

Key Decision Report of the Corporate Director Resources

Officer Key Decision	Date: 17 December 2021	Ward(s): n/a
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Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
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SUBJECT: Contract award for Digital Experience Platform software

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This contract is for the provision of a Digital Experience Platform (DEP), Customer Identity Services and the support and maintenance of the solutions. It will also contain a provision to 'call-off' additional services and modules that will be required to enhance the online offering. The platform will provide our residents with consistent, secure, and personalised access to online services and information provided by the council. Associated with this procurement will be the transition of services from the aging My eAccount platform to this service.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To authorise direct award for a call off contract via the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) G-Cloud 12 (RM1557) procurement framework to system vendor, Granicus-Firmstep Limited "Lot 2: Cloud Software". This will provide support and maintenance and system hosting for the Digital Experience Platform and associate components/services. The contract will run

for a minimum period of 24 months to commence after 28 January 2022, with the option to extend for a further two periods of 12 months each.

3. Date the decision is to be taken:

24 January 2022

4. Background

4.1 Nature of the service

A Digital Experience Platform will be a council-wide solution comprising of a set of integrated technologies, which will enable the council to build, deploy and continually improve the services we offer to residents through an online customer portal. An existing in-house developed system 'My eAccount' currently fulfils this service alongside a range of other technologies powering the council website and line-of-business applications. This contract will allow the council to implement a modern solution that can expand to provide a consistent and improved online experience for residents of the borough.

4.2 Customer Identity capabilities will provide a common approach to customer identity, automating the authentication and verification of customers when accessing different services and line of business applications across the council. A new contract with an improved solution will allow the council to introduce new online services that are not possible with the existing solution.

4.3 The council's Technology Roadmap entails a shift from maintaining onsite Information Technology infrastructure in favour of systems that are hosted by suppliers and/or provided as a service that includes system hosting known as SaaS (Software as a Service). This approach avoids periodic spikes in investment followed by degradation in technology performance. Hosted and cloud services are expected to provide enhanced resilience, performance, and accessibility of systems. Business systems are kept up to date by vendors allowing services to make full use of available compute power and functions provided by these software applications.

4.4 This contract will allow the council to deliver the technology capabilities that support the Resident Experience Programme in achieving their objectives to transform the council's interactions with local residents and the community through the digital offer.

4.5 Estimated Value

Typically, new online services configured in the platform, including those migrated from current technologies, will undergo an investigation and design phase. This will define the components and services required for the delivery of that particular online service offer. As such, the nature of this agreement lends itself to a call-off contract – in which services can be drawn down at an appropriate time to meet the council's needs.

4.6 The estimated total value of the call-off contract is £1,391,918 and will entail a minimum 24-month duration, with two 12-month extensions available. The contract will be comprised of annual commitments for the base platform and of the additional components (as required) and one-off costs for services that can be "called-off" through the duration of the contract.

The contract expenditure below is estimated based on a phased implementation of the platform components across the 48-month contract duration. The exact profile will be subject to contract specification with the Supplier and the delivery plan for online services deployed into the new technology platform.

	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Total
Total Expenditure	£286,503	£350,745	£365,035	£389,635	£1,391,918

See Appendix 1 – Contract Expenditure for further detail.

- 4.7 Funding will come from the revenue ICT budgets and will be an increase in revenue expenditure and will avoid capital investment in replacing the existing on-premise solution. Failing to move systems to hosted IT infrastructure is likely to incur major investment in the council's IT provision and Data Centre facilities.
- 4.8 The services to be included within the call-off agreement will be within the following categories of expenditure (see Appendix 1 – Contract Expenditure for further detail):

Contract Expenditure Category	Description
Base Platform Ongoing Costs	Annual subscription charges for the foundation technical capabilities. This should be considered the base level commitment for the council Digital Experience Platform provision.
Base Platform One-off costs	Supplier technical and project management services to set up and implement base platform components.
Additional platform features Ongoing costs	Annual subscription charges for additional technical components or features.
Additional platform features One-off costs	Supplier technical and project management services to set up and implement additional platform components.
System development and training services One-Off costs	Technical services to develop the system and configure end-to-end digital processes, linking to other business systems. Training for staff to manage and access the platform. Provision is made for these services across the contract duration to implement the system, migrate services from My eAccount and enhance the resident experience over time.

- 4.9 The new "call-off" agreement will be made as a direct award under the CCS Government Digital Marketplace procurement framework (G-Cloud 12).
- 4.10 The current solution is hosted on premise and is supported in-house.
- 4.11 **Timetable**
The formal contract agreement will be completed after the 28 January 2022.

