

**REPORT TO: CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 20 NOVEMBER 2023**

**REPORT ON: PROCUREMENT OF A CONTRACT FOR BEREAVEMENT SERVICES ADMINISTRATION SOFTWARE**

**REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

**REPORT NO: 257-2023**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of a sourcing strategy for the procurement process for a new Bereavement Services administration software system and to seek approval to commence a compliant procurement process, leading to award of a contract.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee: -

- (a) Approves the commencing of a procurement exercise in respect of the project described, based on the sourcing strategy, summarised in this report
- (b) Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to award a contract to the successful bidder, following a procurement process carried out in compliance with the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations of 2015 and a review of the suitability of available services on Crown Commercial Services (CCS) GCloud framework.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 Based on market testing carried out, the total cost of the contracts awarded is anticipated to be £175,000. Any material deviation from this sum, resulting from the procurement process that is above the amount allowed for contingencies, will require further approval from this Committee, prior to the contract being awarded.

3.2 The total projected cost of the purchase and implementation of the new software system is estimated at £85,000 to be funded from the IT provision in the 2023-28 Capital Plan.

3.3 Annual support costs of the new software system are estimated at £18,000 and will be met from existing Neighbourhood Services revenue budgets.

3.4 Staffing costs to support the deployment of the products to be met from existing Corporate Services and Neighbourhood Services staffing budgets.

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 This report supports the Council's Digital Strategy 2023-27 which was approved at Policy and Resources Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 (Report 141-2023 ). The Councils Digital strategy sets out to increase Council services to be delivered through integrated end to end Digital & IT services.

- 4.2 Dundee City Council has statutory duties in terms of the Burial and Cremations (Scotland) Act 2016. Approximately 620 burials/interments are administered by the Council in a typical year. As well as statutory duties, the process is one of great sensitivity requiring processes of maximum efficiency and ease of use to Citizens.
- 4.3 The current Burials database was developed in house approximately 20 years ago and has limitations in relation to the management of information and reporting features. The system is used to manage the diary bookings and process data for burials; it then produces daily work lists detailing the individual requirements for each funeral taking place. The system acts as a database for records; this database provides permanent statutory registers in compliance with Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016. Since the system has been in place, very little has evolved within that timeframe. This results in limited, dated functionality and an increased reliance on paper-led processes and supplementary paper records. The Service faces continuing increasing demand and as such must find ways to improve efficiency, mitigate risks, and lower the likelihood of errors which could open the Council to reputational damage and/or legal challenges.
- 4.4 Audit report 2021-13 recommended improvements and enhancements in a number of areas including user access, private sales, funeral director invoicing, burial schedules, reporting, and family history searches. Whilst enhancements were possible to ensure security within the system most of these cannot be achieved within the current system.
- 4.5 It would not be practical (if indeed possible), to modernise this current system to improve overall efficiency through joined up processes or to provide any customer self-service facilities.
- 4.6 A new system requires to be procured which will bring the following benefits and improvements in enabling Dundee City Council to meet its statutory duties. Improvements include: -
- Reduction of labour-intensive processes which are often paper based and require increased scrutiny to remove errors.
  - Consolidation of all related data in a single database including for example headstone safety information which is currently held in discrete spreadsheets.
  - Digitisation of cemetery plans and maps, it is a legal requirement to hold such information with current plans in paper format, some in poor condition
  - Digitisation of the links between maps and plot records
  - Digitisation of the management of memorials
  - Digitisation of the supply of the funeral schedule to cemetery operatives
  - Digitisation of Funeral Director access to the system
  - Improve the quality and availability of associated reports
  - Increase ease of Family History searches with the potential of increased revenue to the Council for this service
- 4.7 Neighbourhood Services staff in liaison with People Services and Customer Services & IT staff have researched the market and identified excellent marketplace options proven

in comparable authorities which can provide all the benefits and improvements identified.

- 4.8 A procurement exercise will be carried out to identify a new system which will provide the Council best quality at the best price.

**5.0 SOURCING STRATEGY SUMMARY**

- 5.1 The objective is to establish of modern communication channels by the Council. Greatly increasing the attraction of and facilities provided by the Council to interact digitally with the Council.
- 5.2 Procurement will be carried in a compliant manner (purchased from Crown Commercial Services (CCS) GCloud framework. The UK Government administered CCS provides the G-Cloud framework. The is a service enabling buying of digital services within the public sector which saves time and money for the taxpayer. Procurement, in collaboration with IT and Neighbourhood Services have reviewed the available suppliers of this software.
- 5.3 The opportunity will include a section, to be evaluated on how suppliers can contribute to Community Wealth Building in Dundee.
- 5.4 The proposed Service Evaluation Methodology is as follows

Compliance

<u>Compliance (in full) with the specification of Requirements</u>
Bidding Organisations must meet all mandatory requirements. (Pass/Fail).

Only those suppliers meeting compliance requirements will proceed to the evaluation stage.

Evaluation

The Services will be evaluated based on the most economically advantageous Service having regard to the Price and Quality of the Service, as follows: Quality 60% and Price 40%.

Quality elements to be measured includes:

- Services to meet the Councils specification of requirements
- Project Plan
- Community Benefits.

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

Description of Risk	Actions required to manage Risk
<b>Commercial Risk</b> – That either the price objectives are not achieved up front or there are other costs that arise during the contract and diminish the overall benefits.	The Council's specification will contain all the works expected for the contractor to undertake to allow for most accurate pricing.

<b>Technical Risk</b> – This concerns the difficulty in being able to specify the desired outcome and on the market being unable to deliver to the specification	The technical specification will be included within specification, the procurement is for cloud-based services and will consider cyber security and information protection requirements.
<b>Performance Risk</b> – This concerns the ability of suppliers to perform consistently over the life of the contract to deliver the planned benefits	The contract will contain a number of KPIs governing service response times.
<b>Contractual Risk</b> – Being able to remedy the shortcomings in the contractor’s performance without severely damaging the contract and about avoiding reliance on the contracted supplier as the contract develops.	The contract will put a reliance on contractors but there will be reviews and contact with the contractor to assure the fulfilment of duties.
<b>Procurement Risk</b> – where a procurement is found unsound in law, through the public procurement rules	Procurement will be carried in a compliant manner using Crown Commercial Services G-Cloud framework.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The approval of this report will allow for procurement to begin as soon as possible, the delivery of process efficiencies within the Council and improvements in service and choice to citizens and businesses.

## 8.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

## 9.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

## 10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

**Date: 20 NOVEMBER 2023**