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4 August 2022

Mr Jonathan Tully  
Head of Internal Audit  
South Cambridgeshire District Council  
South Cambridgeshire Hall  
Cambourne Business Park  
Cambourne  
Cambridge CB23 6EA

Dear Mr Tully,

### **Procurement of professional services from HR Wallingford**

In 2020, South Cambridgeshire District Council procured professional services from HR Wallingford in regard to expert advice on hydrology issues related to the development of Northstowe.

An [invitation to quote](#) was published on 3 June 2020. The description of services are subject to that invitation to quote are found in section 2 of the document.

In paragraph 27, four key questions are posed:

- Did dewatering and/or ditch excavations contribute to the collapse in water levels?
- Has part of the aquifer been blocked or has water been diverted into the balancing pond on Phase 1 either directly or through seepage?
- Did the construction of ditches cut into the gravels allowing the flow of the aquifer to be diverted?
- Has the importing of a clay layer all over the Phase 1 site prevented rainwater replenishment of the aquifer and therefore exacerbated the problem?

In its quotation, HR Wallingford states, "We will also answer the specific question set out in paragraph 27 of the ItQ."

1. Does the district council agree that its acceptance of the proposal made by HR Wallingford and subsequent payment to HR Wallingford created a legally binding agreement between the district council and HR Wallingford pursuant to the terms of the Invitation to Quote and the quotation?
2. Does the district council agree that the questions in paragraph 27 of have not been adequately answered by HR Wallingford?
3. Does the district council have any mechanisms in place to ensure that the council receives services that the council has paid for and that the performance of those services secures adequate value for money? If so, could the council please describe those mechanisms and explain whether or not they were sufficient to secure value for money in relation to this procurement?

4. What steps with the district council take to see that the relevant hydrological assessment is provided in accordance with the terms agreed with HR Wallingford?
5. When will the relevant hydrological assessment be provided?
6. Did South Cambridgeshire District Council alter the terms of its agreement with HR Wallingford after HR Wallingford's quotation was accepted or did South Cambridgeshire District Council indicate in any way that HR Wallingford should not answer the questions in paragraph 27?
7. Will you, as Head of Internal Audit, provide responses to these questions undertaken in accordance with the remit of the council's internal audit service?
8. Will you raise these concerns with the council's section 151 officer and monitoring officer and ensure that a response is timely response is forthcoming that addresses the questions posed in this letter even if the council's internal audit service is unable to address these questions?
9. Will you, as Head of Internal Audit, please relay these concerns to members of the council's audit and corporate governance committee and provide recommendations to the audit and corporate governance committee as to whether any specific instructions from the committee are necessary in order for internal audit to fully assess and address the concerns raised in this letter?

HR Wallingford is a highly respected consultancy with a reputation for delivering high quality work for its customers. As such, I feel it is important that HR Wallingford is given an opportunity to provide further information that may assist local stakeholders in understanding why the terms of the firm's quotation were not fulfilled. I have therefore sent a copy of this letter to HR Wallingford.

Please also ensure that any response to this letter is copied to Longstanton Environmental & Groundwater Group. The group's email address can be found below.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Fulton  
Director

cc. HR Wallingford <[info@hrwallingford.com](mailto:info@hrwallingford.com)> (FAO Andrew Ball)  
Longstanton Environmental & Groundwater Group <[enquiries@legginform.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@legginform.co.uk)>