	£11,895.00	£11,895.00		
Total	£168,334.24	£168,334.24	£168,334.24	£174,730.94	£181,370.72

CACI (Impulse Nexus)	
Cost Components	Year 1
Initial setup	£10,925.00
Impulse Nexus hosted service including CAV (for a minimum of 50 registered users)	£18,250.00
Impulse Nexus annual user license (165 users)	£165,000.00
Parent/Carer Portal	£4,000.00
Schools/Provider Portal	£4,000.00
Admissions suite (based on 20 users)	£20,000.00
Inclusions / Early Help suite (based on 20 users)	£20,000.00
Early Years suite (based on 10 users)	£10,000.00
Attendance suite (based on 20 users)	£20,000.00
Total	£272,175.00

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System-C (Liquid Logic)	
Cost Components	Year 1
150 Education / EY Users (Min)	£142,500.00
Additional 15 Education / EY Users	£13,050.00
10 Finance users (Min)	£65,000.00
Total	£220,550.00

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.
- 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.

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- 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 Group 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 Group 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.

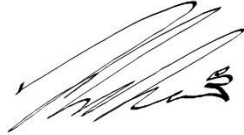
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NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Jonathan Goodwin

Designation: School Admissions Team Leader

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Goodwin', written over a horizontal line.

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 make the contract through 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 or through 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 proposed contract value is above the applicable Public Procurement threshold for service contracts stipulated in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("PCR") of £207 720. Therefore the procurement process is subject to the full PCR regime. The Council is making a direct award through a framework in accordance with section 33 of the PCR.

Therefore, the Council can award the contract.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Revenue implications

The total cost of awarding a contract to The Access Group Ltd via the YPO framework for the Synergy Education system is £861,104.38 (excluding 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.

The annual costs across the service areas are set out below:

Team	Years 1 to 3 Annual Total (01/08/26 to 31/07/29) <i>x3</i>	Year 4 Total Extension Year 1 (01/08/29 to 31/07/30)	Year 5 Total Extension Year 2 (01/08/30 to 31/07/31)	Total over full term (inc. Extension)
Schools Admissions - DSG CSSB	50,013	51,914	53,887	255,840
Early Years - DSG EY	43,198	44,840	46,544	220,977
Free School Meals Eligibility Checking (LMiS) - Traded	28,958	30,058	31,200	148,132
Inclusions and Child Employment - DSG HN	46,165	47,919	49,740	236,155
Total	168,334	174,731	181,371	861,104

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

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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.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None identified

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;
- (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.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None identified

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

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

Delete as applicable

Proposal NOT agreed because

Details of decision maker

Signed

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 _____