

Harborough District Council

Report 6 to Cabinet Meeting of 16 January 2023



Title:	Core Business Systems Software
Status:	Public Appendix B is exempt not for publication by virtue of paragraph 8/9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.
Key Decision:	Yes
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Portfolio Holder:	Cllr James Hallam - Finance
Appendices:	Appendix A - HDC Idox System Review 1.0 Appendix B - Annual Cost Breakdown

Executive Summary

- i. Idox Uniform, Document Management System, Public Access & Total Land Charges are essential pieces of software used for the day-to-day operation of services across the Council.
- ii. This report recommends entering a new contract with the supplier of these systems for a period of 4 years. It also recommends that the systems are provided from Idox's external, private data centres rather than from inside The Symington Building.
- iii. The cost of an off-site software solution is higher for the Council than anticipated however it has been mitigated by savings from the ICT Transformation Programme. If the proposed software solution is agreed, the Council will be able to move away from the Citrix log in process and minimise the back-end infrastructure required. Further, there will be a reduced call upon limited internal resource time for system and technical support, especially during upgrades. Adoption of the cloud based software solution will provide improved availability of the Public Access system, used by the public to track their planning applications.
- iv. This new solution is in line with the ICT Strategy Principles.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet awards the contract to supply hosted software including Uniform, Document Management System, Public Access & Total Land Charges for a period of 4 years, with a 2 year extension if required, to Idox Software Ltd.

Reasons for Recommendations

- v. Robust and integrated software packages are essential for the day to day running of a wide variety of services across the Council. A review of the Council requirements and possible solutions in the market took place in Q4 2021. It identified that limited alternatives to the Idox products are available, especially when investigating solutions that fit with the ICT Strategy Principles.
- vi. All options for the future provision of integrated software solutions were comprehensively assessed in an outline business case prepared in March 2022. The business case had regard to the cost of moving to an alternative solution, the functionality required across multiple Service Areas and the key dependencies required for the ICT Transformation Programme. It was concluded that the Idox software solution was the most appropriate for the Council.

Purpose of Report

1. To recommend award of a contract that will provide business critical software supporting the day to day functioning of the Council.

Background

2. The Council relies heavily upon software solutions provided by Idox Software Limited (“Idox”), including Idox Uniform, Document Management System, Public Access & Total Land Charges, for the provision of services across the Council. The current contract with Idox is to provide this software to the Council where it is hosted in the server room in The Symington Building. This agreement has been in place for the last 7 years and therefore the Council’s internal processes are heavily aligned with the software. It expires in March 2023.
3. The ICT Strategy agreed by Council in 2021 promoted moving all possible software and services out of the central server room at the Symington Building to other ‘cloud based’ services. This improves flexibility for Members and staff accessing systems and therefore how services are delivered by the Council. Accordingly, the imminent expiry of the existing contract provides the Council with the opportunity to ensure future software is procured in compliance with the current ICT Strategy.

Details

4. A review of the Council requirements and possible solutions in the market took place in Q4 2021 with results presented to the Corporate Management Team. Appendix A shows the detail and results of that process. The market alternatives for these software packages are very limited, especially when investigating solutions that fit with the ICT Strategy Principles. The review included meetings with all Service Areas that use the Idox suite of products to gather requirements. A new system overview and documentation was produced and can be seen in Appendix A. This was used as a basis to look at alternative solutions, whether for part of the system or as a whole package.
5. As shown in appendix A, market testing was completed using this information along with an outline business case taking into consideration the cost of moving to an alternative solution, the functionality required across Service Areas and the key dependencies required for the ICT Transformation Programme, namely the need to decommission the hardware that the current software runs on. The recommendation was to pursue the Hosted Uniform solution.

6. Advantages and disadvantages of the hosted Idox solution are outlined on page 8 of Appendix A.
7. A further advantage that was identified after appendix A was published is that system upgrades will be managed by the supplier. Currently there are 20 upgrades planned over the next 4 years. On average each of these upgrades requires 40 hours of IT engineering time. This would no longer be required and as such the reduction was calculated in the removal of a vacant post in ICT as part of the budget planning for 2022/23.
8. A Breakdown of the annual costs can be found in Appendix B. The year 1 costs are to be met from within the capital programme with years 2 to 4 being split across revenue budgets in the same manner as the current contract (shared across multiple service areas).

Implications

Corporate Priorities

9. Place and Community key activities KA.01.01 & 02, around delivery and digitalisation of services, are reliant on our main business applications being fit for purpose and able to interact with each other in order to streamline internal and external processes. This decision will allow the Council to continue with these improvements and integrations with other organisations. For example, this will allow data to continue to be shared with the Leicestershire Building Control partnership.

Financial

10. Year 1 costs are to be met from within the capital programme with years 2 to 4 being split across revenue budgets in the same manner as the current contract (shared across multiple service areas).

Legal

11. The nature and value of the services to be procured are such that they are subject to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("PCR 2015"). However, the proposed procurement strategy is to undertake a direct award through the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework. This framework has been established following compliance with public sector procurement regulations, and is established to help buyers across the public sector reduce time and costs. The requirements of PCR 2015 are therefore satisfied by using this framework.
12. The commercial agreement has standardised contract terms. As part of the legal process to procure the services, the Council's Legal Services team will advise as necessary and input into contract signature post award.

Policy

13. This is in line with the ICT Strategy agreed by Council in 2021, specifically the 'Cloud First' guiding principle meaning that hosted solutions are considered before any others.

Environmental Implications

14. Due to the 'lift and shift' nature of the implementation the same level of energy is expected to be used for the new system and therefore a neutral impact in achieving net zero.

Risk Management

15. Not awarding the contract would leave us exposed contractually after March 2023. The systems detailed in Appendix A would no longer work with a significant impact on service delivery. A short term extension to the current contract could be negotiated with the current supplier.
16. Not awarding the contract would mean the failure of a key dependency for the ICT Transformation Programme, reducing the committed savings from BC25.

Equalities Impact

17. None, the hosted systems will present to staff, members and residents in the same way as the current systems.

Data Protection

18. The supplier's hosted environment complies with the Council's ICT security requirements. Should the contract be awarded a full data protection assessment will be done as part of the onboarding process.

Consultation

19. Page 14 of Appendix A shows the workshops and interviews that took place with Council Service Areas.

Alternative Options Considered

20. The options considered as part of the review are outlined on page 8 of Appendix A. These were:
 - a. Remaining As-Is (on premise system)
 - b. HDC Hosted (moving the current system into our own cloud infrastructure)
 - c. Supplier Cloud (moving to new software in the cloud)

Background papers

HDC – ICT Strategy v2.0