Key Dates:

- Key Decision – 21st January 2022
- Direct Award via the CCS framework agreement after 28 January 2022

4.12 Officers and officer groups consulted in evaluating the technologies and service offer:

- Assistant Director - Resident Experience/We Are Islington
- Director of Digital Services
- Resident Experience Programme (Fairer Together/Transformation Team)
- Information Governance Team
- Communications Team (Web Content)
- Commercials Manager, Digital Services (Procurement and Supply)
- Architecture and Security Manager (and Team), Digital Services
- Application Services Team, Digital Services

In addition to the above, a Lead from each directorate attended supplier demonstrations held as part of our market engagement. Feedback from these representatives informed clarifications requested of the suppliers' published service offer.

Prior to the market engagement the Digital Experience Platform has been identified as a crucial enabler of the council's Resident Experience Programme to deliver its objectives and support the council's Strategic Plan 2021. The Programme will play a critical role in delivering services via the Digital Experience Platform to ensure resident needs are met.

4.13 **Options appraisal**

The existing Customer Portal 'My eAccount' is a system developed in-house. It is built around bespoke IT development code that is now preventing the enhancement of the council's online offering. A primary concern is that this technology does not meet common standards that allow for easy integration with other line of business systems and their associated online digital modules. The council lacks the skills and knowledge to further develop the existing technology. Furthermore, there is risk to the sustainability and continuity of the existing solution for the same reasons.

4.14 This proposal seeks a direct award via Government Digital Marketplace procurement framework (CCS G-Cloud 12). An alternative procurement route would be to advertise our requirements and complete a competitive tender. However, the Crown Commercial Services G-Cloud 12 framework is targeted at service providers for these solutions, providing a pre-tendered marketplace. The published service offers available via the framework allow for filtering based on the council's requirements and then for further clarifications of the service offer to determine the supplier of best fit.

4.15 The steps taken to evaluate the suppliers available via the G-Cloud 12 framework, was as follows: -

- Shortlist on the key criteria
- Invite suppliers to demonstrate their system, including follow-up technical sessions
- Issue clarifications and receive responses based on the published service offer via G-Cloud.
- Evaluate service offers and select supplier of 'Best Fit'.

4.16 The benefits of the proposed route:

- Focus on solutions with local government experience and knowledge – understand our legal, data and technical requirements
- 'Out of the box' cloud offering supporting a rapid technology deployed
- Tried and tested 'out of the box' integrations available for line of business systems specific to local government statutory and non-statutory services
- Potential to release additional features as required and development capabilities
- Opportunity to refine and improve existing online services as they are migrated to the new platform
- Provide enhanced access to council services
- Potential to lower transactional cost and/or redirect staff effort to more complex resident contact
- Avoids renewal & capital investment costs to upgrade to the council's own datacentre infrastructure

Drawbacks of the proposed route:

- Increase in annual committed revenue spend – hosting/support

4.17 **Key Considerations**

Commitments to social value that will positively benefit the residents of the Borough will be considered with the supplier in specification of the call-off agreement.

4.18 Granicus-Firmstep Ltd have established an internal volunteer group 'Givicus UK'. Their aim is to raise money and awareness for charities across the UK and each quarter they will review how they can best champion and support different communities. Granicus also participates in local initiatives within the London Borough of Islington (LBI) with examples provided of support for disadvantaged children.

4.19 Granicus-Firmstep Ltd are located locally within Islington, employing 60 members of staff with a number who are Islington residents.

4.20 Granicus-Firmstep Ltd also works with environmentally responsible suppliers, including their hosting partner.

4.21 There is no TUPE, pensions or staffing implications expected from this contract.

4.22 **Evaluation**

The evaluation criteria guidance for selecting a supplier of best fit via the G Cloud-12 procurement framework is:

	G Cloud evaluation criteria
1	Whole life cost – the cost effectiveness, price and running costs of the service
2	Technical merit and functional fit – for example, coverage, network capacity and performance
3	After-sales service management – the helpdesk, account management function and assurance of supply of a range of services

4	Non-functional characteristics – for example, supplier terms, help with on-boarding and off-boarding, scalability, reliability, and automatic disaster recovery
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This was followed in the assessment of supplier service offer listings and associated clarification responses.

4.23 **Business Risks**

All customer/resident accounts will need to be migrated from My eAccount to the new platform. There is a risk of disruption through this process and all account holders will need to change their passwords. Through the discovery sessions with Granicus-Firmstep we will assess the migration options proposed and mechanisms to minimise disruption to residents and services.

