

# Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



**Nottingham**  
**City Council**

Reference Number:

1856

Author:

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Department:

Resources

Contact:

Debra La Mola

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Subject:

VOTER REGISTRATION INITIATIVE- ENGAGEMENT OF BITE THE BALLOT

Total Value:

£15K initially (£30k if the secondment is extended in line with the terms of this decision) (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

**Executive ( for Portfolio Holder Decision )**

**(1) In accordance with financial regulation 3.29, to agree to dispense with the provisions of contract procedure rule 5.1.1 with regard to obtaining quotations, and to a contract being entered into with 'Bite the Ballot' for the secondment to Electoral Services of a Community Engagement Officer (CEO) for 6 months working 30 hours per week for the purpose of increasing voter registration amongst young people ( 17 to 24 years) in the City**

**Non Executive**

**(2) To agree that the cost of the secondment in the sum of £15k be met from new revenue grant funding of £77k allocated to the City Council on 9 January 2105 for the purposes of increasing voter registration;**

**(3) To agree that, subject to adequate Cabinet Office funding being available for this purpose, the Head of Democratic services be authorised, if she considers the secondment to have been successful, to extend the contract for a further period not exceeding 6 months.**

**Reasons for the Decision(s)** This decision is required to maximise voter registration in the City which has fallen during the transition to Individual Electoral Registration and in order to make effective use of the additional resource supplied for this purpose by the Cabinet Office.

Additional Cabinet Office funding was announced on 9 January 2015 for Councils nationwide for the purpose of maximising voter registration with a focus on achieving an increase in registrations in time for the local and national elections on 7 May 2015 ( the actual deadline for registering to vote for that election is 20 April). Effective means of utilising this funding in the limited time available have been considered both in terms of seeking to improve registration levels generally across the City but also amongst target groups and wards where registration levels are known to be poor . A ' Bite the Ballot' secondment offers an effective means by which young people and especially hard to reach groups can be targeted. It involves personal contact with young people which cannot currently be achieved by existing staff resource and feedback from other councils who have used this service indicate that Bite the Ballot CEO's have been successful in achieving new registrations.

**Other Options Considered:**

(a) Not to enter into a contract with Bite the Ballot . This option has been rejected on the basis that Bite the Ballot can demonstrate success in supplying Community Engagement Officers who can connect with young people and hard to reach groups and on the basis that they have the immediate resources and programmes to support the City in its engagement work given the very short timelines within which impact on registration levels is required.

(b) to enter into a shorter contract. This option has been rejected on the grounds that it may not attract the best CEO candidates from Bite the Ballot and also on the basis that after the cut off point for new registrations on 20 April a CEO can then assist with encouraging participation in the election generally and with other planned summer voter registration activity with attainments.

**Background Papers:** None

**Published Works:** None

**Affected Wards:** Citywide

**Colleague / Councillor Interests:**

**Dispensation from Financial Regulations:** Yes

**Consultations:**

Date: 05/02/2015

Chief Finance Officer: Geoff Walker as Chief Finance Officer with regard to dispensation from financial regulations

As signed

Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications:

None

Equality:

EIA not required. Reasons: This decision does not relate to a new service nor a change in service nor will it have an impact on council services such as to require an EIA

Decision Type:

Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In:

No  
The call-in procedure does not apply to the proposed decision because the delay likely to be caused by the call in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or Vice-Chair) in his/her absence has been consulted and agreed both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all circumstances and that it should be treated as a matter of urgency.

Person Consulted: Brian Parbutt  
Consultation Date: 04/02/2015  
Any delay in appointing a secondee for engagement purposes seriously impacts on already limited time available to address voter registration before the deadline of 20 April 2015 .

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources

Legal Advice:

1. Under paragraph 5.1.1 of the Council's Financial Regulations (with regard to the procurement of schemes for work, goods, materials and services), "Where the estimated value of a scheme over the whole life of the scheme is between £10,000 and £50,000 (between £5,000 and £50,000 for Schools), Corporate Directors and the Director for Public Health shall make every effort to obtain at least 3 quotations in writing..."

2. However, paragraph 3.29 of the Financial Regulations provides for circumstances where it may be appropriate to dispense with the requirements of the Financial Regulations including as follows: "Where the Chief Executive, a Corporate Director or the Director for Public Health considers that there are justifiable reasons for dispensing with Contract Procedure Rules within Financial Regulations they may do so, following evidenced consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, provided that (a) for delegated decisions, the Chief Executive, Corporate Director or the Director for Public Health then obtains the agreement of the relevant Portfolio Holder to their decision through the Portfolio Holder decision process."

John Bernard-Carlin  
Team Leader  
Housing, Employment & Education Team  
Legal Services Advice provided by John Bernard-Carlin (Team Leader) on 09/02/2015.

**Finance Advice:**

**Nottingham City Council has received additional Cabinet Office funding of £77k for the purpose of maximising voter registration with a focus on achieving an increase in registrations in time for the local and national elections on 7 May 2015.**

**The proposal is that in accordance with financial regulation 3.29, there is agreement to dispense with the provisions of contract procedure rule 5.1.1 with regard to obtaining quotations, and to a contract being entered into with 'Bite the Ballot' for the secondment to Electoral Services of a Community Engagement Officer (CEO) for 6 months working 30 hours per week for the purpose of increasing voter registration amongst young people ( 17 to 24 years) in the City**

**The initial cost of this proposal is £15k and this can be funded from the additional Cabinet Office allocation. There is the potential to extend the initiative if the initial phase proves successful with the potential for an additional cost of £15k, subject to grant funding being available. there are no implications for the MTFP.**

**Advice provided by Steve Hales (Finance Analyst) on 12/02/2015.**

**Procurement Advice:**

**The proposal is to dispense with the provisions of contract procedure rule 5.1.1 with regard to obtaining quotations, and to enter into a contract with 'Bite the Ballot' for the secondment to Electoral Services of a Community Engagement Officer (CEO) for the purpose of increasing voter registration amongst young people in the City.**

**Upon talking to the report author regarding the reason for not being able to seek three quotations, it is understood that 'Bite the Ballot' is a not-for-profit community interest company with immediate resources and programmes to support the City in its engagement work given the very short timelines within which impact on registration levels is required (deadline for registering to vote for election on 7 May on 20 April). In light of the very short timelines there is insufficient time to carry out a full process without causing delay. On this basis, there are no significant procurement concerns although it is recommended that this requirement should be reviewed 6 months prior to any future election to allow a competitive process to occur. Advice provided by Rosalie Parkin (Category Manager) on 17/02/2015.**

**HR Advice:**

**The temporary secondment of a Community Engagement Officer to NCC to support voter registration will provide additional capacity and does not present any immediate HR impacts. The funding provided will cover the costs of the secondment and will be a temporary arrangement.**

**Should the arrangement continue beyond the limits of this project, advice will need to be taken from HR in respect of any accrued employment rights or obligations. However given the scope and time limited nature of the voter registration project it is not anticipated to present any HR issues.**

**I would therefore support this request.**

**Shaune Loughlin HR Business Partner Advice provided by Shaune Loughlin (HR Business Partner) on 06/02/2015.**

**Signatures**

**Graham Chapman (PH for Resources and Neighbourhood Regeneration)**

**SIGNED and Dated: 18/02/2015**

<b>Glen O'Connell (Acting Corporate Director of Resources)</b>
<b>SIGNED and Dated: 18/02/2015</b>
<b>Theresa Channell (Head of Corporate and Strategic Finance) - Dispensation from Financial Regulations</b>
<b>SIGNED and Dated: 18/02/2015</b>
<b>Chief Financial Officer's Comments:</b>