

**Oldham Borough Council
Record of Decision**



1. **TITLE:** Consultancy Support for the Processing of Planning Applications
2. **SERVICE AREA:** Executive Director of Place/Deputy Chief Executive
3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To help address the backlog of planning applications and pre-application advice responses in the Planning Service caused by temporary vacancies / absences in the Service and increased numbers of applications received.

Part A: A request for an exemption to the requirement to follow rule 4 of the Contract Procedure Rules is made under rule 21 of the council's Contract Procedure Rules. This will allow a direct award of a contract extension to a contractor to supply two consultants to be considered under Part B of this report, in order to provide urgent support in processing planning applications within the Development Management team.

Part B: Subject to the approval of the exemption request under Part A, a request is made to approve the budget for the proposed contract extension and for the contract extension to be directly entered into with OLR Planning Limited.

4. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive Director of Place/Deputy Chief Executive

5. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED - That:

Part A (as outlined above) – be approved
Part B (as outlined above) – be approved

6. **OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

Option 1 – to appoint interim agency staff via the corporate Framework Agreement with Reed This option is not suitable as previous experiences with Reed have shown that they do not have the experienced planning professionals available to be able to provide the service needed in Development Management. As such, following this (fruitless) route only delays bringing in the necessary support at a time when it is needed urgently.

Option 2 – independent consultants are asked to register with Reed in order that they can provide the services through the corporate Framework Agreement for the provision of agency staff. The consultants have been asked about this option, but they are attached to OLR Planning

Limited, so they do not see it as a workable arrangement and are not prepared to proceed in this manner. This option would also increase the cost to the council slightly due to the small mark-up of the fee that Reed apply.

Option 3 – to adopt another compliant procurement route of using an accessible and compliant Framework Agreement for the provision of Agency staffing. This would be in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules and would evidence a value for money test, but the process will take time, which is not available given the level of backlog, and would not guarantee the provision of consultants or agency staff who are known to offer services to a high standard. Given this is for decision is related to an extension of an



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existing contract, going out to market to procure contractors to replace OLR Planning will inevitably lead to a gap in provision of the service and inefficiencies due to the handover process, with no guarantee that the process will result in support of a higher or equal quality to that being provided by OLR Planning.

Option 4 – Part A: to exempt the requirements under rule 4 of the Contract Procedure Rules in accordance with rule 21 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Part B: to obtain approval to make a direct contract extension award to OLR Planning Limited for the provision of the two part-time consultants named in this report to supply services, and to obtain approval to expend the required funds from the Planning Service budgets.

This option requires a decision to be made on the proposed exemption by the Deputy Chief Executive (Health and Social Care) in accordance with rule 21.4.2 of the Contract Procedure Rules under Part A before a decision regarding the spend and direct contract awards can be taken under Part B by the Deputy Chief Executive (Place).

Option 4 is the preferred option to enable the speedy and direct appointment of a suitably experienced and qualified company to provide planning professionals at rates offering value for money compared to other agency and consultancy options.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION

To address the backlog of planning applications and pre-application advice responses in the Planning Service caused by temporary vacancies / absences in the Service and increased numbers of applications received, the appointment of agency staff/planning consultants is requested.

8. INTERESTS AND NATURE OF INTERESTS DECLARED

None

9. PRINCIPAL GROUPS CONSULTED: Not applicable

10. DOCUMENT CONSIDERED: Consultancy Support for the Processing of Planning Applications