

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

Decision to be taken by: Adam Barnes Head of Communications

Pursuant to an authorisation in the council's Scheme of Delegation: GEN1 – To enter into any contract for works and the supply of goods and services

Report title: The re-procurement of website hosting and support

The decision	<p>Having consulted with Cllr Hawthorne, Leader of the Council:</p> <p>DECISION</p> <p>To award without further competition a call-off contract for the supply of hosting and content management services for the county council's corporate website and all connected sub sites under Lot 1c of the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821 - Data and Application Solutions to Public Partnerships (PPL), a trading name of Public Consulting Group UK Limited in accordance with the direct award criteria thereunder.</p> <p>The proposed call-off contract shall continue for an initial period of four years and include the option to extend for two further periods of twelve months each.</p>
Background documents	
Reasons for the decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC's) current website hosting and content management services contract expires in June 2023 and has already been extended twice2. GCC's current website is built on version 7 of Umbraco's CMS. This becomes 'end of life in September 2023 and therefore must be upgraded to a more current version, Umbraco 10 or 11.3. The Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821 - Data and Application Solutions (the Framework), allows both a mini competition process or a direct award, both of which are fully compliant with the PCR 2015.4. A direct award can be completed where the requirement of the Council is intrinsically linked to a system already within the customer's organisation and the products are present on the Government eMarketplace. The specified Order Form must be completed as set out in the Framework Guidance.

	<p>5. The Council's current system was built and is maintained by PPL. PPL have designed bespoke templates for the Council as part of the contract. In accordance with the Framework direct award procedure, the Council's requirements are intrinsically linked to the Council's current system and the products provided by PPL are available on the Government eMarketplace under the Framework. Legal have been involved in preparing the relevant call-off Order Form in accordance with the Framework.</p> <p>6. PPL's solution available via the Framework is compatible with our pre-determined statement of requirements. Due to intellectual property involved in the bespoke template design created by PPL under the current contract, the Council's templates cannot be made by another supplier. A new supplier would be required to undertake bespoke development to create new templates for the council's website, which would substantially increase the costs to the Council.</p> <p>7. The extension options in the current contract have been exhausted and the Council's current website is under an unsupported version of Umbraco which puts the Council's website at risk. The unsupported version cannot be used from September 2023 and would leave th council without a corporate website.</p> <p>8. A procurement process cannot be conducted due to the timescales required in relation to development of a new website and templates as well as migration of the Council's current website to the new version.</p> <p>9. This direct award process is compliant with the Framework and the PCR 2015.</p>
<p>Resource implications</p>	<p>The total value of the contract over the four years, including the two 12 months extensions, should these options be taken up, is estimated to be approximately £390,000. A breakdown of costs is set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade to Umbraco 11 (one off) = £42,000 • Migration costs (one off) £75,000 • Hosting and maintenance £45,000 per annum x 4+1+1 = 6 = £270,000 <p>Total cost: £387,000</p>
<p>Who has been Consulted?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Leader of the Council • Internal support services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Procurement

- Legal Services
- Information Management Service
- ICT
- Communications

What were their comments?

- Strategic Procurement has confirmed that this procurement is necessary, and that this approach is a fair and transparent
- ICT has confirmed that the necessary funding is available for the annual hosting and maintenance costs. The two one-off costs are being met corporately and will be spread over the lifetime of the contract
- ICT, Legal and IMS have all been involved with the development of the various documents referenced above and signed them off as meeting all their requirements
- Leader of the Council, Cllr Mark Hawthorne is supportive of the decision

Background/Context

1. To support residents, businesses and other interested parties to engage and interact with the council in a way and at times that suits them, it is essential for the council to continue to have a modern, effective online presence.
2. Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) website offers residents, businesses, partners and other interested parties 24/7 access to information on council services and other essential advice and guidance, public consultations, details of decision making (historical and future) and other democratic information, grant and funding information, business advice, news, and details of all the council's long term plans and strategies.
3. As such, GCC's website is a vital part of its ability to communicate and engage effectively with people and organisations across the county and beyond.
4. GCC's current website hosting and content management services contract expires in June 2023 and no further compliant options to extend are available
5. GCC's current website is built on version 7 of Umbraco's content management system (CMS). This becomes 'end of life' and unsupported in September 2023 and therefore there is a need to upgrade to a later version, Umbraco 10 or 11 which will require content migration from the current site to a new one.
6. To ensure up to date security software is in place, it is ICT's position that all GCC's digital services should be hosted on either the most recent version of the CMS or the version that can immediately before it e.g., Version 11 or Version 10

