

	<p>ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BY OFFICER 5 August 2016</p>
Title	<p>Authorisation to seek quotations for provision of Electoral Registration Canvassing Tablets</p>
Report of	<p>Director of Assurance</p>
Wards	<p>ALL</p>
Status	<p>Public</p>
Enclosures	<p>N/A</p>
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Summary

This report authorises the Head of Electoral Services to seek quotations for the provision of mobile tablet devices to be used when conducting future statutory ‘Household Enquiry Form’ (HEF) canvasses. Legislation requires that a canvass is conducted of every residential property in Barnet each year between July and November, ahead of the publication of the annual revised Register of Electors on 1 December. Legislation further requires that all households that do not respond to the HEFs that are posted to them must receive a personal visit by a canvasser in order to elicit a response. Making use of modern, mobile tablet technology offers the potential for more secure, accurate and efficient household visits to take place, leading to an increase in the response rate from households and savings to the service in future years.

Decisions

- 1. That the Head of Electoral Services, working in conjunction with Corporate Procurement, is authorised to seek quotations for a sufficient quantity of Tablet devices that:**
 - **contain and utilise relevant, secure and robust software to meet all requirements of both electoral registration and data protection legislation**
 - **are supplied with appropriate contractual arrangements for:**
 - **provision of mobile data and GPS connectivity**
 - **repair and/or replacement of defective Tablets**
 - **continual revision of software to meet changing demands of the service and/or legislation**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The London Borough of Barnet's Electoral Services team is required by law to conduct a full canvass of all residential properties every year in order to obtain responses to Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs). It costs in excess of £200,000 to fulfil this statutory obligation each year and a significant proportion of these costs come from the need to conduct personal visits to those households that do not respond to HEFs that have been posted to them. In recent years the number of properties requiring a personal visit in Barnet has been in the region of 66,000 to 70,000 and when these forms are returned by canvassers to the Electoral Services team, significant resources are required to scan and process them (e.g. adding or removing electors, amending personal details etc.). The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA 2013) that introduced Individual Electoral Registration (IER) also made it a requirement that any individuals that were identified as being eligible but not on the electoral register, had to be invited to join the register and then personally canvassed if a response is not received. Following successful trials in various other local authorities, it is considered that mobile tablet devices, loaded with relevant, secure software now offer significant advantages in meeting the legislative requirements and longer term cost savings.

2. REASONS FOR DECISIONS

- 2.1 The cost of this procurement is anticipated to be in the region of £35,000 and the London Borough of Barnet's Contract Procedure Rules stipulate that this must be authorised by way of a full officer Delegated Powers Report from a Director or Assistant Director.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 3.1 The only alternative to mobile tablet devices currently available is to continue with a wholly paper-based canvassing approach. This is being rejected on the

basis that it is more costly (with no prospect of any future savings) and less secure in terms of personal data.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 The Head of Electoral Services, in conjunction with Corporate Procurement, will request quotations from suppliers offering acceptable products and solutions. The quotations will be assessed on financial (25%) and qualitative (75%) criteria to ensure that the quotation offering best value for money and best meeting the needs of the legislation and of Electoral Services canvass requirements is awarded the contract.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 Electoral Services delivers statutory services of electoral registration to the residents of the London Borough of Barnet. By ensuring that the register of electors is as accurate and complete as possible, the service contributes to the following corporate priorities:

- To maintain a well-designed, attractive and accessible place, with sustainable infrastructure across the borough
- To create better life chances for children and young people across the borough
- To promote family and community well-being and encourage engaged, cohesive and safe communities

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 Central government, via the Cabinet Office's 'Electoral Registration Transformation Programme' (ERTP) has awarded grant funding to The London Borough of Barnet's Electoral Services team each year since 2012 to assist with the additional costs for preparing for and implementing IER. The costs of procuring mobile tablet devices for conducting personal visits during the annual HEF canvass will be wholly met from this grant funding. From the grant funding received from Cabinet Office between 2012/13 and 2015/16, LBB's Electoral Services currently holds £169,000 in reserve for future additional IER costs (including canvassing costs). For 2016/17 LBB's Electoral Services has been allocated £76,000 of IER grant funding from Cabinet Office. It is uncertain whether further funding from Cabinet Office will be allocated in future years.

