

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 th April 2026
Subject:	Transformation Delivery Partner Procurement
Lead Member: Chief Officer:	Councillor Wal Chahal, Lead Member for Assets and Transformation Ian O'Donnell, Executive Director of Corporate Resources
Contact Officer:	Martin Chalmers, Director of DDaT and Transformation Client
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices	Appendix A Appendix B

1. Summary

This report provides the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (“the Committee”) with a summary of the Council’s proposed Transformation Delivery Partner.

The purpose of this report is to give the Committee visibility of, and an opportunity to comment on, the proposed approach including the procurement structure governance model and the key components that will support delivery of the Council’s Transformation Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

2. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- Notes the summary of the proposed Transformation Delivery Partner - Core/Portfolio Office, PMO & Specialist Advisory (Lot 1)
- Notes the intended multi-stage procurement approach
- Notes the proposed governance assurance and independence arrangements
- Provides any general comments on the approach should it wish to do so

3. Report

Introduction

The Council is procuring a Transformation Delivery Partner Framework to strengthen delivery discipline, improve assurance and ensure all transformation activity is aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This report provides the Committee with a high-level overview of the proposed framework.

A full, detailed Specification based on these principles will be submitted for approval at the May 2026 Cabinet.

Background

Having provided a series of options for consideration in February, the preferred option, – **Option D: an external delivery partner with some in-house co-ordination and delivery, and option to appoint specialist partners for specific projects** – was selected as it provided the optimal balance of assurance, flexibility, service engagement and capability building. It supported the Council’s transformation ambitions over the three-year period, aligned with the hub-and-spoke delivery model, and offered the necessary external credibility required under intervention.

Specifically, as set out in the February Cabinet paper:

- A medium-term partner arrangement needed to provide the capability and capacity required to ensure delivery of the three-year MTFS aligned programme; reliance on contracted individuals has been demonstrated to be insufficient.
- A single external partner model or a multi partner framework without strong internal oversight would not provide the required assurance or grip.
- The preferred option combines a lead partner with in-house delivery and targeted specialist support ensuring both control and sustainability.

Procurement Structure

The Council intends to implement the agreed Option D establishing a structured multi-Lot arrangement, each Lot being a separate procurement:

- Lot 1 will be the external delivery partner referenced in Option D. It will provide overarching transformation direction, portfolio management and assurance, and commercial, financial and HR advisory services
- The specialist partners of Option D will be procured as further Lots. Specifically:
 - Lot 2 will cover specialist capability Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) enabled change.
 - Lot 3 is expected to comprise a set of contracts (known as Lot 3a, Lot 3b, etc) focused on specialist service transformation (e.g. Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Housing) to be procured where specialist capability is required. The timing of these procurements will be driven by the need to have assured requirements and business cases, and the need to maintain delivery pace.

Multi Stage Procurement Approach

Lot 1 – the lead partner - will be procured first. The Expression of Interest stage is underway and Requests for Proposal will be sent to interested bidders following approval at the May Cabinet. A detailed timetable for the procurement has been developed and will result in contract award in mid-July.

Lot 2 – the specialist partner supporting DDaT-enabled change – will be procured broadly in parallel with Lot 1, to enable design and delivery of data and technology elements of the transformation to proceed rapidly.

The Lot 3 procurements will be commissioned where specialist capability is required and once initiatives have been validated and sequenced. This ensures spend is controlled and aligned to MTFS priorities. The Lot 1 partner will play a key role in this assurance.

Governance and Assurance Expectations

The February Cabinet report emphasised the need for:

- Strong governance including CLT Transformation Board Design Authority and Commissioner oversight
- Independent assurance benefits validation and clear audit trails
- Clear separation between delivery and assurance functions

These expectations are consistent with the governance model described in this report and reflected in the procurement specification..

4. Main findings / report

Summary of the Proposed Lot 1 Procurement

The sections below summarise key points from the Lot 1 specification which is being submitted for approval to Cabinet in May.

