

Cabinet

18 November 2025

Gateway 3 Contract Award: Contract to Deliver the Medway Test Process

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tracy Coombs, Portfolio Holder for Education

Report from: Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People & Deputy Chief Executive

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Procurement Overview

Total Contract Value: £1,467,781 (over a nine-year period)

Project Budget (Estimate): £1,204,480

FTS reference number: N/A

Contract Term: 36 months plus 3x24 month extension options

Contract Start Date: 01/02/2026

Initial Contract End Date: 31/01/2029

Extension End Date: 31/01/2035

Summary

This report seeks permission to award the procurement of the Medway Test Contract.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet awards the contract to Renaissance Learning as they have been evaluated as the most economically advantageous against the Council's award criteria as per the evaluation spreadsheet contained within 3.1 of the Exempt Appendix.

2. Suggested reasons for decision

- 2.1. Following a comprehensive evaluation of all bidders, Renaissance Learning was assessed as meeting the required criteria more than other bidders, in terms of both quality and price. Officers determined that Renaissance Learning can provide the best service of those available and offer satisfactory value for money.

3. Background

3.1. Budget & Policy Framework

- 3.1.1. The Medway Test is undertaken annually to ascertain which pupils are deemed to be of grammar ability and are eligible for entry into one of the six grammar schools in Medway. This forms part of the wider statutory duty of the Local Authority to ensure all pupils can access a suitable school place and supports the Council's priority two of Medway's children achieving their potential in schools.

3.2. Background Information and Procurement Deliverables

- 3.2.1. The successful contractor will provide Medway with the various tools to undertake the Medway Test annually which includes a 3-paper test for 4,500 pupils taken over a 7-day period in September each year.
- 3.2.2. This will require the timely delivery of sufficient documents and test papers to enable the test to be taken on the set days, the collection of papers for marking and the timely production of results to meet strict deadlines.
- 3.2.3. The initial estimated budget was based on previous contract costs, however, due to changes in the test requirements and inflationary impact, the tendered costs are higher than anticipated. This additional cost will be covered from within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is the Central Government grant provided for school services, and overseen by the School Forum. DSG will increase the allocation to the Medway Test.

3.3. Parent Company Guarantee/Performance Bond Required

- 3.3.1. As per the Gateway 1 report, a PGC/bond will not be sought from bidders.

4. Procurement Process

4.1. Procurement Process Undertaken

- 4.1.1. A 4-week open market procurement process was undertaken on the Kent Business Portal, from 11 August to 5 September 2025.

4.2. Evaluation Criteria Used

4.2.1. 40/60 price to quality, to ensure that the most advantageous price is realised whilst enabling every facet of the test required to successfully deliver the test is in place.

#	Question	Weighting (%)	Purpose
1	Ability to deliver. Please confirm that your organisation has the ability to deliver all element of the specification. Should you not be able to evidence any area(s) of the specification then please detail below how you will ensure you will comply regardless. Please specify any element of the work stream you would outsource.	2	Obtain a high-level overview of the organisation's abilities.
2	Fulfilling requirements. Please provide details of how you will fulfil the requirements of the specification in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test development prior to test window• Print and delivery of test materials prior to test window• Marking and results after tests have been sat	2	Obtain a high-level overview of the organisation's understanding of our requirements and how they would fulfil the different elements of them.
3	Programme. Provide a programme delivery schedule in the form of a Gantt Chart illustrating key dates of delivery. If possible, please identify any time savings which will lead to the overall reduction of the programme.	2	Determine whether the organisation understands the stages of the process and our deadlines.
4	Social value. Selection of questions around growth and environment.	5	A minimum 5% for social value is mandatory.
5	Confirm that you will guarantee that the test papers are bespoke to Medway Council only across the lifetime of the contract. Outline how you will ensure test questions will not appear in test papers in neighbouring LAs and any other school	0 (pass/fail)	Pass/fail question to ensure the organisation can meet our strict requirements around re-using questions from other tests and to determine the organisation has clear methods in place to do so.

#	Question	Weighting (%)	Purpose
	inside or outside the Medway boundary.		
6	How will you ensure that the Maths questions match high national curriculum standards in order that the paper correctly stretches and assesses the highest academic achievers within Medway?	5	Find out whether the organisation can make the test relevant to the national curriculum.
7	How can you ensure a flexible approach will be given to the strict delivery schedule set by Medway Council for example the adaptation of a test paper?	5	Whilst we have a strict schedule to adhere to, we may need to adapt as we go through the process. This will identify whether the organisation is adaptable.
8	Confirm that the question and answer papers will be error free in terms of layout, formatting, spelling, grammar and branding etc.?	0 (pass/fail)	Pass/fail question to explore the organisation's quality control measures.
9	How will you guarantee the security of the question and answer papers throughout the whole design, production and delivery process?	5	Determine whether the organisation has appropriate measures in place to keep the test papers secure both from issues that could destroy them and scenarios that could expose to the public.
10	How will you account manage our contract to ensure successful conclusions throughout the test project, including named point of contact, agreed response times, correct quantities, proofs and print etc.?	6	This is a measure of customer service and customer satisfaction.
11	What flexible approach will you offer on modified papers including translation, braille etc. and to provide advice and/or modified papers as appropriate with regard to specific special arrangements e.g. where it may be necessary to laminate test materials or change the colour of answer sheet or booklet printing. How will we	6	Due to an increasing range of requirements of our children, we need to ensure the bidder can adapt test materials to make them accessible for those with SEND.

