



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

WBC Executive Member for Digital &
Environmental Services &
ADC Executive Member for Resources
18 November 2020

Decision to be taken on or after
26 November 2020

Key Decision: Yes

Ward(s) Affected: N/A

Award of Contract - Low-code digital platform

Report by the Director for Digital Sustainability & Resources

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The contract for the Low Code Platform used by the Councils is due to expire in March 2021.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Executive Members to award a contract renewal through the appropriate procurement route.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Executive Members are recommended to approve the award of the contract to Netcall.

3. Context

- 3.1 In late 2014, Adur & Worthing Councils took a bold and strategic step to invest in new digital technologies that set the councils on a different path. The investment, now repaid through reported annual revenue savings, has established Adur & Worthing as national leaders in local government digital, with significant benefits being delivered using innovative and award-winning technology platforms. The programme has saved significant revenue costs through reduced software expenditure and cashable service efficiencies, and is expected to continue to deliver savings year on year.
- 3.2 The most ground-breaking element of the strategy - our low code platform - has provided the foundation to build a wide range of applications for services including housing, waste and environmental services, FOI, complaints, HR, audit, and estates. The technology really proved its worth during the Covid crisis, enabling us to build and develop community and business support applications within a matter of days.
- 3.4 Since adopting the platform we have developed a team of highly skilled developers to work collaboratively with services to design solutions that meet their needs and are designed around the needs of the customer. The benefits of our approach include:
- Reduced costs compared to the procurement of legacy systems
 - The ability to work in an agile way, releasing system functionality within days or weeks rather than months, and crucially the ability to quickly adapt that functionality based on user feedback
 - Designing end to end solutions around our customer needs, not being restricted by 'off the shelf' solutions.
- 3.5 Over the last few years the Digital team has built up a significant amount of skills and knowledge, resulting in them accelerating the speed of delivery and the sophistication of the applications that they build. We have evolved our partnership working with services and honed our customer centric design skills to deliver significant benefits.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1. The current contract with Netcall is due to expire in March 2021. It is proposed to renew the contract for a further 5 year term. Renewing the contract with the current supplier is the preferred option for the following

reasons:

- 4.1.1. The existing platform has performed really well and is continuously being developed and updated. The renewal of the contract will include a significant upgrade to the platform and some additional functionality that will enhance our ongoing work on our CRM (which we are also building on the platform).
 - 4.1.2. Netcall have established an 'App Share' scheme whereby the public sector can share applications, avoiding the need for each council to reinvent the wheel. The local government community on the platform is growing rapidly. Whilst Adur and Worthing councils were the first to fully embrace the technology there is now strong collaboration across the community.
 - 4.1.3. It will enable us to continue to develop applications using our existing technology.
- 4.2 Changing suppliers at this stage would require re-skilling of the digital Dev Team and dilute our expertise as the team would need to be able to support two different platforms to maintain the applications that we already have in place.
- 4.3 Based on the above mentioned reasons it has been decided that it would be impractical to run an OJEU procurement process. It is proposed to go via an alternative fully compliant procurement route that represents the best value for money and do a direct award to the incumbent provider via SoftCAT Crown Commercial Services RM3808 Lot 13 Digital Marketplace Framework.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Overall the 5 year contract consists of £228,030 capital licence cost and £70,250 annual revenue cost, Total contract value £579,280.
- 5.2 There is a capital budget of £831,340 in 2020/21 with a further budget of £125,000 allocated in 2021/22 for the delivery of the digital strategy which is sufficient to fund the one-off licencing costs allowing for other commitments against the budget.
- 5.3 The annual revenue cost of £70,250 will be funded from within existing budgets.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 6.2 s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation
- 6.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 6.4 s1 Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 confers power on the local authority to enter into a contract for the provision of making available assets or services for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the local authority
- 6.5 Under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCRs) where a Public Authority is to enter into a contract for the supply of goods & services, and the value of those goods and services exceeds a financial limit of £189,333, any procurement exercise to contract for those goods and services must be conducted in accordance with the Regulations and a failure to do so may be declared upon receipt of a procurement challenge, anti-competitive and in breach of the Regulations. Use of a framework agreement for this procurement is authorised by Regulation 33 of the PCRs.

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- Our low code platform supports a range of commercial services run by the council, including commercial and green waste services. The platform has also been used to process and distribute business grants during Covid.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- The low code platform will enable us to continue to design end to end solutions designed around user needs. Recently this has been demonstrated by the applications that have been built on the platform to support the Covid community response and the distribution of business grants

2.2 Equality Issues

- The low code platform enables us to design applications around user needs and increasing on line functionality designed for our customers. The increase in uptake of self services solutions (as we have seen in waste and environmental services for example) will free up capacity in our customer facing teams to support customers who are not digitally enabled, have more complex needs or are more vulnerable.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

- Matter considered and no issues identified.

3. Environmental

- Matter considered and no issues identified.

4. Governance

- The low code platform is a cornerstone of our digital strategy, enabling us to design solutions around customer needs. Since adopting this approach we have built up a wide range of applications, and our Digital Team is now highly skilled at engaging with services to build out solutions that meet their needs. Our approach has delivered significant savings to the Councils and reduced reliance on costly, inflexible third party legacy systems.
- Our low code platform helps us deliver our commitments in Platforms, particularly in relation to Platform 4, Good Services & New Solutions and Platform 2 Thriving People & Communities.