

Executive Briefing

September 2013

Soft Market Testing - Community Meals

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City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Adult Social Care Procurement
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- Report version number: v2

1. Summary

Soft Market Testing (SMT) exercise – Community Meals (aka Mobile Meals, Meals on Wheels)

- 1.1 To report findings of the Soft Market Testing (SMT) for Community Meals.
- 1.2 Assessing the range of respondents it could be summarised that the prospects for the Council of encouraging operators to express an interest through the procurement/tendering process are good.
- 1.3 All those that responded could demonstrate a positive track record of providing meals service and can deliver all type of meals including African, Asian, European and Kosher, 365 days a year.
- 1.4 It is to note that some providers are able to provide more additional services including general checking on customers' well-being, serving meals, take out rubbish and prepare hot drinks.
- 1.5 Following the SMT, the Project Board may wish to take up the opportunity to invite respondents to further dialogue to assist future decision on procurement of the service. The procurement exercise can incorporate views of SMEs, voluntary sector and others respondents of the SME exercise.

2. Background:

2.1 In line with the principles of Self Directed Support, the Council implemented fundamental changes to its ways of working in April 2010. The new way of working requires that following an assessment of need and subsequent establishment of eligibility a customer is advised of their indicative allocated resource through the use of the Resource Allocation System (RAS). The customers then should have a choice in how they wish to choose meals provision in accordance with their own choice and assessed needs.

2.2 The Council's aspiration is that a customer will have a range of choices available to

them and will be supported to support plan either by themselves or with support from another party including Care Management in Adult Social Care (ASC).

2.3 The service currently delivers to approximately 260 people providing culturally-appropriate, nutritious meals 365 days a year.

2.4 Existing providers prepare meals that reflect the origins of the service user and their cultural needs. All meals are produced under strict hygiene conditions and practices as laid down by law, enforceable by the local Environmental Health Department. All meals meet nutritional standards established by local or national recognised bodies.

2.5 There are currently two external providers based in the community and voluntary sector and one in-house provider. Currently, all meals are transported by an in-house provider.

2.6 The future of the current mobile meals service is being consulted on and the department is seeking to establish whether suitable alternative provision is available in the market.

3. Purpose of Soft Market Testing

3.1 The overall objectives of the exercise were to assess whether there is potential in the market from suitably qualified and experienced providers to achieve Council's outcomes, which are:

- a) To help Customers maximise their options
- b) To determine if there is market interest in providers delivering meals to those in receipt of a managed personal budget
- c) To determine what barriers there are to doing this (e.g. transport, meal types, charges, location, frequency, volume)
- d) To determine level of interest in different contract types including framework contracts with no guarantee of hours
- e) To establish what providers can do – meal types, frequency, delivery times, locations, food only, prices etc.
- f) To identify any gaps in market provision
- g) To determine what is available for people in receipt of a Direct Payment

4. Process

4.1 The SMT was advertised on 26th July 2013 via Source Leicestershire. It was made clear to the market that it was not a call for competition.

4.2 All current providers for variety of Adult Social Care services had been notified (Voluntary Sector including current Mobile Meals providers; Care Homes, Domiciliary Support Services; Independent Living). Notifications were also sent to providers who expressed interest previously. Members of Federation for Small Businesses and

Voluntary Action Leicestershire had also been notified.

4.3 The closing date for submission of responses was 9th September 2013. A total of seven responses to the SMT were received.

4.4 Type of Operators:

The legal status of the organisations who submitted responses is as follows:

- a) Public Limited Company / Registered Charity: 2
- b) Charity with Trustees: 1
- c) Charitable Organisation limited by Guarantee: 1
- d) Private Limited Company: 2
- e) Partnership: 1

4.5 Experience / Suitability of Providers:

All Providers have given details of their current activities including additional well-being services, capacity of providing community various type of meals, current take up, price and ability to deliver meals.

5. Analysis of Responses

5.1 Type of Meal

Four providers cater for clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds (European, Asian, African-Caribbean, Halal etc.), whereas three of the have stated provision of meals for a specific client group only. In terms of special diets, all respondents are able to provide meals for Diabetic clients, Vegetarians and Pureed/Soft or other form of Texture modified meal. Some are also able to supply the following: Milk Free; Gluten Free; Low/ No Added Salt; Egg Free; Low Fat; Energy Dense.

It must be noted that two of the respondents are only currently able to provide frozen meals.

5.2 Premises and Food Hygiene Rating

All but one respondent have confirmed that their premises are approved and inspected. One organisation did not provide the answer.

Three respondents have confirmed food hygiene rating of 5, two – 4 and two have not provided a response.

5.3 Meals Availability

Five respondents have confirmed that they can deliver meals 365 days a year. One, who provides frozen meals, can supply them to a transport provider's facility every week. Another respondent does not provide services during weekends and Christmas, however, can provide alternative frozen meals for these periods.

5.4 Price

The SMT questionnaire asked respondents to provide price for their meals and applicable delivery charge.

Two providers who only supply frozen meals quoted prices ranging from £1.48 to £2.65 for standard meals and up to £5.95 for cultural meals.