4.1 Governance and Assurance

The framework introduces a single governance and assurance model across all transformation activity including both in-flight and new initiatives, with special provision for rapid approval of urgent projects critical to achievement of near-term MFTS savings.

The Lot 1 provider ("Lot 1") will integrate all initiatives into Portfolio governance from mobilisation, lead structured discovery cycles, and validate deliverability and financial alignment before initiatives progress.

A controlled Fast Track Governance Route will support projects which are urgent owing to statutory requirements or MFTS savings timelines.

4.2 Independence Controls

The procurement specification sets out strong independence requirements including:

- Organisational process and assurance separation
- Ethical wall documentation and regular independence statements
- Alternative assurance routes where Lot 1 is delivering under other Lots
- The Council's right to exclude Lot 1 from bidding for other Lots where the potential for conflicts is identified

These controls ensure fairness transparency and confidence in the procurement process.

4.3 Lot 1 Portfolio Management Office (PMO) and Advisory

Lot 1 will be operational within 10 working days of contract award and will:

- Validate sequence and assure all transformation activity
- Manage the assurance of business cases, notably the operation of a Gateway 0 feasibility process which will require there to be confidence in the feasibility of initiatives before they enter delivery

- Provide independent financial and commercial advisory
- Issue duty to warn statements where risks remain unmitigated
- Provide a senior Transformation Director with visible onsite leadership

4.4 Organisational Design and Culture

Lot 1 will deliver a mandatory organisational design and culture programme aligned to the Target Operating Model. The programme will:

- Strengthen leadership behaviours trust and visibility
- Embed critical daily behaviours that shape the employee experience
- Respond to the Council's culture baseline including staff survey insights
- Support cross organisational collaboration and consistent ways of working
- Provide a phased capability transfer model ensuring full transition to HR by the end of Year 2

4.5 Pay and Reward

Pay and Reward modernisation will be completed internally by the Council before Lot 1 mobilisation. Lot 1 will:

- Validate the outputs of the internal programme
- Ensure alignment to the Target Operating Model and Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Integrate Pay and Reward implications into organisational design and workforce planning

Lot 1 will not deliver Pay and Reward activity and no Pay and Reward specialist is required within Lot 1 pricing.

4.6 Lots 2 to 3

Indicative scopes for Lots 2 (DDaT-enabled change) and 3 (indicatively four specialist service change Lots: Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing, and Corporate Change) have been provided in the Lot 1 specification as context for Lot 1 bidders. They are provided there for context and are subject to change as and when the relevant procurements mobilise.

5. Implications

Financial implications

The budget agreed as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process included £15.6m of revenue investment across 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29. The profile of this expenditure across the 3 years is still being finalised, the expectation is that more spend will be incurred in 2026/27 and 2027/28 than in 2028/29 enabling the programme to be mobilised and savings delivered across the MTFS. Those savings represent £25m of the overall £38m MTFS savings plan.

The indicative allocation of the revenue expenditure across the different transformation activity remains in line with the February Cabinet report which has been appended to this report.

There is an estimated £20m of once off capital investment which has been included within the Capital programme over the same 3 year period. A further £2m of investment in the NEC Housing system is set out in the HRA Capital Programme.

Legal implications

The procurement will comply with public procurement regulations including independence and transparency requirements.

Equalities implications

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be required on a project-by-project basis to ensure that all proposed changes are assessed for their potential impact on individuals and groups with protected characteristics. Each project must complete an EIA screening at initiation, with a full EIA undertaken where screening identifies potential adverse or differential impacts. EIAs must be developed in line with the Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty and must inform decision-making, design choices, consultation activity, and implementation planning. The Supplier will be expected to support the Council in identifying equality-related risks, evidencing mitigations, and ensuring that proposed interventions promote fairness, accessibility, and inclusive outcomes for residents and staff. No project will progress through governance without an approved EIA appropriate to its scope and impact.

Corporate Parenting implications

Corporate Parenting implications will vary project by project and be considered within each project’s business case.

