

Equality Impact Assessment - head of service review

Reference: EQIA196759639

Submitted: 16 April 2020 16:10 PM

Executive summary

Title of policy or decision: Management of Ongar Business Centre

Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): The decision seeks agreement to procure a replacement service for the management of Ongar Business Centre - a 15,000 sq ft office building owned by Essex County Council (ECC) and let on flexible terms to over 25 business tenants - with effect from 1 May 2021.

Currently, ECC has a contract with Let's Do Business Group Limited (LDBG) dated 24 May 2017, for both Inward Investment services and the management of Ongar Business Centre. The extended LDBG contract would expire on 30 April 2021. It is therefore necessary for the Council to prepare a fully compliant procurement exercise for the management of Ongar Business Centre to ensure best value for money from the Council's asset.

Based on Early Contractor Engagement, it is proposed that this contract have an initial duration of five years, with the option for three further extensions up to a maximum of five years (extensions of 2+1+1+1); a total possible contract length of 10 years. The contract will be structured to ensure a balance of risk and reward for the Council, achieved through a priority return from the management contract, rather than through the head lease (which would specify a peppercorn ground rent). This would include supporting prosperity and productivity for Essex residents and businesses.

The Essex Prosperity and Productivity Plan identifies four 'missions' to 2040. The successful bidder should support these missions and this support should not have a material impact on rental income or operation and maintenance costs.

The value to the contract is determined by the income received by ECC, and is dependent upon market conditions; however, this is anticipated to be well below £2m over the maximum contract duration of 10 years.

The procurement may require the TUPE transfer of the existing Centre Manager (and any other relevant staff at the end of the current contract) and is therefore considered 'High Risk' under Rule 11 of ECC's Procurement Policies and Procedures. The following process is anticipated for the procurement:

- Open procedure
- Single-stage tender
- ITT published for at least 30 days, with at least 14 days for clarifications
- Evaluation based on compliance, price and quality
- Procurement decision made at ITT consensus meeting
- Standstill period of at least 10 days, subject to call-in
- Three-month transition / mobilisation period from contract start date
- Services start date 1 May 2021

The decision seeks to agree to undertake a fully compliant procurement process, as above, to appoint a provider to manage the Ongar Business Centre once the extension period comes to an end on 30 April 2021, with the decision to award also to be taken by the Executive Director for Place and Public Health. This contract will be for an initial period of five years with the option to extend by up to five further years, in order to appeal to the market.

It also seeks to agree that the contract will secure a balance of risk and reward for the Council through a priority

return from the management contract, rather than through the head lease (which would specify a peppercorn ground rent) i.e. waiver to depart from policy on commercial rents.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: Enable inclusive economic growth, Transform the council to achieve more with less

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Enable inclusive economic growth: Enable Essex to attract and grow large firms in high growth industries, Target economic development to areas of opportunity

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Transform the council to achieve more with less: Limit cost and drive growth in revenue

Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?: a change to an existing policy, practice or project

Please provide a link to the document / website / resource to which this EqIA relates: n/a

Please upload any documents which relate to this EqIA, for example decision documents: n/a

Assessing the equality impact

Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on the communities likely to be affected by the policy (or decision): As this decision is seeking to undertake a fully compliant procurement process to appoint a provider to manage the existing Ongar Business Centre, it does not have any impact on the wider community.

Does or will the policy or decision affect:

Service users: No

Employees: No

The wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities: No

Which geographical areas of Essex does or will the policy or decision affect?: Brentwood

Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?: No

Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?: No

Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies?: Yes

Description of impact

Description of Impact. If there is an impact on a specific protected group tick box, otherwise leave blank. You will be given the opportunity to rate identified impacts as positive, negative or neutral on the next page: No impact on any of the above groups

I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics: I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics

Describe any actions that have already been taken to mitigate negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics: This decision does not have any impact on any of the protected characteristics groups

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your EqIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date EqIA completed: 16/04/2020

Name of person completing the EqIA: Dominique Keogh

Email address of person completing the EqIA: Dominique.Keogh@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Economy, Localities & Public Health

Your service area: Economic Growth

Your team: Economic Growth

Are you submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: tristan.smith@essex.gov.uk