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**Pre Market Engagement Brief**

**Procurement of Internal and External Audit Services**

**Project Reference CHA/AS/2024**

1. **Introduction**

**About Cottsway Housing Association**

Cottsway is a registered housing provider with homes based in West Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire. We own over 5,600 homes for rent and low-cost home ownership, have a turnover of around £45.5 million, with an asset base worth £475 million.

**Our Purpose**

Our purpose guides us in all that we do:

'Together we are turning houses into homes, growing and building communities, and making a positive difference to people's lives.'

**Our Values**

* We are open and transparent about how we do business
* We are here for the long term
* We see Cottsway as a partnership between customers and staff and key stakeholders
* We will do all we can to provide our customers with decent homes from which they can enhance their lives
* We are part of, and value, the communities in which we work

You can read more about us [**here**](https://www.cottsway.co.uk/)

Copies of recent financial statements and reports can also be found on our website.

1. **Current Arrangements**

Cottsway has contracts in place for Internal and External Audit Services. The scope of the contracts is as follows:

**Internal Audit Services**

* Producing an internal audit strategy which addresses the audit universe to which it is applied.
* An annual internal audit plan to be approved by the Audit and Risk Committee following consultation with senior management.
* Review of operational and management controls including policy decision making processes.
* Special reviews as requested by the Board or management.
* Regular attendance at Audit and Risk Committee meetings

**External Audit Services**

* Planning, management and execution of annual external audit of the Cottsway Group in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board;
* Reporting on external audit progress to management and the Audit and Risk Committee including attendance at Board and Audit and Risk Committee meetings as appropriate;
* Provision of an assessment as to whether the Cottsway financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with current accounting rules and the housing SORP.

Both contracts were last procured in 2020, and expire in April 2025.

1. **Future Requirements**

The procurement process for the new contracts is expected to commence in August 2024 and contracts are expected to be awarded by December 2024.

The new contracts shall be procured in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The anticipated contract period is 3 years, with an option to extend for up to 2 additional years.

Prior to launching the procurement process, Cottsway is undertaking a Pre Market Engagement exercise.

The purpose of the Pre Market Engagement exercise is to:

* Determine the market capacity for Internal and External Audit Services
* Establish potential Bidder interest in the new contracts
* Establish key risks and barriers
* Establish innovative opportunities
* Discuss procurement options and timescales
* Establish cost drivers and indicative budgets
* Understand the potential to generate Social Value
* Shape the content of the Tender documentation

1. **Pre Market Engagement Exercise**

The Pre Market Engagement exercise shall be conducted via a 1-hour Teams meeting with each Participant during July 2024.

Meeting spaces are limited and shall be allocated on a first come first served basis to Interested Parties responding to this Brief.

Interested Parties wishing to attend shall register their interest by no later than 28th June 2024 to our appointed Procurement Advisors, Clarity Procurement Solutions:

[nathan@clarityprocurement.co.uk](mailto:nathan@clarityprocurement.co.uk)

Interested Parties shall also indicate the names and positions of those wishing to attend.

Subject to availability, meeting dates shall be confirmed to Participants week commencing 1st July 2024.

1. **Important Notes**

In accordance with Regulation 40 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the deliverables from this Pre Market Engagement may be used in the planning and conduct of the future Service procurement procedure, provided that it does not have the effect of distorting competition and does not result in a violation of the principles of non-discrimination and transparency.

Where a Participant has advised Cottsway, whether in the context of this Pre Market Engagement or not, or has otherwise been involved in the preparation of the procurement procedure, Cottsway shall take appropriate measures to ensure that competition is not distorted by the participation of that Participant.

Such measures shall include:

* The communication to the other Participants and Bidders of relevant information exchanged in the context of or resulting from the involvement of the Participant in the preparation of the procurement procedure
* The fixing of adequate time limits for the receipt of Tenders

Participants shall only be excluded from the procurement procedure where there are no other means to ensure compliance with the duty to treat economic operators equally in accordance with regulation 18(1) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Prior to any such exclusion, Participants shall be given the opportunity to prove that their involvement in preparing the procurement procedure is not capable of distorting competition.

Participants shall bear their own costs and under no circumstances whatsoever shall Cottsway become liable for any participation costs associated with this Pre Market Engagement. Cottsway shall similarly not be liable in the event that a procurement process following this Pre Market Engagement is not undertaken, whatever the reason.

1. **Definitions**

“Bidder” – shall refer to the organisations formally invited to participate in the Tender

“Cottsway” shall refer to Cottsway Housing Association

“Interested Parties” shall refer to providers who express an interest in participating in the Pre Market Engagement

“Participants” shall refer to the providers that Cottsway has invited to participate in this Pre Market Engagement

“Pre Market Engagement” shall refer to this exercise, undertaken in accordance with Regulations 40 and 41 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015

“Tender” shall refer to any Tender that Cottsway may issue subsequent to this Pre Market Engagement