

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet Member Decision to extend the Agreement for Services between Cheltenham Borough Council and Publica Group (Support) Ltd

Accountable member:

Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council

Accountable officer:

Gareth Edmundson, Chief Executive

Ward(s) affected:

None

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

Cheltenham Borough Council entered into a five-year Agreement for Services with Publica Group (Support) Ltd on 31 October 2017 for the delivery of support services.

The contract was extended for four years to cover the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2026, and the Council now wishes to extend the contract for a further four years to 31 October 2030. This is permitted under the contract, which allows the contract to be extended for two successive periods of four years.

Recommendations:

1. To approve the extension of the existing Agreement for Services with Publica Group (Support) Ltd for a further period of four years to 31 October 2030.

2. For the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to formally write to Publica Group (Support) Limited to notify Publica Group (Support) Limited of the contract extension.
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

The budgetary and financial implications will be considered as part of the Council's budget-setting process. Approval of the contract sum will be sought at the February 2026 Council meeting. There are no direct financial implications arising from the extension of the contract term. The contract fee is agreed annually and reflects any changes to the services provided.

Signed off by: Jon Whitlock, Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer),
Jon.Whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

As noted in this decision, the Council is party to an agreement with Publica Group (Support) Limited ("Publica") for a number of internal services ("Contract"). The Contract is due to expire on 31 October 2026 and the Council is required to serve no less than 12 months' notice to extend the term by a period not exceeding 4 years.

The Council's notice requirements have lapsed and as such, in order that the Council may extend the Contract it will be required to agree the extension period with Publica. If agreed, the formal notice to extend the Contract will need to waive the notice requirements with both Party's approval.

Signed off by: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk, 01684 272203

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

There are no direct implications arising from extending the contract term.

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

The services provided by Publica Group (Support) Ltd support teams across the council to deliver the priorities in the Corporate Plan, which are:

- Securing our future
- Quality homes, safe and strong communities
- Reducing carbon, achieving council net zero, creating biodiversity
- Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes
- Taking care of your money

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

Extending the term of the contract for internal support services will be neutral in terms of impact.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

The performance of Publica Group (Support) Ltd is monitored through the Publica Operational Forum and Shareholder Forum and through regular liaison with Publica's service teams.

2 Background

2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council entered into a five-year Agreement for Services with Publica Group (Support) Ltd on 1 November 2017 for the delivery of support services.

2.2 The contract was extended for four years to cover the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2026, and the Council now wishes to extend the contract for a further four years to 31 October 2030. This is permitted under the contract, which allows the contract to be extended for two periods of four years.

2.3 The Council is required to serve formal written notice that it wishes to extend the contract.

3 Services delivered by Publica Group (Support) Ltd

3.1 The Council currently receives the following services from Publica Group (Support) Ltd:

- ICT
- Procurement
- Transactional finance (accounts payable and receivable)
- Insurance services

3.2 The Agreement for Services enables the council to make changes to the services (whether by way of the removal of services, the addition of new services, increasing or decreasing the services, specifying the order in which the services are to be performed or the locations where the services are to be provided) through the annual review process or in the event of an urgent matter on giving reasonable written notice for any reasons whatsoever.

3.3 The contract will be extended on the same terms and therefore these flexibilities will continue to apply throughout the extension period.

4 Impact of local government reorganisation

- 4.1 Extending the contract for a further four years means the contract term will be extended to 31 October 2030, which is beyond the proposed timescale for local government reorganisation.
- 4.2 As outlined above, the contract contains provisions to change the services delivered by the company. The contract also contains provisions to enable the contract to be terminated. Extending the term to 2030, therefore, does not present an issue.
- 4.3 In the event local government reorganisation does not take place or is significantly delayed; towards the end of the extended term, the council will need to consider a re-procurement of services as the contract cannot be extended beyond 2030.

5 Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The recommendation to approve an extension to the agreement for services with Publica Group (Support) Ltd will ensure continuity of service.
- 5.2 The Council is required to serve formal written notice that it wishes to extend the contract.

6 Alternative options considered

- 6.1 No alternative options were considered. The quality of services delivered by Publica Group (Support) Ltd is good and, in light of the proposed local government reorganisation, the option of terminating the contract at this time was not considered a viable option.

7 Key risks

- 7.1 If the council does not serve notice that it wishes to extend the term of the contract with Publica Group (Support) Ltd beyond 1st November 2026 then it could put the future delivery of services at risk.

Report author:

Gill May, Organisational Performance Lead, gill.may@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening

Background information:

N/A.

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the council does not formally serve notice that it wishes to extend the term of the contract with Publica Group (Support) Ltd beyond 1 st November 2026 then it could put the future delivery of services at risk	Gareth Edmundson	2	2	4	Avoid	Serve notice to extend the contract	Gill May	24/12/25

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: Gill May	Service Area: Corporate Services
Title: Organisational Performance Lead	Date of assessment: 11/11/25
Signature: G May	

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Other

Extension of Agreement for Services between the Council and Publica Group (Support) Ltd

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Agreement for Services between Cheltenham Borough Council and Publica Group (Support) Ltd

Is this new or existing?

Other

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

The Council is required to serve formal written notice to extend the contract.

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims: Provision of internal support services comprising ICT, procurement, transactional finance (accounts payable and receivable) and insurance services.

Objectives: To support delivery of council services.

Outcomes: The services delivered by Publica Group (Support) Ltd support teams across the Council to deliver the priorities in the Corporate Plan.

Benefits:	Service areas are supported to deliver the actions in the Corporate Plan for the benefit of Cheltenham's residents.
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e. What are the expected impacts?	
Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.	No
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	No impact expected
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
This an existing contract for internal support services. Extending the term of the agreement will be neutral in terms of its impact.	

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

f. Identify next steps as appropriate	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment	
Completion date for Stage Two assessment	

Please move on to Stage 2 if required ([intranet link](#)).