

## ***Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Community Services & Safety***

***Friday, 22 September 2023 at 12.30 pm  
Room 3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND***

Please note that due to guidelines imposed on social distancing by the Government the meeting will be held virtually.

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).  
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

### ***Items for Decision***

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on Friday 29 September 2023 unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

### **These proceedings are open to the public**



Martin Reeves  
Chief Executive

September 2023

*Committee Officer:*                    **Committee Services**  
*Email:* [committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

*Note:*    *Date of next meeting: 17 October 2023*

**If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.**

## Items for Decision

### 1. Declaration of Interest

### 2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am two working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

### 3. Petitions and Public Address

*Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.*

*Requests to speak must be submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting. Requests to speak should be sent to [committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk).*

*If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.*

### 4. Library Stock (Books) Contract (Pages 1 - 6)

*Forward Plan Ref: 2023/217*

*Contact: Jane Mason, Library Operations Manager: stock & reader services, [jane.mason@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jane.mason@oxfordshire.gov.uk)*

Report by Executive Director (People, Transformation & Performance).

Permission to engage with a consortium-based contract renewal exercise (2024-2026 + 2 year extension) for the purchase of library stock (books) with suppliers who can offer significant discounts and library-specific processing. The consortium arrangement is longstanding since 2000.

**The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to approve the continued participation of Oxfordshire County Council in the consortium for its library stock contract.**

## **Councillors declaring interests**

### **General duty**

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

### **What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?**

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

### **Declaring an interest**

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

### **Members' Code of Conduct and public perception**

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

### **Members Code – Other registrable interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

### **Members Code – Non-registrable interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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**Divisions Affected – N/A**

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES & SAFETY**

**22 September 2023**

### **Library Stock Contract**

**Report by Executive Director:**

**People, Transformation & Performance**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to approve the continued participation of Oxfordshire County Council in the consortium for its library stock contract.**

#### **Executive Summary**

2. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Libraries currently are part of a long-running consortium arrangement for the purchase of Library stock (books, audio-visual/AV materials). The current contract runs through to March 2024, and discussions have started on the renewal of this contract.
3. The contract is due to go to tender in October, and to be awarded in December; with the contract coming into operation from April 2024. The provisional term of the new contract will be two years, with a possible extension of a further two years.
4. OCC Libraries are seeking approval to proceed with this process, via the current consortium arrangement, in order to deliver service continuity, achieve best value for money, and to meet growing customer needs.

#### **Background**

5. Under the 1964 Public Libraries Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service”. It is a core expectation that library users will be provided with access to a collection of library stock, available for loan and suitable for all ages.
6. The Library Service has a contract with specialist provider(s) to supply library stock. This contract covers the purchase of the core principal categories of Library Stock, i.e. printed books and Audio Visual (AV) materials for the

service (i.e. 44 branch libraries, the Home Library Service, and HMP Bullingdon).

7. The current contract runs through to March 2024, and discussions have started on the renewal of this contract. The annual value of the Library Stock contract is in the region of £450k-£500k. Given the value of this contract, the Library Service sought advice from Procurement, and were advised on the correct decision-making processes - hence this report.
8. For several beneficial reasons, outlined below (section 3.3), OCC has been part of a consortium arrangement for more than 25 years. The consortium that OCC is currently part of is the Central Buying Consortium, (CBC), which is the largest library consortium of its kind in the UK<sup>1</sup>. West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) is the lead authority for managing this particular contract for the CBC.
9. The prospective contract is due to go to tender in October; with the contract coming into operation from April 2024. The provisional term of the new contract will be two years, with a possible extension of a further two years.
10. Oxfordshire's library service wishes to extend our commitment to the consortium arrangement when the contract is awarded in December 2023. We are therefore seeking retrospective approval, at this juncture, to continue towards contract award.
11. We are already in advanced discussions with the Contract Review Group (CRG) to finalise the contract specifications, before West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) will issue the contract for open tender. Oxfordshire Libraries will be engaged fully in the evaluation of the bids, which will take place in November and result in the award being given to the successful bidder(s) in December 2023.

## Options Appraisal

12. The following options have been considered, but are not being recommended for the following reasons:
13. The vast majority of library services across the UK purchase the principal categories of books and AV through consortia. There are nine library consortia in the UK and Ireland, and these are generally geographically focussed, enabling members to more easily collaborate and work together.
14. We could explore joining another consortium; however, their contracts are likely to be on different timelines; they may not wish to expand their operations; and they would not be in such geographic proximity to the CBC. Additionally, joining another consortium at this stage would be a very challenging timeframe and would be unlikely to achieve any better benefits than the current arrangement.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfordshire Libraries is one of 54 Local Authorities and school library services from across the southeast and London. A sub-group of 15 members forms the Contract Review Group (CRG) who oversee the scrutiny and accountability of the contract. Oxfordshire's representative is the Co-Chair of this group.