Risk management implications

A risk assessment has been undertaken on the Council’s procurement process to ensure that the approach, timelines and governance arrangements are robust, deliverable and capable of supporting a successful contract award. This assessment considered the Council’s readiness to run the procurement, the clarity and stability of the specification, the availability of evaluation resources, the sequencing of approvals, and the potential for delay or challenge. The resulting controls and mitigations have been incorporated into the procurement plan, ensuring that the process is proportionate, compliant, and capable of delivering a fair, transparent and timely outcome. Ongoing oversight will be maintained throughout the procurement to monitor emerging risks and ensure that the Council remains on track to meet the planned award date.

Risk Category	High-Level Procurement Risk	Mitigation / Control
1. Council Procurement Readiness	The Council is not fully prepared to run the procurement (documents incomplete, governance unclear, evaluation panels	Define procurement readiness criteria; secure CLT/Commissioner sign-off; confirm evaluator availability; maintain a single

	not confirmed), leading to delay or challenge.	controlled document set; weekly oversight by Procurement Lead.
2. Timeline & Award Date Risk	Slippage in drafting, approvals, evaluation or moderation jeopardises the planned contract award date.	Use a critical-path procurement plan; apply fast-track governance for low-risk decisions; build flex time; pre-agree contingency options
3. Specification Ambiguity	Ambiguous or evolving requirements create inconsistent bids, pricing variance, or risk of material change challenge.	Ensure bidder-proof specification; internal technical assurance; internal readiness for receipt/response to points of clarification; controlled change management; clear scope boundaries and exclusions.
4. Commercial & Pricing Risk	Bidders price in excessive contingency due to unclear scope, dependencies or risk allocation.	Provide transparent assumptions; require pricing assumptions; include risk-focused method statements; evaluate realism and deliverability, not low-ball pricing.
5. Legal & Challenge Risk	Inadequate documentation, unclear scoring, or inconsistent moderation increases risk of legal challenge.	Standardised scoring framework; evaluator training; evidence-based moderation; Legal review of ITT and evaluation model; full audit trail.
6. Market Capacity & Attractiveness	Limited market interest or unattractive commercial terms reduce competition and value for money.	Appropriate soft market testing; expression of interest process; clear mobilisation expectations; proportionate requirements; transparent evaluation model; avoid over-specification.
7. Mobilisation & Transition Risk	Successful bidder cannot mobilise at pace due to unclear onboarding, data access or Council dependencies.	Include mobilisation plan requirement; define Council responsibilities; readiness criteria for contract commencement; early mobilisation checkpoints.
8. Contract Management Readiness	Insufficient internal capacity or unclear roles post-award lead to drift, scope creep or poor performance.	Define contract management structure; set KPIs and reporting cadence; name a Contract Manager; use quarterly delivery breakdowns and milestone points.
9. Data, Information & Access Risk	Delays in providing data, systems access or information reduce bidder confidence and impact mobilisation.	Pre-identify required data and access; include data-readiness statement; assign internal data owners; provide secure transfer mechanisms.
10. Governance & Decision-Making Risk	Slow or inconsistent governance decisions delay procurement or create uncertainty for bidders.	Apply proportionate fast-track governance; pre-schedule decision points; maintain escalation routes; ensure Commissioner oversight.

Environmental implications

Environmental implications will vary project by project and be considered within each project's business case.

Next Steps and Timeline

Following the presentation of the procurement options and the subsequent decision to proceed with the Framework route, the Council has navigated both its internal reporting and approval requirements and the obligations set out in the Procurement Act 2023. This has shaped the procurement approach and resulted in the following timeline for appointing the preferred bidder:

Expression of Interest (EOI) released	21 April 2026
Return of EOI	5 May 2026
Cabinet Report published	8 May 2026
Issue Specification/documentation	19 May 2026
Deadline for receipt of Tenders	10 June 2026
Tender Evaluation	11-18 June 2026
Bidder presentations	19 June 2026
Prepare Evaluation Report	25 June 2026
Issue Contract Award Notice	3 July 2026
Standstill	3-13 July 2026
Award confirmation	14 July 2026