

Extraordinary Finance & General Purposes Committee

Report: Procurement Consultancy Support Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Contract

Wards Affected: All Wards

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks approval to appoint an independent procurement and environmental-services consultant to support Officers in progressing the next grounds maintenance and street cleansing procurement.

1.2 The appointment is intended to provide independent review, challenge and assurance rather than replace Officer ownership of the project. Officers will prepare the service specification, asset schedules, tender documents and the comparative business case for the potential in-house street cleansing model. The consultant will review, test and verify that work, support publication and tender administration, assist with clarifications and supplier engagement, participate in evaluation and interviews, prepare or quality-assure the final evaluation and recommendation, and support mobilisation.

1.3 Three specialist consultants were approached. Two submitted full proposals. A third consultant advised that they could support only with a limited document review and did not consider that they could provide the wider end-to-end support required. The two full proposals are assessed anonymously in this report as Bidder A and Bidder B.

1.4 TUPE and procurement-specific legal advice will remain outside the consultancy commission and will be provided through the Council's existing third-party legal support. The appointed consultant will work alongside that advice and ensure relevant operational and commercial matters are properly reflected in the procurement documents and business case.

1.5 The appointment will not determine whether the Council selects a fully outsourced service or an in-house street cleansing model. The purpose of the procurement is to obtain comparable market information and provide Members with a sound basis for making that decision.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- **APPROVE** the appointment of Bidder B to provide procurement advisory and project support;
- **APPROVE** a budget of up to £20,000 ex VAT, including the fixed fee of £18,550 and a limited allowance for approved travel or essential additional work;
- **AUTHORISE** Officers to agree the final scope, programme and terms within the approved budget;
- **NOTE** that Officers will continue to prepare the core procurement documents and the in-house business case;
- **NOTE** that the Council's external legal advisers will provide TUPE and legal advice; and

- **AGREE** that the cost is met from an available year-end underspend or, if required, general reserves.

3. Background

3.1 The current grounds maintenance and street cleansing contract expires in July 2027. The replacement arrangement is expected to be one of the Council's highest-value recurring contracts, with an estimated five-year value of approximately £4.25 million to £4.55 million before optional enhancements.

3.2 The Working Group has developed a procurement structure that will allow the Council to test the following options:

Lot	Requirement	Purpose
1	Full grounds maintenance and street cleansing service	Provides a priced and evaluated fully outsourced option.
2	Grounds maintenance only	Provides the external grounds element required if street cleansing is brought in-house.
3	Grounds maintenance with support for street cleansing fleet and equipment	Tests whether a grounds contractor can provide or manage the fleet and equipment needed for an in-house service.
4	Standalone street cleansing fleet and equipment lease	Provides an alternative fleet and equipment route if Lot 3 is not viable.

3.3 The Council **will not** be required to award every lot. The tender documents must clearly explain which combinations may be awarded and how those combinations will be evaluated.

3.4 Officers will also prepare a business case for the in-house street cleansing model option. This will include staffing, fleet, depot, management, health and safety, business continuity, mobilisation and full financial implications. The consultant will review and test the assumptions so that the in-house option can be compared consistently with the tendered external options.

4. Why Consultancy Support is Required

4.1 The Council has the operational knowledge to define the service and prepare the underlying documents. Specialist support is required because the procurement is above the relevant threshold, includes several interdependent lot options and must comply with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulations 2024.

4.2 Independent support will provide:

- review of the proposed procurement route and lot structure;
- quality assurance of the specification, pricing schedules, award criteria and tender documents;
- support with publication, notices and tender administration;
- consistent management of supplier clarifications and formal addenda;
- independent support during compliance checks, evaluation, interviews and moderation;
- review and verification of the Officer-prepared in-house business case;

- support with the evaluation report, recommendation, assessment summaries and standstill process; and
- mobilisation assurance before the new arrangement begins.

4.3 This support will strengthen the audit trail and provide independent challenge. It will not transfer responsibility from Members or Officers and will not predetermine the preferred delivery model or the contract award.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Workstream	Lead	Consultant input
Procurement strategy and lot structure	Officers and Members	Review and advice on compliance, deliverability and market approach.
Service specification, asset data and pricing schedules	Officers	Review for clarity, consistency, measurability and commercial risk.
Tender documents and evaluation methodology	Officers	Quality assurance of award criteria, weightings, scoring and instructions.
Publication and clarifications	Officers with consultant support	Review notices, support tender administration and maintain a clear clarification record.
Evaluation, interviews and moderation	Joint evaluation panel	Compliance review, independent challenge, moderation and evaluation records.
In-house business case	Officers	Review and verify assumptions, costs, risks and sensitivity analysis.
TUPE, legal advice and contract terms	External legal advisers	Work alongside legal advice without replacing it.
Award and mobilisation	Officers with consultant support	Support the recommendation, supplier feedback, standstill and mobilisation readiness.