5.2.2 There will be some immediate operational cost savings made possible by utilising the tablets in this financial year, primarily coming from a reduction in print and postage costs (of approx. £8,500 for 70,000 A3 HEF forms and 35,000 reply paid envelopes and postage costs). Future savings are expected as the processes from using tablets start to mean that less staff time is required to scan and manually process returned forms and for management of temporary canvassers (e.g. out of office hours overtime for receiving and distributing property forms).

5.2.3 Corporate Procurement will work with the Head of Electoral Services to ensure that the process of tendering and awarding the contract comply with LBB's Contract Procedure Rules.

5.2.4 As part of the process of assessing the received quotations, Electoral Services will ask LBB's Information Services to review the offered technology and software. In addition Electoral Services will liaise with LBB's Information Management team to ensure that appropriate data security processes and standards are applied to the handling of resident's and elector's personal details collected via the tablet devices.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 Council Constitution, Contract Procedure Rules, Appendix 1 Table A – Authorisation and Acceptance Thresholds – provides that for procurements with an estimated value of between £25,001 and £164,176 authorisation is by Director/Assistant Director via Full Officer Delegated Powers Report (unless prior authorisation received via Procurement Forward Plan) and accepted via Summary DPR once procurement has been completed.

5.4 Risk Management

5.4.1 The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) for the London Borough of Barnet has a duty to conduct an annual HEF canvass of all residential properties during the period of 1 July to 30 November, ahead of the publication of the revised Register of Electors each year on 1 December. As part of this canvass it is required that all properties are sent a HEF, followed by at least two reminders. Where no response is received from a property, a personal visit must be made to the property to try and gain a response to the HEF. It is considered that the anticipated benefits that will arise from using mobile tablet devices in future will play an important part in minimising the risks to the ERO and the Council that are inherent in having to meet these requirements.

5.4.2 The following table summarises the key risks identified as mitigated by the use of mobile tablet devices for canvassing:

Risk Description	Consequences	Residual Risk rating:		Mitigation from Mobile Tablet devices:
		Likelihood	Impact	
Risk of personal details being seen or obtained by unauthorised person/s. (e.g. stolen or mislaid HEF forms)	Loss of resident's personal data. Data security breach that must be reported to ICO.	Low	High	Canvassers do not hold hundreds /thousands of HEF forms with personal data. Tablet device only accesses or holds data for one household at any one time.
Risk that canvasser does not visit properties, but either disposes or fraudulently supplies	Eligible electors do not get registered. Ineligible electors are	Low	High	All forms completed on visits to properties are electronically tagged with time, date and location information. Full electronic audit of all visits and

inaccurate information.	not removed. Canvasser is paid for work that was not actually completed.			data collection is maintained.
Risk that the canvassers do not return HEF forms to the offices of Electoral Services regularly throughout canvass period.	Backlog of scanning and processing work builds up in the office causing delays in registration updates. Additional costs arise through the use of staff overtime or employment of temporary admin staff.	Medium	Medium	All data collected using the mobile tablet devices is available immediately for updating the electoral register and no manual processing of forms is required. Staff time is freed up to be used for other tasks or to enable them to act as canvassers.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

5.5.1 There are no Equalities and Diversity considerations relevant to this decision.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

5.6.1 The Head of Electoral Services will engage with peers from other local authorities that have previously piloted or adopted mobile tablets for canvassing to take advantage of lessons learned or existing best practice.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 None.

7. DECISION TAKER'S STATEMENT

7.1 *I have the required powers to make the decision documented in this report. I am responsible for the report's content and am satisfied that all relevant advice has been sought in the preparation of this report and that it is compliant with the decision making framework of the organisation which includes Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, Budget and Policy Framework and Legal issues including Equalities obligations.*

8. OFFICER'S DECISION

I authorise the following action

- 8.1 **That the Head of Electoral Services, working in conjunction with Corporate Procurement, is authorised to seek quotations for a sufficient quantity of Tablet devices that:**
- **contain and utilise relevant, secure and robust software to meet all requirements of both electoral registration and data protection legislation**

- are supplied with appropriate contractual arrangements for:
 - provision of mobile data and GPS connectivity
 - repair and/or replacement of defective Tablets
 - continual revision of software to meet changing demands of the service and/or legislation

Signed Director of Assurance

Date 05/08/2016
