

## LEGAL SERVICES CCT

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### 1. Purpose

1.1 To update Members on progress in market testing the Legal Service

### 2. Summary

2.1 In view of budgetary pressures it was not possible to complete all the preliminary stages of the market testing exercise envisaged in the report that went to the Best Value/CCT Sub-Committee. Nevertheless, a number of legal firms were invited to tender for the majority of the Council's legal services. Two external bids have been received and will need to be evaluated along with the in-house bid.

### 3. Background

3.1 The Legal Service is obliged to carry out market testing of a proportion of its work before 1 October 1999. The CCT/Best Value Sub-Committee agreed that a majority of the Council's legal services should be market-tested. Consultation with clients identified work that was considered inappropriate to be included in the exercise.

3.2 A specification was then prepared along with other detailed contract documentation. Because of the time taken to prepare this documentation and other pressures on the Client-Side operation it was not possible to invite expressions of interest and prepare a select list from which to invite tenders.

3.3 Instead, an exercise was carried out in which firms were selected based on their perceived ability to provide a range of services included in the contract and responses to the advertisement in the local press.

3.4 There was a healthy level of interest from the firms selected which resulted in two external bids as well as the in-house bid. These bids will now need to be assessed.

### 4. Implications

4.1 Environmental

None specifically associated with this report

#### 4.2 Equalities

The market testing exercise has been carried out bearing in mind the Council's Equal Opportunities policies.

#### 4.3 Financial

Market testing will help to demonstrate that the Council is receiving value for money from the provision of legal services.

#### 4.4 Legal

The Council must subject its legal services to compulsory competition before 1 October 1999 unless it has done so voluntarily before then.

#### 4.5 Staff and Accommodation

Because the Council has carried out a voluntary competitive exercise this has allowed it to make clear that the Transfer of Undertakings regulations (TUPE) would apply to any external contractor if they won the contract. A successful external bid would also free up accommodation in the Civic Offices.

### 5. **Conclusions**

The Legal Service has been subjected to competition for the majority of its standard legal work. There was an healthy interest from the private sector in competing for the work and two external bids were received. All the bids are now in the process of being evaluated and the results of that evaluation exercise will be reported to committee in due course.