6. Procurement and Governance Benefits

6.1 The consultant will assist the Council in applying the selected procedure consistently and transparently. This includes ensuring that the procurement documents set out the award criteria, assessment methodology, lot combinations and decision-making process before tenders are received.

6.2 The support will also assist the Council to maintain consistent supplier communications, identify conflicts of interest, document the evaluation process and prepare the information required for the award and standstill stages.

6.3 Legal interpretation, TUPE advice and formal contract drafting will remain with the Council's external legal advisers.

7. Proposals Received

7.1 Three consultants were approached. Two submitted full proposals. A third consultant advised that they could provide only a document review and could not support the wider tender administration, evaluation and mobilisation requirements.

Bidder	Fixed fee	Proposed approach	Initial assessment
Bidder A	£16,000 + VAT	Broad end-to-end service, including preparation of documents, business case, evaluation and mobilisation.	Provides wide coverage at the lowest fee, but the proposal assumes a greater level of consultant-led drafting than the Council requires and proposes a different lot structure.
Bidder B	£18,550 + VAT	Advisory and assurance role alongside Officer-led drafting and project management.	Closely reflects the Council's proposed working arrangements and four-lot structure, with emphasis on review, challenge, evaluation and mobilisation.
Third consultant	No full proposal	Document review only.	Did not meet the full scope required.

8. Evaluation Method

8.1 The two full proposals were assessed against the support required by the Council. The evaluation considered:

Criterion	Weighting	Evidence considered
Understanding of the Council's requirement and proposed delivery model	35%	Officer-led drafting, four-lot structure and an advisory rather than replacement role.
Procurement and regulatory support	20%	Publication, clarifications, evaluation, award, standstill and audit trail.
Relevant environmental-services and commercial experience	20%	Grounds maintenance, street cleansing, fleet, operations and contract delivery.
Business-case review, evaluation and mobilisation	15%	Verification of the in-house case, interviews, moderation, recommendation and mobilisation.
Cost and overall value	10%	Fixed fee, additional costs and the extent to which the service avoids duplication.

9. Evaluation Outcome

Criterion	Weight	A score /5	A weighted	B score /5	B weighted
Understanding and alignment	35%	3.5	25	4.9	34.3
Procurement and regulatory support	20%	4.0	16.0	4.7	18.8
Relevant experience	20%	4.9	19.6	4.9	19.6
Business case, evaluation and mobilisation	15%	3.8	11.4	4.8	14.4
Cost and value	10%	5	10	4.1	8.2
Total	100%		82		95.3

9.1 Bidder A

Bidder A offers the lower fee and a broad package of support. The proposal includes substantial consultant-led preparation of the tender documents and the comparative business case. It also proposes a three-lot structure that differs from the four-lot approach developed by the Working Group. As Officers intend to prepare the core documents and business case, parts of the proposed service would need to be revised to avoid duplication.

9.2 Previous work completed for the Council by Bidder A has also been considered as part of the assessment of likely delivery quality. That experience identified some duplication of Officer work and material that required correction. This does not prevent appointment, but it reduces the assurance provided by the current proposal.

9.3 Bidder B

Bidder B's proposal is structured around the Council's intended approach. It assumes that Officers will retain responsibility for drafting and project ownership, with the consultant providing review, challenge and specialist advice. It also reflects the proposed four-lot structure and the requirement to compare the tendered options with an independently reviewed in-house business case.

9.4 Bidder B provides the stronger evidence of relevant environmental-services and commercial experience. Its proposed input is concentrated on the areas where the Council requires additional expertise: procurement review, tender administration, clarification management, evaluation, business-case assurance and mobilisation.

9.5 Bidder B's fixed fee is £2,550 higher than Bidder A. The evaluation concludes that the additional cost is proportionate because the proposal is more closely aligned to the required scope and is less likely to duplicate work already being completed by Officers or legal advisers.

