



CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

MEMBERS UPDATE 2018/19

ISSUE: 2

Article of: Director of Development and Regeneration Services

**Contact for further information: Helen Hatch (Extn. 5171)
(Email: helen.hatch@westlancs.gov.uk)**

SUBJECT: Exemption from contract procedure rules : Citizen Space software

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

- 1.1 To brief Members on a request for exemption from contract procedure rules, to be granted by the Chief Executive, in relation to 'Citizen Space' consultation software.
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2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Plan is one of the Council's strategic objectives, and public consultation is a mandatory and legal requirement of Local Plan document preparation. Effective software is a vital part of the Council's ability to run online consultations, process representations, analyse comments and publish feedback. During preparation of the last Local Plan (2012-2027) the council used 'Objective' software to manage the consultations but the contract was terminated, following the adoption of the plan in 2013, as the product was no longer considered fit for purpose.
- 2.2 Officers in Strategic Planning have since been using online software, accessed by free or low cost websites, to run their consultation events. However, as the Local Plan Review progresses, it becomes increasingly important to have software that can handle all the requirements of consultation and the large volumes of representations which are anticipated through public consultation.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Officers from Strategic Planning initially went out to software providers in October 2016, and invited three companies to give demonstrations of their product and to provide quotes for its purchase. Those companies were:
- Delib (Citizen Space) – c. £8000 per annum
 - JDI Solutions (Opus Consult) – c. £10,000 per annum
 - Inovem (Inovem Consult) – c.£12,000 per annum
- 3.2 Demonstrations were given to officers within Strategic Planning, Regeneration, Housing and Communications. Following the demonstrations, only Strategic Planning wished to continue to procure consultation software specific for their needs. However, whilst the procurement of the software has been pursued by Strategic Planning, any other sections of the Council that wish to use the software to undertake online public consultation will be able to do so.
- 3.3 Officers decided that JDI Solutions did not offer a package to meet their consultation needs and was subsequently side-lined. Officers deemed Citizen Space to be the best of the three packages and this was also the lowest cost.
- 3.4 In November 2017, Inovem and Delib were contacted to provide updated costs. Both confirmed no change to their costs. A bid for funding was submitted in November to enable the purchase of consultation software, which was subsequently approved by Council in March 2018. In April 2018, the Strategic Planning team arranged another demonstration of Citizen Space and decided to proceed with procuring the software. During that demonstration, Delib confirmed the annual cost of £7995 and, in the first year only, £1200 for training staff. This cost remained unchanged from 2016.
- 3.5 Assuming Citizen Space is retained until the Local Plan Review is completed in approximately three years' time, this would total £25,185. Once the Plan is adopted, and consultation requirements lessen, a review will be taken as to whether Citizen Space is then retained. The contract can be renewed, or cancelled, on an annual basis and there is no long term commitment to cost.
- 3.6 The estimated value of the contract is likely to exceed £10,000 and therefore three written quotations would normally be obtained. It is not practicable to approach Cabinet (or another appropriate body of Members) to request an exemption to the Contracts Procedure Rule because it is too late for submission at the next meeting of Cabinet and the software is required as soon as possible. Asking the other two suppliers to formally revalidate their

quotations for second, or third, time would raise their expectations unnecessarily, since the choice of product has already been made on price and technical grounds. Citizen Space is deemed to be both the preferred and lowest cost choice.

4.0 ACTION BEING TAKEN

4.1 The purpose of this update is to notify Members that a request for exemption from contract procedure rules has been sought from the Chief Executive for the reasons set out above.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There is a financial implication arising from this article as it relates to the purchase of consultation software. However, officers have chosen the product with the highest technical performance and the lowest cost and therefore it is considered to achieve best value. The costs for the software have been accounted for in the Strategic Planning and Implementation budget. The introduction of the software should serve to reduce the resource impacts that consultation creates, by minimising the input and processing of representations through the availability of improved online means.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 This item is for information only and makes no recommendations. It therefore does not require a formal risk assessment and no changes have been made to risk registers.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

This report does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

None.