



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	European Tender for Provision of Assessment Centres
Date:	Friday 17 June 2011
Reporting Officer:	Julie Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources

Relevant Background Information

The council has had formal procurement processes in place for the provision of competency based assessment centres to assist with the recruitment of senior council posts for the past fifteen years.

The current contract, which is with AS Associates, is due to expire on 31 August 2011 and new tendering arrangements now need to be initiated.

Members will be aware that the use of assessment centres has become an integral stage in the recruitment and selection process for local government vacancies at senior management level, as prescribed by the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection, in order to assess candidates against the key competencies for the post.

Those Members who have participated on council selection panels will also be aware of the added value of this independent, impartial and externally validated approach, which results in a more manageable number of higher calibre candidates to choose from and eliminates the possibility of making an unsatisfactory (and therefore potentially costly) appointment based on a 'one-off' apparently impressive interview performance.

Key Issues

The HR Service in collaboration with Corporate Communications section has already made significant savings in its recruitment and selection processes and considerable work will now be done to seek to ensure that this new contract delivers further efficiency savings, with a robust evaluation based on cost and quality being undertaken. It is likely therefore that this tendering exercise will take over six months to complete.

Given the lengthy and resource-intensive process, the contract should be re-tendered on the basis of a two year period, with the option of extending for a further two years.

Other councils have expressed an interest in working collaboratively with Belfast City Council in the procurement of this service and this, along with the total value of a two year contract, will require a European tendering process i.e. public advertisement in the local press together with an advertisement in the Official Journal of the European

Community. This will include a two-stage pre-qualification questionnaire stage with a select list and tender evaluation process.

Resource Implications

The cost of assessment centres is met by the relevant employing departments.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (i) approve the initiation of the tendering process for the provision of assessment centres;
- (ii) delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Resources (or her nominee) to approve the select list and award the contract in line with predetermined evaluation criteria, based on cost and quality; and
- (iii) approve the extension of the current contract with AS Associates for six months, until February 2012, and then on a monthly basis thereafter until the procurement process is complete and the new contract is in place.