7. Therefore, GCC needs to secure a new contact to deliver its website hosting, development and support needs and the required CMS upgrade and associated transfer of website content.
8. Statements of requirements have all been developed and agreed with ICT, IMS, Communications and external legal advisors.
9. Achieving a website provider via a direct award helps GCC to minimise the impact of recent inflationary price increases as the prices in the Call-Off contract are fixed for the duration of the agreement.
10. Continuing with the existing provider will reduce resource and training costs to the Council as web editors and web authors can continue to operate within familiar systems and templates.
11. PPL as a provider delivers a good fit with GCC's stated requirements, delivering the key functionality needed for Gloucestershire residents to effectively utilise the council's corporate websites
12. Clear and measurable SLAs have been developed to ensure value for money and effective service delivery. These will be monitored through regular contact management meetings with the provider.
13. It will be the responsibility of the new Supplier to have developed and tested a new customer website to go live by September 2023.
14. The recommended approach is to award a four year contract to PPL (current provider) through Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821 – Data and Application Solutions Lot 1c which allows a direct award as the requirement is intrinsically linked to a system owned by GCC and the services are present on the Government eMarketplace.
15. External legal advisors have been consulted on and have drafted the Call-Off Contract for these services.
16. This approach ensures the procurement can be completed within the timeline available, 22nd February 2023 before the Framework CCS 3821 expires.
17. This approach will also ensure the migration work and new website can be delivered ahead of Umbraco 7, the current CMS version in use, becoming unsupported.
18. This award process is compliant with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the CCS Framework provides a compliant route to market.
19. The following options for re procurement of this contract were considered:

Option 1 - Award a four year contract with the option of two 12 month extensions to PPL (current provider)

Procure through the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821 - Data and Application Solutions Lot 1c which is available for GCC to purchase goods and services and allows a direct award to PPL (current provider) who is a supplier under Lot 1c of the Framework.

Option 2 - Mini- Competition through the Crown Commercial Services Data and Application Solutions Lot 1c.

Benefits:

- Greater choice of products and expanded service provision
- Extensive range of high-quality suppliers
- Call-Off contracts can be awarded for a duration specified by the Council.

Issues (already occurred) and Risks (potential issues):

- An elongated procurement process will mean that current arrangement must be extended. There is no ability to extend the current contract and the current version of the system is unsupported.
- The timescales to implement a new system with a new supplier cannot be complied with and the Council would be left without a corporate public facing website.

Option 3 – build, host and manage GCC's website needs 'In house'

GCC does not have sufficient in house skills, expertise, or capacity to deliver and maintain a website of the scale required to meet GCC's needs.

Option 4 - No longer have a website

GCC's website is a vital communication and engagement channel. Not having an online presence would not be in line with customer expectations and preference and significantly hamper the ability for GCC to communicate and engage with residents and businesses. It would also mean GCC not meeting the Government's digital expectations of local authorities.

20 Recommendation

The recommended approach is to award a four year contract with the option of two 12 month extensions to PPL (current provider) through a call off from the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821 - Data and Application Solutions Lot 1c which allows for a direct award.

This approach ensures the procurement can be completed within the timeline available, 22nd February 2023 before the Framework CCS 3821 expires.

Risk Analysis

- CCS 3821 expires 22nd February 2023
- Current contract ends June 2023
- Umbraco 7 becomes 'end of life' in September 2023
- Future significant CMS upgrades and associated costs

Equalities considerations

We will include appropriate mandatory requirements within the spec to make sure the system is compliant with up-to-date Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

To minimise the risk of creating digital exclusion, any information on the website that is essential (for example, related to a consultation about a policy/service) would be provided to specific communities/service users in a variety of formats.

The Council will continue to make reasonable adjustments to enable any affected employees with the protected characteristics to use the system. No separate Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared in respect of this decision.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been completed? No

If 'Yes', please attached the signed Due Regard Statement.

Has any conflict of interest been declared by any Cabinet Member consulted on the decision?

No

If any conflict of interest declared, was a dispensation granted by the Audit and Governance Committee of the Council?

Date of dispensation:

Does this decision report form or any supporting papers provided contain confidential or exempt information?

No

Does this decision need to be published on the GCC website?

Yes

In coming to this decision, I have given due and full regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”) by reference to the law itself.

Having fully considered all available information, I have decided to reject any alternative options and take the recommended decision(s), for the reasons set out in this report.

Signed



Adam Barnes

Head of Communications

Date 23/12/2022

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