10. Why Bidder B is the Preferred Option

10.1 Bidder B achieved the highest overall score because its proposal:

- accurately reflects the Council's four-lot procurement structure;
- supports an Officer-led process rather than replacing Officer work;
- provides targeted independent review and assurance at each key stage;
- demonstrates relevant operational and commercial experience in grounds maintenance and street cleansing;
- includes review and verification of the in-house business case without assuming that the in-house option will be selected;
- provides support through publication, clarification, evaluation, recommendation and mobilisation; and
- can work alongside the Council's legal advisers without duplicating TUPE or legal advice.

10.2 The recommendation relates only to the appointment of the consultant. It does not represent a decision on the future delivery model or the successful tenderer. Those decisions will be made later, using the tender results, the verified in-house business case and the published evaluation methodology.

11. Risks and Controls

Risk	Potential effect	Control
No specialist support	Errors or weaknesses in the procurement documents, evaluation or award process.	Independent review and support at each key stage.
Unclear lot or evaluation methodology	Tenders may not be comparable or the Council may be unable to select the intended combination.	Review the lot structure, award options and evaluation method before publication.
Inconsistent clarification management	Unequal treatment of suppliers or an incomplete audit trail.	Maintain a controlled clarification log and issue formal addenda where required.
Unverified in-house business case	External and in-house options may be compared using inconsistent assumptions.	Independent review, sensitivity testing and comparison with actual tender returns.
Insufficient time for mobilisation	Risk of service disruption when the current contract ends.	Maintain the procurement timetable and review mobilisation readiness.

12. Financial Implications

12.1 Bidder B's fixed professional fee is £18,550. Approved travel and any agreed work outside the fixed scope would be additional.

12.2 A maximum budget of £20,000 excluding VAT is recommended. Any work outside the agreed scope must be approved in writing and remain within the approved limit.

12.3 No specific consultancy budget has been identified. The cost should therefore be met from an available year-end underspend or, if required, general reserves. VAT will be reclaimed in the normal way.

12.4 The proposed budget represents less than 0.5% of the estimated five-year value of the future service arrangement.

13. Programme

Stage	Indicative period	Consultancy input
Appointment and strategy review	August 2026	Confirm scope, procurement route, programme, lot structure and risks.
Document development	August–October 2026	Review specification, pricing schedules, tender documents and business-case assumptions.
Publication and tender period	October 2026–February 2027	Support notices, supplier communications, clarifications and addenda.
Evaluation and business-case comparison	February–March 2027	Compliance review, evaluation, interviews, moderation and verification of the in-house case.
Award and standstill	March–April 2027	Support the evaluation report, recommendation, assessment summaries and standstill.
Mobilisation	April–July 2027	Review implementation, risks, KPIs and readiness for commencement.

14. Legal and Contractual Matters

14.1 The consultant will provide procurement, commercial and operational advice. The Council's external legal advisers will remain responsible for legal interpretation, TUPE, employment implications and contract terms.

14.2 The consultancy appointment should include a clear scope, fixed-fee control, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, professional indemnity, data handling, deliverables, change control and termination provisions.

15. Conclusion

15.1 Specialist support is recommended because the procurement is high value, above threshold and includes several delivery options that must be evaluated consistently. The consultant will provide independent review and targeted support while Officers retain responsibility for the documents, business case and project management.

15.2 The appointment will not determine the future delivery model. It will support Members in making that decision after the Council has received the tendered prices, completed the evaluation and considered the independently reviewed in-house business case.

15.3 Bidder B is recommended because its proposal most closely matches the required scope, reflects the four-lot structure, avoids unnecessary duplication of Officer and legal work, and provides the strongest evidence of relevant environmental-services, procurement and commercial support. The higher fee is considered proportionate to the additional assurance and closer fit with the Council's requirements.

Appendix 1 – Summary Comparison

Area	Bidder A	Bidder B
Delivery model	Consultant-led preparation of substantial elements.	Officer-led process with targeted advisory and assurance support.
Lot structure	Proposes three lots.	Reflects four-lot structure.
Documents and business case	Consultant prepares significant parts.	Consultant reviews and verifies Officer-prepared work.
Legal and TUPE	Includes TUPE-related work.	Works alongside the Council's external legal advisers.
Relevant service focus	Broad procurement package.	Specific environmental-services, commercial and operational focus.
Fixed fee	£16,000 + VAT.	£18,550 + VAT.
Overall score	82 / 100	95.3 / 100
Assessment	Meets much of the requirement but would require re-scoping to avoid duplication.	Best fit with the Council's proposed approach and required support.