



Award of Arboricultural Services Contract

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To consider the award of a contract to the preferred supplier for the provision of arboricultural services to the Council for up to 4 years.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 1. Approve the contract award for the provision of arboricultural services to Crimson Kings (Midlands) Ltd for a two-year term for an estimated annual sum of £150,000, with an option to extend annually for up to a further two years.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Housing & Projects, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, to extend the contract by up to a further two years should this be required.**

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	Yes
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The financial implications of this contract award are within budgeted levels and therefore the projected annual cost set out in the report can be met without an increase in the budgets.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Procurement

- 1.2. A compliant procurement process has been followed by running an open tender process to identify a preferred contractor resulting in a overall contract value of £600k including extensions based on £150k per annum for 4 years. The tender process was managed by Welland Procurement and conducted in accordance with best practice and the Procurement Act 2023 to ensure that the principles of transparency, equity and fairness have been adhered to.

Completed by: Helen Baldwin (Procurement Lead)

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 A contract of this value must be considered by Cabinet.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Health and Safety

- 1.4 As part of the procurement process it has been stipulated that successful contractors must hold accreditation under the Arboricultural Association Approved Contractor Scheme.

- 1.5 It is administered by the Arboricultural Association and involves a rigorous independent assessment of a contractor's policies, systems and operations and this includes detailed evaluation of:

- Health and Safety management systems and compliance with legislation
- Training, competence and supervision of staff
- Use, inspection, and maintenance of equipment

- Work planning, risk assessment, and site safety practices
- Quality of arboricultural work and overall business management

1.6 This contract will also be subject to scrutiny and contract monitoring by SKDC officers to ensure that safety standards are maintained.

Completed by: Phil Swinton Head of Health and Safety, Compliance and Emergency Planning

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council currently procures arboricultural services on a job-by-job basis, obtaining individual quotations for each piece of work or parcel of activity. While this approach has provided operational flexibility, it has become increasingly inefficient and administratively burdensome as demand for tree management has grown.
- 2.2 Analysis of annual expenditure has shown that the cumulative value of these individual works has exceeded thresholds at which a formal, competitively tendered contract is required. Continuing with ad-hoc procurement therefore presents both a compliance risk and poor value for money, as pricing lacks the stability and economies of scale associated with a structured contract.
- 2.3 To address these issues, the Council requires a single arboricultural services contract that consolidates routine and reactive works under an agreed schedule of rates. This will ensure consistent service quality, improved cost control, and alignment with procurement regulations, while supporting effective long-term management of the Council's tree stock.
- 2.4 The contract was awarded using a Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) approach. Submissions were evaluated with 60% of the available score being awarded for price and 40% relating to quality. Prior to the scored evaluation stage, bidders were required to meet a small number of pass/fail compliance requirements, including evidence of Employers' Liability Insurance, Public Liability Insurance, and accreditation under the Arboricultural Association's Arb Approved Contractor Scheme ¹. The use of these pass/fail criteria ensured that only contractors meeting essential insurance requirements and recognised industry quality standards progressed to the scored evaluation.
- 2.5 The Arb Approved Contractor scheme is widely regarded as the industry 'gold standard' for arboricultural contracting and provides independent verification of a contractor's competence, safety management systems, work quality, and business practices. This approach is particularly important given that arboricultural

¹ Further information on the Arboricultural Association's ARB Approved Contractor scheme is available at: <https://www.trees.org.uk/> (Arboricultural Association – home of the ARB Approved Contractor scheme)

operations involve inherently high-risk activities and the wider industry is not subject to statutory licensing. By applying these minimum requirements at the outset, the Council ensured that all compliant bidders had already demonstrated an appropriate level of professional competence and risk management, allowing the scored quality assessment to focus on delivery methodology, contract management arrangements, environmental performance and social value.

- 2.6 Answers to five quality assessment questions were independently evaluated by three officers following score description and model answer notes circulated prior to the evaluation. Scores were moderated by a Contracts and Supply Specialist at Welland Procurement.
- 2.7 As this contract is for the provision of ongoing arboricultural services, works will be instructed as needed in response to inspections, emergencies, planned maintenance programmes and other service demands. This means tenders could not be assessed against a single fixed contract value, so a representative pricing model was used to enable a fair comparison of bids.
- 2.8 Pricing was assessed using a sample of rates from the contract Schedule of Rates, based on the types of tree work the Council most commonly orders. This included a mix of work types, tree sizes, access conditions and likely operational scenarios. Each item in the sample was given a notional quantity to reflect how often that type of work is expected to occur and its typical scale. Tenderers submitted a unit rate for every item, and these rates were multiplied by the notional quantities to produce a total evaluation price for comparison. These quantities were used for evaluation only and do not represent guaranteed levels of work under the contract. This approach provides a fair and transparent way to compare bids while reflecting expected service needs over the life of the contract.
- 2.9 The estimated contract value of £600,000 represents an approximate upper value calculated by combining the Council's current General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets for tree management and projecting these over the maximum potential contract term of four years. This figure is provided for procurement and transparency purposes only and does not commit the Council to any minimum level of expenditure under the contract.
- 2.10 The contractor will be appointed on the basis of a schedule of rates for different categories of arboricultural work, and works will be commissioned as required. The actual level of expenditure will therefore be determined by the budgets approved by the Council for tree management in each financial year, and by operational priorities.
- 2.11 Works will be instructed in accordance with the Council's recently adopted Tree Management Policies, which sets out the framework for prioritising tree inspections and works across the Council's estate. This approach ensures that the contract provides the Council with access to a suitably qualified contractor while maintaining full flexibility for Members to determine the level of funding allocated to tree management through the annual budget-setting process.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 12 tender submissions were received. Three bids were rejected for failing to pass the pass/fail criteria and/or scoring below a minimum technical or quality threshold.

Position	Name	Combined Score (%)
1 st	Crimson Kings (Midlands) Ltd	98.40
2 nd	[bidder 2]	77.23
3 rd	[bidder 3]	60.84
4 th	[bidder 4]	60.77
5 th	[bidder 5]	58.89
6 th	[bidder 6]	52.90
7 th	[bidder 7]	52.89
8 th	[bidder 8]	49.58
9 th	[bidder 9]	44.40

- 3.2 Crimson Kings (Midlands) Ltd obtained the highest combined score and are therefore the preferred supplier.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Continue to procure arboricultural services by obtaining individual quotations for each piece of work or parcel of activity. This option has been discounted both based on the expected value for overall works, and because this approach risks an increased overall cost.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 This contract will ensure high-quality, safe and professional tree work in accordance with national standards, with clearly defined quality criteria covering operational practices, health and safety, environmental management, responsiveness, professional competence and customer service. The contract will provide consistency, transparency, and value for money for the Council's ongoing tree management responsibilities.
- 5.2 Crimson Kings (Midlands) Ltd obtained the highest combined score and are therefore the preferred supplier.