

REPORT 7

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CABINET MEETING OF 8 SEPTEMBER 2020

PUBLIC REPORT: Y

EXEMPT REPORT: Appendix A is exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12 (A) of the Local Government Act, 1972

Report Title	Customer Portal Procurement
KEY DECISION	Yes
Report Author	Rachael Felts, Service Manager (Customer Services and Engagement) and Project Manager for Customer Portal
Purpose of Report	To seek approval from Cabinet to award the customer portal contract in line with officer recommendations
Reason for Decision	To enable the implementation of a new customer portal to support the Council's digital transformation programme, which is referred to as the Smarter Services Programme (SSP).
Portfolio (holder)	Councillor Dann
Corporate Priorities	<p>The Harborough District Corporate Plan 2018-2021 commits to several objectives that underline the need for a digital transformation programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation / Proactive / Efficient• Enable more online services• Increase income, deliver Savings• Increase benefit from management information• Drive continuous improvement• Improve external communications and transparency
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smarter Services Programme holds the budget for the customer portal procurement.• The budget for the programme was approved by Members as part of the budget setting process in February 2020• The company recommended by officers falls within budget - Appendix A (Exempt).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential saving to be made through improved online services, customers self-serving and increased efficiencies in service delivery • Savings could also be made through the non-renewal of software annual charges and maintenance costs for current systems, as the new customer portal can provide these.
Risk Management Implications	As set out in the body of this report found at item 8
Environmental Implications	None
Legal Implications	<p>The chosen route for procurement was the Crown Commercial Services GCloud framework.</p> <p>G-Cloud was set up by Central Government in 2012 to provide a procurement framework for cloud hosted services that vastly reduces the time and cost to local authorities.</p> <p>The procurement process consists of four stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Request for Information (RFI) 2. Demonstrations 3. Invitation to present formal proposal 4. Selection and Award <p>Further details are set out in the body of this report found at item 5</p>
Equality Implications	A statement has been prepared following liaison with the Council's Equalities and Diversity Officer and is set out in the body of this report at item 7.
Data Protection Implications	These have been considered as part of the procurement process.
Consultation	<p>The Portfolio Holder has been consulted.</p> <p>To support the Smarter Services Programme, in March 2020 the Council began to engage with residents about accessing services. An outline of the key findings can be found below in the body of this report.</p> <p>As part of the GCloud procurement process, references were sort from other local authorities.</p> <p>The Council's Commissioning Officer, the Council's Equality and Diversity Officer and the Council's Section</p>

	151 Officer have consulted and have provided specialist advice and guidance.
Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To award the contract in-line with officers' recommendations as outlined in Appendix A (Exempt). 2. To not approve the awarding of the contract. This is not recommended as it would impact the delivery of the Smarter Services Programme, previously approved by Members.
Background Papers	<p>To inform the procurement panel's decision they referred to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the demonstrations and scenarios presentations by each company held during July • the Request for Information documentation supplied by each company • information provided other local authorities as part of the 'reference request' process
Recommendation	Based on the procurement process and full evaluation of each company, the officers' recommendation is to award the customer portal contract to company B as found at Appendix A (Exempt).

1. Introduction

1.1 Harborough District Council (HDC) launched the 'Smarter Services Programme' (the SSP), a long-term Programme aimed at improving the services provided to residents and businesses and to make working practices more efficient in order to tackle the growing demand for services. The Smarter Services Strategy was approved by Cabinet in February 2020.

1.2 The Harborough District Corporate Plan 2018-2021 commits to a number of objectives that underline the need for a digital transformation programme:

- Innovation / Proactive / Efficient
- Increase Income, Deliver Savings
- Increase benefit from management information
- Drive continuous improvement
- Improve external communications and transparency

1.3 As part of the Smarter Services Programme, the Council identified the need to procure a hosted customer portal as part of its target technology portfolio, to act as a single interface for its customer and customer service base and a primary system for staff. This would provide an enhanced customer experience, allow the Council to offer more services on a 24/7 basis and meet the expectations of

our customers. In addition, it will enable more customers to interact with the Council digitally and as such efficiencies in service delivery can be realised.

