

BRIEFING NOTE – PROCUREMENT OF MARKETPLACE ORDERING SYSTEM (DIRECT AWARD VIA FRAMEWORK)

Purpose

To outline the procurement process undertaken to identify a suitable marketplace ordering system beyond the expiry of the current contract term, to justify the selection of the preferred solution, and to recommend a direct award via framework on the basis the preferred solution demonstrates value for money and operational continuity.

Background

In 2025 the Council extended its existing contract with TET Ltd for one year, bringing the contract term to 1st June 2026. With the support of Essex Procurement Partnership, a Project Initiation Document and Statement of Requirements was completed to allow the commencement of the procurement process with the purpose of securing a solution beyond the current contract end date.

Procurement Process

Several procurement routes and supplier options have been explored to test value for money and compliance.

Initial consideration was given to the CCS G-Cloud 14 Framework, where price lists indicated an annual cost of £24,995 per annum for the same service.

Further market research into alternative providers identified estimated annual costs ranging from £28,490 to £37,960 per annum, with some alternatives operating per-user licence models (£4,000–£6,000 per user). This contrasts unfavourably with the current arrangement, which provides unlimited user access for Council employees.

Following this, the NHS Digital Workplace Solutions 2 Framework was identified, which comprises of 44 suppliers to identify the range of capabilities for this service, and as part of market engagement an Expression of Interest was issued to all framework suppliers. All suppliers had equal opportunity to respond in line with the statement of requirements which were also shared as part of the market engagement, no alternative suppliers confirmed they could meet the requirements within the budget, functionality and timescale. No feedback was received indicating that the requirements were restrictive, nor were alternative compliant solutions proposed. TET Ltd was the only respondent and submitted a proposal with a contract value of £19,423 per annum, which is equivalent to the pricing available from the direct services from Proactis.

The NHS Digital Workplace Solutions 2 Framework permits direct award where a supplier demonstrates they meet all defined service requirements and offers the most economically advantageous solution without the need for further competition. The published framework guidance confirms that authorities may directly award where

objective conditions with the framework are met under PCR15. With two months until requirement for contract commencement, this would be an efficient and lowest cost route for contract award.

Recommendation

The procurement activity undertaken demonstrates that entering into a contract with TET Ltd represents the most cost-effective and operationally robust option, while preserving continuity of critical procurement functionality.

It is therefore recommended that approval is given to enter into a contract with TET Ltd via direct award using the NHS Digital Workplace Solutions 2 Framework, to secure access to the Proactis Marketplace system for an initial two-year period, with options to extend by a further one year plus one year. The proposed contract value sits within budget, avoids unnecessary transition risk, and the proposed contract term provides the flexibility required in the context of Local Government Reorganisation.