

Addendum to agenda item 6: Communications (cover report)

5. Length of contract

- 5.1. The anticipated spend on external communications support is broadly up to £100k in the first 12 months and c. £60k in subsequent years. The current threshold, over which OJEU procedures are required is £189k.
- 5.2. It is proposed that, initially, a two-year contract is awarded. This would allow the initial procurement to take place on a basis other than the full OJEU procedure.

6. Approach

- 6.1. The National Frameworks initiative hosted by Norfolk County Council runs a series of effective frameworks for a number of aspects of LGPS activity. Crown Commercial Services also operate in this manner. At this time, however, neither have a framework in place for the provision of the type of communications specialists that we are seeking.
- 6.2. As a consequence, the ASU has been exploring a procurement avenue aimed at facilitating the timely procurement of the external communications support proposed within the Hymans Robertson paper.
- 6.3. ASU Host Authority Essex County Council has recently begun utilising the services of procurement specialists *Bloom* who are the UK's exclusive operator of the NEPRO3 (North East procurement) framework. They also recently onboarded Adira, the Welsh Government framework.
- 6.4. *Bloom's* category experts maintain extensive preferred supplier databases and can both assist with shortlisting as well as managing the procurement process via either direct awards or mini-competitions. Currently *Bloom* have in excess of 200 providers in the categories of Communications, Public Relations and Media Relations.
- 6.5. Pending the agreement of the Joint Committee to the recommendations within the Hymans Robertson paper, it is anticipated that using *Bloom* would allow a procurement to be completed prior to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 6.6. *Bloom's* fees for managing the procurement of external communication support for ACCESS are understood to be 5% of spend which is levied against the successful appointee, not the acquiring body.
- 6.7. The intended approach is therefore that the Interim Director of the ASU, in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Committee:
 - liaises with *Bloom* and Hymans Robertson around the finalisation of a specification; and
 - engages *Bloom's* services in the procurement of external communications support.
- 6.8. The Committee is asked to note the intended approach to procuring external communications support.