

Item no.

Report to: Executive
Date: 11 October 2005
Report of: Executive Member for Environment & Transport
Subject: The Planning and Building Control IT System
Ward: All

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To purchase technical support for the introduction of the Planning and Building Control IT system and to consider waiving Contract Standing Orders.

2 Consultation

2.1 The Director of Regeneration and Development and the project implementation group have been consulted.

3 Background

3.1 In July 2005, the Council approved the purchase of a new Planning & Building Control IT system (Sx3 Northgate). Implementation is co-ordinated by a project implementation group and is on target to enable the Development Control service to go live in December, thereby maximising the amount of Planning Delivery Grant that can be achieved by the authority.

4 Position Statement and Option Appraisal

4.1 Experience from elsewhere suggests that normally, a project of this scale is programmed for implementation over an 18 –24 month period and is supported by two experienced members of staff being seconded during the implementation period. In the circumstances, it has only been possible to second one member of staff for 6 – 9 months. However, an experienced external consultant employed by TerraQuest has been identified who has both project management expertise and Sx3 systems expertise. Initial project meetings and assessments have been carried out and 18 days consultancy support would be enough to support the introduction of the new system. The cost of consultancy support would be £11,700 (+ on site expenses), which is more cost effective and practical than seconding a further member of staff and backfilling the posts with agency staff.

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- 4.2** Technical expertise is also required to assist to populate the new IT system with existing planning and building control data. Consultancy support would help to convert this data to the new format and ensure it is compatible with the Land and Property Gazetteer. The TerraQuest consultant would be able to supervise this process using technical assistance from the same company at a cost of £18,000 (+ on site expenses).
- 4.3** Once the system is live, licenses are required to enable staff to utilise the Geographic Information System function and these would need to be procured through Northgate (Sx3). The cost of these licenses for 31 existing users is £12,500 in the first year and £2,340 p.a. thereafter.
- 4.4** Finally, the new system also provides the opportunity to access old records in an electronic format. Previously, old applications were despatched to a company which photographed and stored records on Microfiche. However, this is now a somewhat out dated technology and in future, all applications would be scanned in an electronic format as part of the corporate document imaging system. There is therefore a need to scan applications that have accumulated, and continue to accumulate, since the last applications were Microfiched. There will be an ongoing need to both, clear the backlog of files and scan new files until the new document imaging system is introduced. Several companies are capable of scanning large numbers of files and quality/price comparisons are now being undertaken. The cost of scanning a single years planning and building control records is estimated to be £6,500 . it is likely that at 3.- 4 years of records will initially be scanned.
- 5.0** Conclusions
- 5.1** Introduction of the Sx3 Northgate system in December will maximise the Planning Delivery Grant for e-government. Going out to tender for these services would cause a delay and would mean that the target date of December would not be achieved. Specialist consultancy support is required to achieve the target and a supplier has been identified who is also an accredited contractor on the Planning Advisory Service list of preferred contractors accredited to provide services to local planning authorities. Procurement of the other services described above will maximise the benefits of operating the new system to staff and customers alike and it is therefore considered appropriate to depart from Standing Orders.

6.0 Implications

6.1 Policy Implications

It is not considered that there are any implications resulting from this report.

Legal Implications

Specialist suppliers have been identified for the first three items described above and consequently, it is appropriate to waive Contract Standing Order 4(A) (iv).

Financial Implications

The cost of the arrangements detailed in Section 4 total £76,200 in 2005/06 with associated annual costs of £8,840 per year. These costs can currently be accommodated from the planning delivery grant reserves and building control surpluses.

Risk Implications

A risk assessment has been carried out and all the necessary actions required to manage the identified risks either have been carried out or will be implemented.

Communications

It is not considered that there are any implications resulting from this report.

7.0 Corporate Implications

7.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

It is not considered that there are any implications resulting from this report.

Equality and Diversity

It is not considered that there are any implications resulting from this report.

E-Government

Purchase of these goods and services will help to meet the requirements of PSO R08 and PSO G05. It will also enable the planning service to meet the 'Pendleton Criteria' for e-government in planning.

Procurement

Specialist suppliers have been identified which are able to meet the specific requirements needed to introduce the Sx3 system. Quotations are being sought to procure an ongoing scanning service. The consultant identified to assist with the introduction of Sx3 is on the accredited list of project contractors to provide services to local planning authorities.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 To approve the purchase the supplies and services as described in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4 of the report.

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8.2 In accordance with Contract Standing Orders 1(a) that the Executive agree to waive, Contract Standing Order 4(A) (v) in relation to services supplied by TerraQuest and Northgate Sx3 and, Contract Standing Order 4(A) (ii) in relation to the procurement of a scanning service.

9 Background Papers

9.1 None