#	Question	Weighting (%)	Purpose
	work together to control the cost implications of such activity?		
12	How will you ensure the marking process is accurate and the results provided are correct and to our specifications?	6	To ensure the organisation has a professional marking system with strong quality assurance processes e.g. papers being scanned by optical readers more than once and manual checks taking being made by trained operators where there are any discrepancies between the scans.
13	How will you ensure there is a) a wide range of questions covering different areas and b) variety in the context of how questions are presented e.g. cross section of scenarios?	5	To determine how the bidder would provide a varied test in terms of how questions are asked. Assess the bidder's ability to cover different areas of the national curriculum.
14	How will you ensure any changes highlighted by Medway regarding the presentation of test booklets and familiarisation guide are followed through in the next active year?	5	Measure how effective the bidder would be at correcting issues from one year to the next.
15	How do you ensure that the print quality of test papers is exceptional and how would you swiftly resolve any issues should we find poor quality papers?	6	Determine how the bidder would react to issues we might highlight about the test papers and whether they would provide a satisfactory solution.

4.3. Contract Management

4.3.1. Contract management will be the responsibility of the School Admissions & Medway Test Programme Lead.

4.3.2. It is proposed that the below table is used for the purpose of further reporting.

Contract Start Date	Initial Contract End Date	Extension Period in months	Reprocure Period in months	Project Extension Review (GW4) Date	End of project review (GW4) Date
01/02/2026	31/01/2029	36	24	01/02/2028	01/02/2034

For the above table, it is assumed that the:

- Extension period must be greater than the reprocure period.
- Project Extension date (if applicable) gives officers sufficient time to reprocure the service should the extension not be granted.
- End of Project date mandates officers present a contract management report to board prior to starting a new procurement process.

5. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The bidder does not want to extend after the initial 36-month term	After awarding the contract and providing services for the initial contract term, the bidder decides they do not wish to extend.	Maintain good relations and communications with the bidder to ensure both the LA and bidder are satisfied with the service and are happy to continue working together longer term.	C IV
The bidder does not fulfil its obligations per the contract	The contract is awarded and the successful bidder does not provide adequate services according to the specification.	Pre-process briefings and discussions with the provider to clarify expectations. Regular meetings, communication and progress reviews to follow up on that.	C III
Local government reorganisation requires changes to the contract/service	Local government review changes the landscape regarding the number of schools, type of test and number of candidates. This will require changes to be made to the contract.	In the contract, set out the potential for this to happen and the requirement for the successful bidder to allow changes to the contract following review with the LA.	A III

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

6. Service Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

6.1.1. The Medway Admissions and Medway Test services are funded by the central services schools block of the dedicated schools grant with a 2025-26 budget allocation of £642,555. The round one monitoring is forecasting a small overspend of £23,457.

6.1.2. In January, each year the schools forum is asked to ratify the funding for the following financial year. As a minimum the Medway Admissions and Medway Test budget is increased to match the requirements of the service or in line with inflation.

6.2. Legal Implications

6.2.1. This procurement activity was above the FTS threshold and therefore an FTS notice was required.

6.2.2. The procedure gives a high degree of confidence that the Council's primary objectives for procurement are met, as required by Rule 2.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules ("the CPRs").

6.2.3. Under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, the procurement is a Process 3 procurement (Rule 18), and the process set out in this report meets the requirements for such procurements. The procurement was advertised on the Kent Business Portal, in compliance with rule 18.4 of the CPRs.

6.2.4. Medway Council has the power under the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 and the Localism Act 2011 to enter into contracts in connection with the performance of its functions.

The process described in this report complies with the Procurement Act 2023 and Medway Council's Contract Procedure Rules

6.2.5. This report has been presented as a Process 3 medium risk procurement, and therefore the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Procurement Board will therefore set the risk and reporting stages for the remainder of the procurement process for Gateway 4.

6.3. TUPE Implications

6.3.1. Not applicable

6.4. Procurement Implications

6.4.1 Procurement followed Public Procurement Act 2023 and 2024 regulations. Competitive Tender above Threshold. Three providers submitted bids, one Provider, Feijoa Global did not submit financial information and case studies not relevant.

6.5. ICT Implications

6.5.1. There is not likely to be any additional impact upon ICT requirements, however as the Medway Test arrangements relies upon ICT for much of the process, should the new contract require changes to ICT processes for the Medway test, that work shall be commissioned as necessary.

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Appendices

Exempt Appendix – Financial Analysis

Background Papers

[Gateway 1 Report](#)