



<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>AGREED UPON PROCEDURE AUDIT HOUSING BENEFIT SUBSIDY CLAIM CONTRACT</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND INVESTMENT</b>

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report requests that the Director of Finance agrees to award a contract for the Council to Grant Thornton LLP. This will be for a five year term and is to commence subject to contract signed in June 2023.

The decision supports the delivery of the Wirral Plan by enabling financial processes supporting plan delivery to continue.

This is not a key decision.

This decision affects all wards in the borough.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Director of Finance is recommended to approve the award of a contract for a 5 year term with effect from June 2023 to Grant Thornton LLP as the Most Economically Advantageous Tenderer for Agreed Upon Procedure Audit work for the Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 A detailed specification of requirements was issued in May 2023 and a tender exercise undertaken. One bid was received. The bid was scored on a Most Economically Advantageous Tender basis with Grant Thornton LLP meeting the necessary requirements and being the highest scoring bidder.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 The Council requires an Auditor to provide reporting accountant services in order to allow the annual Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim to be processed by Department of Works and Pensions (DWP). No further extension periods were available on the existing contract. Therefore an award needed to be made. There were no other bidders and those who could have bid notified the Council that they would not due to resourcing capacity.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The current service contract is provided by Grant Thornton LLP and has been operational since 2017. The contract provides services for a 5 year period with no option to extend.
- 3.2 A full procurement exercise was undertaken involving consultation with officers in a number of areas and then the drawing up of a detailed tender specification and scoring matrix. Expressions of interest were invited via 'The Chest' portal and the process was overseen by the procurement team.
- 3.3 The contract is again for a five year period with no extension options. The contract length helps to balance out against the cost and aligns to four of the five years for which Grant Thornton are the auditor for the Statutory Accounts.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The tender prices were calculated on a daily charge rate per type of auditor. The calculated estimated costs for 5 years was £198,750.00. The actual cost will fluctuate based on further testing required or changes in DWP requirements for the agreed upon procedure work that is set annually.

### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The award of this contract is being made on a Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) basis. The meaning of MEAT is governed by the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The criteria for award includes assessment of the best ratio of price and quality criteria. The scoring also reflects marks for social value and compliance with General Data Protection Regulations. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules set out how contracts are to be awarded by the Council in accordance with its Procurement Strategy requirements.

5.2 The award will be underpinned by a formal contract which will be drawn up by the Council's legal team.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 There are no direct staffing ICT or asset implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 There is a risk that the audit firm could experience financial difficulties and not be able to fulfil its duties to the Council. The bidder was assessed as being strong with low risk of default.

7.2 There is a risk that expected service standards may not be met. The contract is being awarded to the existing provider which has a track record of dealing with the Council. Council officers meet regularly with the auditor to ensure services are being delivered to the satisfaction of the Council.

7.3 Contractual and legal risks. The award is supported by a contract drawn up by Wirral's legal team and agreed with the audit firm. This provides protection should an issue arise.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 There are no consultation implications.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

9.2 There are no equality implications from this report.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The preferred tenderer is committed to help to reduce carbon impact. This includes seeking innovation towards its services which will have a positive impact.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The preferred tenderer has offices based in Liverpool and the award of contract will help maintain local services currently being provided in the area and the employment of staff providing the service.

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## APPENDICES

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

Agreed Upon Procedure Tender Specification  
Submitted bid (this is exempt from publication).

### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
None	