15. Oxfordshire could look towards having an individual contract with specialist library suppliers. An open contract and tender would have to be set up, requiring specialist capacity from OCC Procurement team and additional contract management support, akin to that provided by the WSCC procurement lead.
16. It is highly doubtful that the same level of terms would be achieved (i.e. discount levels, additional benefits), and value-for-money would likely be compromised to a significant degree.
17. Public libraries can and do buy books from commercial bookshops (online or high street), but this is generally on a very small scale; when, for example, a library contractor cannot supply our needs - unusual book title, local small press publisher, self-published niche interest etc.
18. For large-scale, full library service provision, it would be practically inoperable, and would undoubtedly reduce value-for-money for the council, as discounts (certainly the same level of discounts) would not be available.
19. A new contract would need to be put out to tender, which OCC would have to manage individually. Courier/delivery services would be separate and costly; and library servicing costs and provision (i.e. getting the stock shelf-ready and available for lending) would have to move in-house, as a commercial bookshop simply would not be able to accommodate this critical aspect of operation (and again, capacity and resource/budget would be a major barrier).
20. Finally, there is not enough time to complete the market research and undertake open tender to all bookshops, including online retailers, before the impending end of the current contract in March 2024.

## **Corporate Policies and Priorities**

21. **Libraries & Heritage Strategy** [Libraries and Heritage Strategy \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries-heritage-strategy)  
Specifically, the following sections:
  - Support for reading (page 6)
  - Current performance (page 14) - per date of report
  - Priorities (page 22) - Increase libraries and heritage contribution to learning and promote library's role in fostering literacy and a love of reading; and,
  - Maximise partnerships at local and national level to improve the sustainability of services
22. **Oxfordshire County Council Corporate Plan**  
This contract will enable the library service to meet the following five out of the nine council priorities as set out in Oxfordshire County Council Corporate Plan 2023-2026:

- Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work through the provision of books which support knowledge and understanding of the climate emergency
- Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire through the provision of books for all ages and needs across the breadth of 44 library buildings, a home library service and inclusion of an HMP Prison library
- Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents through the provision of books which support knowledge and understanding of many of the health and wellbeing needs of local residents, whatever their age.
- Support carers and the social care system through the development of collections of books which meet the needs of carers as customers of the library service and residents who use the home library service or are supported through reading groups in care settings
- Create opportunities for children and young people to reach our full potential through the provision of books in libraries specifically for the needs, interests and curiosity of children and young people aged 0-18 years and their families.

## Financial Implications

23. The current total CBC contract is worth c.£11M in total, and OCC's element of this is c.£480k. The emerging stock contract will be of a similar scale, but the total consortium contract value is yet to be finalised.
24. OCC Libraries' participation in this consortium contract is reliant upon an estimated annual spend of between £450–£500K (variations dependent on Section 106 investment and wider service budget level confirmation).
25. The revenue for this contract comes from a dedicated budget line – Library Collections (M37000), within the Library Service budgets.
26. There are no capital budget implications.
27. Bick Nguyen-McBride, Assistant Finance Business Partner has signed off this report from a Finance perspective (8<sup>th</sup> September 2023).

## Legal Implications

28. Jonathan Pool, Solicitor (Environmental Contracts) has signed off this report from a Legal perspective (8<sup>th</sup> September 2023).
29. This contract will enable OCC to comply with its statutory duties. this contract will also enable OCC to fulfil its contractual agreement with HM Prison Service to provide library services at Bullingdon Prison.

## Staff Implications

30. None applicable.

## Equality & Inclusion Implications

31. This is not a new proposal, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been produced. However, the Library Stock Policy ensures that collections are acquired with all due consideration of the diverse communities that OCC Libraries serve.
32. For note, the proposal has also been assessed against equalities criteria by WSCC, which found no negative impact, particularly for those with protected characteristics.

## Sustainability Implications

33. This is not a new proposal; therefore a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) has not been produced. However, within the contract specification is a core requirement for suppliers (and their supply chain) to demonstrate sustainability and environmentally conscious operating practices (i.e. waste management, transport, carbon footprint). Additionally, OCC Libraries have a strategic priority around Climate Action, and specifically engage local communities through our collections and activities in this area.

## Risk Management

32.

Risk	Mitigating Action
If OCC do not enter into stock contract, supply of library books will be at risk	Procurement exercise via WSCC
If OCC do not proceed with consortium arrangement, supply of library books will be at risk and discount levels, value for money, and specialist servicing requirements will not be sustained	Continue with a consortium arrangement
The current discounts available from library suppliers are not able to be sustained	Market research suggests that the remaining providers in this market have made competitive offers to other consortia despite the declining spend from library authorities

## Consultations

33. None applicable.

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**NAME** Stephen Chandler, Executive Director: People, Transformation & Performance

**Annex:** None applicable

**Background papers:** None applicable

**Other Documents:** Current contract (2020-2022+ 2024) tender posting October 2019 [Decision - Procurement: Central Buying Consortium Library Group FRC01 19/20 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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September 2023