Prices provided by the remaining five respondents were as follows:

- a) Standard meal from £3.60 to £7.56
- b) Asian Vegetarian from £5.25 to £7.71
- c) African-Caribbean from £6.71 to £7.71
- d) Halal from £6.71 to £7.71
- e) Kosher £12.09 (frozen option available from £6.45)
- f) Other special diets (diabetic, low salt, texture modified etc.) from £5.25 to £7.56 (frozen options available from £1.60)

All prices include delivery.

5.5 Additional Services

The respondents have listed a number of additional services provider whilst delivering the meal, including:

	Organisation A	Organisation B	Organisation C	Organisation D	Organisation E	Organisation F	Organization G
General checking on customer's wellbeing/cause for concern	✓	✓	✓	✓	□	✓	✓
Offer a drink of water	✓	□	✓	□	□	□	✓
Remove lids from meals	✓	□	✓	□	□	✓	✓
Plate up meals	✓	□	✓	□	✓	□	✓
Cut up meals	✓	□	✓	□	□	□	✓
Bring in items from the doorstep	✓	□	✓	✓	□	□	□
Take out rubbish	□	□	✓	□	□	□	□
Dispose of container or lid	□	□	✓	□	□	□	□
Help with menu planning	□	□	✓	□	□	□	□
Get seasonings, cutely, clean tea towel	□	□	✓	□	□	□	✓
Smell gas	□	□	✓	□	□	□	□
Heating working	□	□	✓	□	□	□	□
Make hot dink	□	□	✓	✓	□	□	□
Best before' dates checked	□	□	✓	□	□	□	□
Tripping hazard	□	□	✓	□	□	□	□
Post letters	□	□	□	✓	□	□	□
Place meal in the freezer or microwave	□	□	□	✓	□	□	□
Safe, Warm and Well checks'	□	□	□	□	□	□	✓

✓ additional charge

Organisation B and E provided very limited responses, it is possible that they provide more additional services, but failed to include these in the SMT response. Organisation C provides wide range of services, beyond the above listed, however, these attract additional charge.

5.6 Capacity and Current Take Up

Most providers are able to provide from 50 meals per day to 1000+meals. Providers are providing meals from 30 to 125 per day. Frozen meals are provided in bulk as required by the customers.

6. Options

The SMT questionnaire asked respondents their views on the most effective option for the delivery of the service. They were presented with 3 examples, but there was an opportunity to present the Council with a completely new solution. The 3 options were:

- A. A single service provider to prepare and deliver all types of Community Meals (Mobile Meals). Provision covering all Customer Groups across Adult Social Care (single provider undertakes service delivery).
- B. A framework of multiple specialist providers to prepare and deliver Community Meals (Mobile Meals) covering all customer groups of ASC (potential providers could undertake this for one or more of the type of meals provision).
- C. A framework of multiple specialist providers to prepare only Meals covering all customer groups of ASC (potential providers could undertake this for one or more of the type of meals provision).

One of respondents, who currently provide frozen meals, opted for proposing an option not listed above. Their suggestion was for them to deliver frozen meals to in-house or external transport provider for distribution.

Out of the remaining 6 respondents, those able to provide a wide range of cultural meals stated preference for option A. above, i.e. single provider service. The organisations specialising in only one culturally appropriate type of meal (Guajarati, African-Caribbean, European) expressed preference in having a framework of multiple specialist providers, who both prepare and deliver meals (option B).

7. Issues for Consideration

- The current mobile meals provider (that is the organisation who provides the meals for the in-house provider to reheat) would not be in position to deliver hot meals direct to customers in Leicester City, due to not having facilities in the area and an inadequate volume of meals indicated.

- There are alternative providers who can prepare and deliver nutritionally well balanced and culturally appropriate hot meals if frozen meals are discontinued in future.
- Limited providers came forward to provide African- Caribbean and Kosher type of meals.
- Higher unit costs for African – Caribbean and Kosher meals provision.
- One of the Charity organisations is able to provide Customers breakfast and tea packs and can also explore delivery times offering service in the late afternoon or early evening (offering choice to Customers).
- There is a potential risk around TUPE – although this is low and advice from the legal team has been sought.

3. Details of Scrutiny

One of the objectives of the SMT was to establish what providers can do to provide various types of meals, frequency and price of meals. The SMT has been external scrutiny by providers who have responded and internally the Mobile Meals Project Board, Transformation Team including Contracts and Quality Assurance Section scrutinised to achieve the Council's outcomes.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The financial allocation for mobile meals provision is yet to be determined.

5.2 Legal implications

Not arising from this report.

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

This report does not contain any significant climate change implication. However, the proposed tendering of the mobile meals must consider it to ensure the meals service provision must not have a detrimental effect on the Council's climate change targets. Issues to consider are packaging and transporting of meals.

5.4 Equality Impact Assessment

The Mobile Meals Service provision must considers issues as stated below:

- Ensuring culturally appropriate meals are available.
- Ensuring customer choice.
- Ensuring meals reflect any dietary requirements.
- Ensuring vegetarian meals are being prepared in appropriate facilities where no meat and being handled and they are stored and transported appropriately,
- Ensuring meals are fresh and nutritious and ingredients used are responsibly sourced.

5.5 Other Implications

Impact on customers currently in receipt of the service.

6. Background information and other papers:

None.

7. Summary of appendices:

- (i) Soft Market Testing Questionnaire – Community Meals



SMT MoW final.doc