- 1.4 This portal would enable the Council to develop its online presence and seek to re-configure its operational services to provide more seamless and efficient delivery.
- 1.5 At a time when the district is growing significantly, this will allow the Council to channel more of its effort into designing new ways of delivering services that can cope with increased demand.
- 1.6 The procurement initially started in January 2020. Due to Covid-19 the procurement was paused in March 2020 and restarted in July 2020.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To award the customer portal contract to company B as recommended by officers at Appendix A (Exempt).

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The purchase a new cloud-based customer portal supports the delivery and objectives of the Smarter Services Programme previously approved by Cabinet in February 2020.
- 3.2 A customer portal will improve the customers experience when contacting the Council or 'shopping for services'.
- 3.3 Through a 'My Account' functionality the customer portal helps customers know exactly where to go to find information; customers can view, track information/ services or access important documents on their own.
- 3.4 A customer portal can help facilitate customer engagement - improve engagement by empowering customers to interact with the Council when and where it is convenient for them.
- 3.5 Enable improved responsiveness to online customer requests due to streamline service processes; enabling customers to easily self-serve and pay online.

4 Key Facts

- 4.1 An internal project team was established to manage the procurement of the customer portal. This consisted of five senior officers and one chief officer.

- 4.2 Following the Council's principles for project management, a business case and project initiation document were developed and approved by the Corporate Management Team.
- 4.3 Digital transformation is a lot more than enhancing the online channel. It is a programme that will transform end-to-end delivery of services and put in place a new service delivery model for the Council, within the bounds of what has to be done by statute and modelled around continuously improving and adapting services around changing customer and business needs.
- 4.4 The expectation is that customer services can support and use the customer portal to deliver their service delivery, whilst also being able to provide seamless service to people who 'shift channel' from telephone or face to face channels to online. This also allows the telephone and face to face channels to deal with more complex issues and supporting vulnerable customers.
- 4.5 The customer portal does not at this stage involve replacing back office systems, however to allow integration with these systems to reduce the manual inputting currently required between systems.
- 4.6 The introduction of a modern cloud-based customer portal would provide the Council with a solution that provides data exchange between the customer portal and the back-office system. This also facilitates access to information and data out of hours. It would also work directly with the Council's website to provide a seamless and powerful set of tools with which to build online services.
- 4.7 Key components are cloud based. For example, office 365 has already been introduced and provides mobile access to office applications including diary, email and documents through multiple devices including phones and tablets. This allows mobile and flexible working for those core applications.
- 4.8 The customer portal will allow the Council to develop end to end services or automation of services and will enable increased financial transactions and the development of a customer 'My Account' service.
- 4.9 As well as supporting the delivery of the Smarter Services Programme objectives, the benefits the customer portal will deliver are:
 - Support automated workflows/processes resulting in efficiency service delivery
 - Support new mobile and flexible working practices of the Council
 - Support improved customer intelligence to help us design services to meet the needs of our customers
 - Support improved accessibility to data and reporting
 - Support location-based services to improve geographic data and information

- Support better customer experience of online services
- Potential saving through improved online services, customers self-serving and increased efficiencies in service delivery

5 Legal Issues

- 5.1 The chosen route for procurement was the Crown Commercial Services GCloud framework. G-Cloud was set up by Central Government in 2012 to provide a procurement framework for cloud hosted services that vastly reduces the time and cost to local authorities. By using this framework the Council has been able to pre-assess several hundred potential suppliers based on their catalogue offerings, which produced a targeted shortlist of suppliers with whom the Council could then engage.
- 5.2 The procurement process consists of four stages:
1. Request for Information (RFI)
 2. Demonstrations
 3. Invitation to present formal proposal
 4. Selection and Award
- 5.3 Request for Information (RFI) is a document used to allow suppliers to evaluate if they believe they can meet the core set of requirements for the system and to register their interest in providing a demonstration. The RFI consists of a simple yes/no set of questions that the supplier will need to legitimately answer yes to all questions to proceed to the next stage - demonstrations.
- 5.4 Five suppliers returned fully completed RFI which met the Council's core requirements. These were considered by the Project Team which agreed that all five should proceed to the next stage.
- 5.5 Covid-19 paused the procurement process in March 2020. The procurement was restarted in July 2020. At this point one of the five suppliers withdrew from the procurement, leaving four potential suppliers.
- 5.6 Demonstrations to the Project Team were held with four potential suppliers during July 2020. Each supplier was asked to present five scenarios that were designed to test some of the key features of the solution being presented. This was also the opportunity for suppliers to discuss in more detail the Council's requirements ahead of the formal proposal stage.
- 5.7 All four potential suppliers satisfied the Project Team that they would be able to provide a solution in line with the specification of requirements and were asked to provide a formal proposal which will include full and detailed costings. During this evaluation process the Council may require further clarification and or evidence from potential suppliers.

