Principal Decision Report

Decision below £250k and only affects one ward

Subject:	Strategic Energy Partnership – Womble Bond Dickinson further appointment
Decision maker: Senior Officer	Emma Barton, Deputy Chief Executive (Place)
Decision date:	2nd November 2026
Report author:	Andrew Hunt, Green Energy & Sustainability Manager
Ward (s):	N/A

Reason for decision

To appoint Womble Bond Dickinson to a further commission at a cost of £100,000+VAT supporting the procurement of a Strategic Energy Partner for the Borough. This commission will be funded by a £100,000 Advanced Zoning Programme (AZP) grant from DESNZ.

Recommendation(s)

1. Appoint Womble Bond Dickinson to a further commission at a cost of £100,000+VAT. Under this option, the Council will have sufficient ongoing Legal support for the procurement of a Strategic Energy Partner for the Borough.

Background

The Council is currently out to tender for a Strategic Energy Partner for the Borough. If successful, the procurement will establish a Joint Venture between the Council and a commercial energy infrastructure provider to bring in the large-scale investment needed to upgrade Oldham's energy systems for the future and secure a wide range of economic co-benefits for the borough including jobs, skills, a Social Value Fund and stabilisation of energy bills for residents and businesses.

To date, the project has been funded from a variety of sources including the DESNZ / GMCA Local Net Zero Accelerator and the DESNZ Green Heat Network Fund. Recently the Council received a £100K grant from the DESNZ Advanced Zoning Programme to further support the work. As work has progressed, it has now become necessary to award Womble Bond Dickinson, who are providing Legal support for the project, an additional commission. This additional commission will be funded by the £100K AZP grant.

Womble Bond Dickinson and DESNZ have confirmed that the support activities which will be funded via the DESNZ AZP grant are in scope of the AZP Section 31 Grant Funding Agreement.

Alternative option(s) to be considered *(please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s)*

Option 1 – appoint Womble Bond Dickinson to a further commission at a cost of £100,000+VAT. Under this option, the Council will have sufficient ongoing Legal support for the procurement of a Strategic Energy Partner for the Borough.

Option 2 – do not appoint Womble Bond Dickinson to a further commission. Under this option, the Council will not have sufficient support for the ongoing procurement of a Strategic Energy Partner and this will likely lead to a failed procurement.

Consultation *(include any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted)*

N/A

Risks

N/A

Implications

Financial	This request seeks approval to appoint Womble Bond Dickinson to undertake an additional commission, valued at £100,000 plus VAT, to provide continued legal support for the procurement of a Strategic Energy Partner for the Borough. As the project has progressed, further specialist legal input has been identified as necessary to support the procurement process and ensure the successful delivery of this key strategic initiative. The commission will be fully funded through a £100,000 Advanced Zoning Programme (AZP) grant awarded by DESNZ. Funding is already available within cost centre 24080 M003. There are no further financial implications arising from this proposal, as the full cost of the commission will be met from the existing grant allocation. Waheed Rehman – Accountant
Legal	The appointment of Womble Bond Dickinson is made by the Council under delegated authority in accordance with the Council's procurement arrangements. Womble Bond Dickinson were selected by the service in consultation with Commercial Procurement and instructed by Legal Services as external legal advisers for the OGNDP procurement. The additional appointment relates to legal services falling within the light-touch regime.

	The total aggregate value of services, including this appointment, remains below the applicable threshold under the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council may lawfully proceed by way of direct award subject to compliance with Part 6 (sections 84–88) of the Act. As the value exceeds £30,000, a UK7 Contract Details Notice must be published following contract entry. Subject to the above, Legal Services raise no objection and confirm the recommendations are lawful and compliant with the Council's Constitution. Sukie Kaur - Solicitor
Procurement	Legal Services selected and appointed Womble Bond Dickinson (WBD) for the OGNDP procurement. The nature of the services provided by WBD are covered by the 'light touch' procurement regime for which the threshold triggering full application of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) is £663,540 inclusive of VAT. As the total aggregate value of services that WBD will be contracted for is considerably less than this threshold amount, only Part 6 'Below-threshold contracts' (sections 84-88) of PA23 6 is to be contemplated: Given the value of the direct award proposed is above £30,000, the award would constitute a "notifiable below-threshold contract" whereby the Council (under section 87 of PA23) would be required to publish a UK7 Contract Details Notice on the Central Digital Platform as soon as practicable after entering into the contract. Therefore, if approved, the Commercial Procurement Unit needs to be provided with a final/signed version of this report and confirmation that the contract has been entered into, in order to ensure it can meet this transparency obligation on behalf of the Council/Legal Services. Emma Tweedie, Snr Category Manager Commercial Procurement Unit
Equality impact including implications for Children and Young People	N/A
Other	N/A

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?	Yes / No
Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?	Yes / No
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	Yes / No

Report author sign-off	Andrew Hunt
Role	Green Energy & Sustainability Manager
Date of sign-off	10 September 2026

Approval	
Officer approval sign-off	Emma Barton
Role	Deputy Chief Executive (Place)
Date of sign-off	Xx/xx/xx