Extraordinary Economy and Property Committee	
Meeting Date	29 January 2025
Report Title	Procurement of Professional Property Support
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson, Head of Place
Lead Officer	Kieren Mansfield, Strategic Programme and Asset Manager
Classification	**Open**
Recommendations	1. That the Committee approves the ongoing appointment of Tile Hill Interim and Executive Management through the LGRP Framework to provide interim professional support for the Council's estate management function. 2. That the committee allow delegated authority to the Head of Place to extend the contract for a period up to 31st March 2027, pending the recruitment of a permanent, suitably qualified member of staff.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1.1 The Council currently contracts with Tile Hill Interim and Executive Limited, through the LGRP Framework, for the provision of interim professional support for its estate management function. The current contract has run from April 2024 to December 2025, at an estimated cost of £112,000 per annum.

1.2 This report sets out the ongoing need for this support and recommends that the contract continues to operate for a further period, at an estimated pro-rata cost of £115,000 per annum, while the Council seeks to recruit a suitably qualified, permanent member of staff.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

2.1 Despite several recruitment campaigns, using different strategies, the Council has been unable to recruit a permanent Estates Manager, the latest attempt being summer 2025. The position requires a qualified Chartered Surveyor (and a member or fellow of the RICS) to be the professional lead for the council in all areas of property advice, valuation and property asset management.

2.2 Consequently, it has been necessary for a series of interim arrangements to be in place to provide the required experienced and professional input. The current contract for this is with Tile Hill Interim and Executive Limited, through the LGRP Framework, at an estimated annual cost of £112,000 per annum.

2.3 The contract expired on31st December 2025 but has been extended for a further month to cover the period to 31st January, until a report could be bought to this committee.

2.4 The Council is, again, seeking to recruit a permanent Estates Manager, the outcome of which is, at the time of writing, unknown. Should this be successful there would, nonetheless, be a temporary, ongoing need to maintain interim support, assuming notice periods for a successful candidate and a handover period to support a smooth transition of responsibilities and projects. If the recruitment is unsuccessful then there would remain a need for the current interim arrangements to continue.

2.5 Officers have been satisfied that the advice and work of the current interim Property Advisor has been of a high quality and having been working with Swale Borough Council over an extended period he has developed an understanding and knowledge of the Borough, the Council's property portfolio and the relevant wider policy framework. The Interim Property Advisor has confirmed he would welcome the opportunity to continue to work for the Council.

3 Recommendations

3.1 That the Committee approves the ongoing appointment of Tile Hill Interim and Executive Management through the LGRP Framework to provide interim professional support for the Council's estate management function.

3.2 Given the uncertainity of the current and any future recruitment campaigns for the Estates Manager post, it is recommended that the committee allow delegated authority to the Head of Service to extend the contract for a period up to 31st March 2027, pending the recruitment of a permanent, suitably qualified member of staff.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 Terminate the contract with Tile Hill Executive Management to cease the provision of Interim professional support for the Council's estate management function. Cessation is not recommended as it provides the required level of input from a suitably qualified and experienced property advisor to help manage the Council's Property Portfolio, which currently generates over £2 million per annum in rent receipts for the Council, which is set to increase over the next three years.

4.2 Seek an alternative provider. The appointment through a competitive framework reflects the current market rate and a change of provider is not recommended at this time, as the current interim property advisor has worked with the Council over an extended period, provided good quality advice, has developed a knowledge and understanding of the Borough, the Council and its property portfolio and has established, ongoing project work. Should the existing contractor leave the role then this can be revisited at this stage.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 Internal consultation with the Council's services indicate a general satisfaction with the current interim arrangements in place.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The recommendations support the Council's Corporate Plan, specifically through their importance to implementing the Property Asset Strategy, to support best use of our assets and look to increase our income. The property portfolio makes a significant net positive contribution to the Council's financial position overall. The post also helps deliver social and economic value by helping provide effective management of the estate, delivery of specific projects backed by committee decisions and wider partnership ambitions around the future use and transfer of individual assets to town and parish councils.
Financial, Resource and Property	Anticipated annual spend on the contract, if agreed, is anticipated to be £115,000. The anticipated total contract value for the period to March 31st 2027 (if required) is estimated as £124,500 representing the likely maximum total cost of the extension as set out in the report. The costs of meeting the contract have been met through vacant posts held across the property and programmes team, with an additional provision of £50,000 made in the 2025/26 budget by Members, which has been requested for 2026/27, although this would be subject to the outcome of the current recruitment process. The role contributes significantly to the Councils ambitions to increase its property income and to rationalise its estate, generating both revenue income and property disposal receipts. In 2026/27 any increase in property income could contribute to helping offset the cost. If this post is vacant, there is a direct impact on the pace of the work programme and the ability to generate related receipts and saving
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Providing professional advice through a contract which delivers qualified and experienced interim support helps ensure that the right commercial capability and standards are in place to manage the Council's property estate. This is through both direct advice/input and by helping the Council act as an informed and 'intelligent' estate manager when dealing with third parties and other relevant contractors.

Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this stage
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The absence of suitably qualified and experienced advice in managing the Council's property estate could present significant risks including and not limited to inappropriate leases and licence arrangements with Council tenants; decisions that do not deliver full value for money without appropriate valuation advice and negotiation experience and less able and informed management of contracts with third parties in respect of the estate. The current Interim Property advisor retains membership of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and is a registered valuer.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage
Local Government Reorganisation	As the Council moves towards Local Government Re-organisation, the effective management of property assets will be a significant issue, prior to and during the process of bringing together the relevant authorities. Once the geography of Local Government Reorganisation in Kent is confirmed there will be an opportunity to discuss professional resourcing with the relevant authorities – to assess whether suitably qualified employees across the group have capacity and capability to work together and understand the degree to which ongoing interim support will be required, if still in place.

7 Appendices

7.1 No appendices

8 Background Documents

8.1 No Background papers