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| <b>Cabinet</b>         |   |
| <b>Meeting Date</b>    | 22 September 2021   |
| <b>Report Title</b>    | Award of Arboriculture Contract   |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>  | Cllr Julian Saunders, Cabinet Member for Environment  |
| <b>SMT Lead</b>        | Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods   |
| <b>Head of Service</b> | Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure   |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>    | Jay Jenkins, Leisure and Technical Services Manager   |
| <b>Key Decision</b>    | Yes   |
| <b>Classification</b>  | <b>Open</b>   |
| <b>Recommendations</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To agree the 5-year contract award, following the tender process, to Elite Arborists at a cost of £31,200 per annum, starting 15 January 2022.</li> <li>2. To delegate to the Head of Environment and Leisure and Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for Environment to complete the necessary contract documents.</li> </ol> |

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is for Cabinet to make a decision following the outcome of the recently undertaken tender process for the Arboriculture services.

1.2 The existing Arboriculture contract is due for renewal in January 2022.

## **2 Background**

2.1 Arboriculture services include the management and maintenance of the Council's tree stock across the Borough. The 2017 tree survey estimated that the Council has 171,755 trees on land in our ownership. The Council receives in excess of 500 queries from residents in relation to our trees, shrubs, and bushes each year. Following investigation of these queries, subsequent work is allocated to the contractor using a risk-based approach detailed in the Tree maintenance policy.

2.2 The current Arboriculture services are included in the Grounds Maintenance Contract with the current contractor Blenwood Ltd operating the contract since January 2007. The original contract concluded in January 2017 and was subsequently extended under the terms of the contract to January 2022.

2.3 Blenwood have provided a consistent and satisfactory level of service during the contract period and have proved to be reactive to issues as they have arrived.

2.4 However, given the length of time the current contract has been in place, it was important that SBC undertook a review process for the provision of Arboriculture services which would enable the current specification to be updated and tendered. Following the review, it was decided to tender tree services as a separate contract to the Grounds Maintenance one. This would open up the work to smaller, local businesses and potentially bring greater value allowing the potential for more tree works at the same price.

### 3 Tender Returns

3.1 A total of six tender returns have been received. None were rejected at evaluation stage.

3.2 Tenders were evaluated using the Councils 'Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criteria. This considered the price (50%) and quality (50%) of submissions. Given the specific skill base required for the service the quality was deemed to be equally important.

3.3 The six tenders range from £31,200.00 to £55,200.00. A full breakdown of costings is in the tables below.

3.4 Companies were required to submit costing for providing 48, 55 and 60 'tree days' per annum. 48 days was used as the tender price as this is comparable to the current provision.

3.5 Evaluation was undertaken by 4 officers and the recommended contract award report is being presented to SMT for review on 31 August 2021 and Cabinet on 22 September 2021.

3.6 The 5-year contract will be awarded on 15 October 2021 and the new contract will commence on 15 January 2022.

| Company                | Tender Price (£) | Tender Price Score | Quality score | Overall score |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| A –<br>Elite Arborists | 31,200           | 50.00              | 33.00         | 83.00         |
| B                      | 55,200           | 28.26              | 27.25         | 55.51         |
| C                      | 38,619           | 40.39              | 25.33         | 65.73         |
| D                      | 40,800           | 38.24              | 24.75         | 62.99         |
| E                      | 33,600           | 46.43              | 30.25         | 76.68         |
| F                      | 35,760           | 43.62              | 25.25         | 68.87         |

- 3.7 As the table confirms, the proposed company provided the best price and quality. They are a company based in the Borough and made a commitment to a number of environmental improvements as part of the contract.

## 4 Proposals

- 4.1 To agree the 5-year contract award, following the tender process, to Elite Arborists at a cost of £31,200 per annum, starting 15 January 2022.
- 4.2 To delegate to the Head of Environment and Leisure and Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for Environment to complete the necessary contract documents.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 To continue with the previous arrangement of arboriculture services being part of the wider Grounds Maintenance contract. This is not recommended as it will involve starting the tender processes again. This contract was split to encourage local businesses to apply for works and gain more value through using a smaller business with lower overheads. This has been achieved.
- 5.2 To not award any contract for arboriculture services. This is not recommended. The Council has a duty to manage and maintain its tree stock.

## 6 Implications

| Issue                            | Implications   |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Corporate Plan                   | This service contributes to priority 2 in the Corporate Plan – Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges.  |
| Financial, Resource and Property | <p>The current 2021/2022 contract value, based on a 48-day provision is £32,500 per annum so this award presents a small saving. However, this needs to be considered alongside the overall ground’s maintenance contract costs.</p> <p>The overall budget in the medium-term financial plan for 2022-23 was £1,481,550 (plus £27,500 for green waste disposal). Depending upon the final amount of the GM contract there may be a £50,893.00 overspend overall against the budget.</p> <p>The new contract will include an annual indexation figure set at CPI.</p> |
| Legal, Statutory and Procurement | <p>The procurement process was carried out in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.</p> <p>Legal Services have been requested to prepare a new contract. Focus will be made on updating to current levels of oversight and</p>  |

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|  | <p>any changes that may be required following pandemic experiences.</p> <p>Procurement timelines are in place to ensure the Council meets its obligations under UK legislation.</p>   |
| Crime and Disorder   | <p>The maintenance of public realm is a key component of providing a sense of 'place'. Well maintained sites contribute to pride and can reduce crime and disorder.</p>   |
| Environment and Climate Ecological Emergency                 | <p>The revised specification details improved biodiversity and carbon reduction opportunities. The tender asked bidders to present what measures they have in place to measure their carbon footprint and educate staff to contribute to reductions. These will be monitored over the course of the contract as part of the contract management process.</p> <p>Since 2016 Elite have continually invested in becoming more efficient and taken steps to become a greener company. This resulted in changing to electric model equivalents for 70% of the equipment they own. They have confirmed that they continue to monitor the market and increase this where they feel a suitable piece of equipment hits the market.</p> <p>Examples of which include electric Leaf blowers, Hedge cutters, Pole saws, Top Handle chainsaws (Ariel saws) all of which are charged at their depot partially from their green energy provider.</p> <p>The maintenance of our trees will play an important role in delivering the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action plan. As we plant more trees to offset our carbon footprint, the contractor will play a key role.</p> |
| Health and Wellbeing   | <p>Parks and open spaces are known to contribute to improved health and well-being. It is important that we provide a balanced approach to maintenance of our sites to encourage physical activity and recreational use but also to promote biodiversity to help contribute to improved air quality. Trees are vital improving air quality.</p>   |
| Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults | <p>This contract was identified as level Bronze for safeguarding purposes. As they are new to the Council, the contractor is working with the Council's safeguarding team ahead of the start of the contract.</p>   |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety                        | <p>The Arboriculture service is heavily legislated and as a result the contract and specification will ensure that contractors meet and are monitored on meeting the required standards.</p>  |

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|                             | The Council carries a responsibility to keep public areas in good repair. Having an effective Arboriculture contract will help to reduce the liability on the Council for claims.   |
| Equality and Diversity      | It is not felt that an Equalities Impact assessment is required for this service as it is a global service not individually directed at certain groups. Of course, each site will have individual considerations around access, but these are not valid to the delivery of the Arboriculture service. |
| Privacy and Data Protection | None perceived.   |

## **7 Appendices**

None

## **8 Background Papers**

None