- 5.8 As part of the process the Project Team requested references from the potential suppliers. Due to covid-19 site visits were not possible, so 'Microsoft Teams' meetings were held with different councils across the country who were using one of the four potential systems.
- 5.9 The Project Team held an evaluation meeting to review and score all the formal proposals. To inform the Project Team's decision they referred to the demonstrations and scenarios sessions held during July and the Request for Information documentation supplied by each company. The Project Team also used information provided to them through the references requests to help with any clarity/further detail.
- 5.10 The customer portal will underpin the transformation of services through the delivery of the Smarter Service Programme, so the Council needed to ensure that the system could fully fulfil that role. Therefore, the scoring was weighted at 80% for quality (which was broken-down into functionality 50% and non-functionality/other requirements 30%), and 20% on price.
- 5.11 From this exercise company B as noted in Appendix A (Exempt) was identified as the preferred supplier/solution.
- 5.12 Should Cabinet approve the awarding of this contract, the Council will procure the solution through the Crown Commercial Services GCloud framework. Feedback to unsuccessful suppliers will be provided upon request.
- 5.13 As part of the legal process to procure the customer portal, the Council's legal and finance teams will undertake all necessary financial checks on the company and consider any implications concerning the UK leaving the EU.

6 Resource Issues

- 6.1 Within the budget to support the delivery of the Smarter Services Programme there is allocation for resources, which will help with the implementation and delivery of the customer portal.
- 6.2 The Council's Digital Information Officer will support the implementation and day to day management of the customer portal.
- 6.3 Potential saving to be made through improved online services with customers self-serving. Increased efficiencies within service areas as each workstream/service is developed within the customer portal.
- 6.4 Savings could also be made through the non-renewal of current software annual charges and maintenance costs which the new customer portal can provide.

7 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

- 7.1 The customer portal will enable the organisation to have a stronger focus on pro-active service delivery which should have a positive impact on equality and diversity.
- 7.2 With better analytics about customer engagement which the customer portal will provide, the Council can develop a more sophisticated understanding of its customer engagement/profile.
- 7.3 The customer portal will enable customers who prefer to access online services to do so, which in-turn will enable other customer service channels to focus more on supporting vulnerable people.
- 7.4 An Equality Impact Statement was completed for the Smarter Service Programme and supported by the Equalities Officer.

8. Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 The implementation of a customer portal will enable the delivery of the Smarter Services Programme, previously approved by Members.
- 8.2 The customer portal underpins the development of online services and mobile and flexible working.
- 8.3 The customer portal will be more efficient to tackle the growing demand for online services from our citizens.
- 8.4 The procurement of the customer portal is at odds with the Customer Services model envisaged by our partner at Charnwood. Discussions have already been held with Charnwood, and they are content with the Council's approach.
- 8.5 The project has a risk log which is regularly reviewed a part of the project management process. Most of the risks are mitigated, and the relevant legal and financial checks will ensure the successful contractor is robust and able to provide the services required.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 A cross section of operational and strategic staff have been consulted as part of the procurement.
- 9.2 In March 2020, the Council started to engagement with citizens on how they accessed council services. The survey was available online and paper copies

were available. Due to Covid-19, this engagement paused – during this time, approximately six weeks, 131 responses were received.

- 9.3 From the small sample of responses, it showed there was a strong appetite for using the website to perform transactions. The Council's website is the most heavily used source of information about HDC's services. There is scope for improvements to encourage more website transactions, which the customer portal will help provide.
- 9.4 There has been extensive consultation with staff and Members about delivery of the Smarter Service Programme of which this customer portal procurement is a key part.

10. Options

10.1 As noted in the above table.

11 Background Papers

11.1 Smarter Services Strategy approved by Cabinet in February 2020

Previous report(s):

- Smarter Services Strategy – Cabinet – February 2020

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Y – Appendix A Exempt

Ward Members Notified: n/a

Appendices

- Appendix A – Evaluation and Costing (**Exempt**)