- 4.24 Whilst the expectation is for the platform to deliver out of the box functionality, there is a significant amount of work required to create the end-to-end online services. This will require a considerable input from the council Service Areas.
- 4.25 One of the key benefits of using a solution that is designed for local government is that they have tried and tested integrations with key council line of business applications. However, configuring integrations and developing new integrations where there is no 'out of the box' available does have a time/cost/resource risk.
- 4.26 If the council experiences a poor service in the performance, reliability, and resilience during the life of the contract, this will have a detrimental impact on council service operations. This risk should be mitigated through Service Level Agreements (SLA) and any associated penalty clauses with the supplier. Business continuity planning by council services should already allow for these concerns. It is expected the service level provided in the new contract will be an enhancement on the current provision.
- 4.27 The Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklist) Regulations 2010 explicitly prohibit the compilation, use, sale, or supply of blacklists containing details of trade union members and their activities. Following a motion to full council on 26 March 2013, all tenderers will be required to complete an anti-blacklisting declaration. Where an organisation is unable to declare that they have never blacklisted, they will be required to evidence that they have 'self-cleansed'. The council will not award a contract to organisations found guilty of blacklisting unless they have demonstrated 'self-cleansing' and taken adequate measures to remedy past actions and prevent re-occurrences.
- 4.28 The following relevant information is required to be specifically approved in accordance with rule 2.8 of the Procurement Rules:

Relevant information	Information/section in report
1 Nature of the service	Digital experience platform, customer identity service to replace the existing My eAccount solution. See paragraph 4.1

2 Estimated values	<p>The estimated value of the contract is up to £1,391,918 The contract expenditure is estimated and based on a phased implementation of the platform components across the 48-month contract duration – see section 4.6 and Appendix 1 for a full breakdown.</p> <p>The agreement is proposed to run for a period of 2 years with an optional extension of two 12-month terms.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.6</p>
3 Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key Decision approved – 21 January 2022 - Contract to be agreed after – 28 January 2022 <p>See paragraph 4.11</p>
4 Options appraisal for tender procedure including consideration of collaboration opportunities	<p>Recommended Direct award via Government Digital Marketplace G-Cloud 12 procurement framework as per approved Procurement Strategy (03 September 2021).</p> <p>Alternative option for competitive tender – lengthy and market already limited in local authority Digital Experience Platforms.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.13</p>
5 Consideration of: Social benefit clauses. London Living Wage. Best value. TUPE, pensions, and other staffing implications	<p>Social benefit commitments will be considered will be sought through contract specification. The supplier has already cited work within the Borough.</p> <p>There are no TUPE, Pensions or Staffing implications expected from this contract.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.17 – 4.21</p>
6 Award criteria	<p>The Government Digital Marketplace framework, direct award call-off agreement.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.22</p>
7 Any business risks associated with entering the contract	<p>There are several key risks highlighted around the migration to the new platform. The expectation is that these will be mitigated through the design and delivery of individual online services as they are deployed into the Digital Experience Platform.</p> <p>See paragraph 4.23</p>
8 Any other relevant financial, legal, or other considerations.	N/A – please see section 5

5. Implications

5.1 Financial implications:

The current system is out of support and has no on-going budget associated with it. The implementation costs associated with the project will be fully funded from the Transformation Fund and a budget has been set aside for this. The annual costs will be met from with the Digital Service budget. Funding has been identified for this and will be kept under review to ensure that it meets the costs throughout the contract period.

Full details of the costs are shown in appendix 1.

5.2 Legal Implications:

- a) This report seeks approval of a procurement strategy for a contract of 2+1+1 years (a total maximum of 4 years). The estimated total value of the call-off contract is £1,391,918 via the G-Cloud Framework by direct award to Granicus-Firmstep Limited after a 'best-fit' consideration process of relevant providers on the framework.
- b) The council has power to enter into the proposed contract under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997, which enable the council to carry out any activity that is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions, and to enter contracts accordingly.
- c) The estimated value of the procurement is above the current financial threshold for service contracts under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Procurement by direct award via the G-Cloud Framework is compliant with the Regulations as a route to market.
- d) The value of the proposed contract is below £2m and therefore within the power of the Corporate Director to award, or by a Director if the power has been delegated to them (per Procurement Rule 18 and Appendix 3 to the council's Constitution)

5.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:

An Environmental Implications Assessment has been completed and considered as part of this procurement. The council has sought to minimise its environmental impact by selecting a supplier who uses a data centre with lower emission, lower energy usage and has a water-use strategy to conserve drinking water sources. This would not be possible had the council chosen to host the service through an on-premises data centre.

5.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A Resident Impact Assessment was completed on 17 December 2021 and the summary is included below. The complete Resident Impact Assessment is appended.

Summary

This report refers to the technical assessment of a Digital Experience Platform that will provide online services to residents. This was in part a response to both current technology risks and feedback via the Resident Experience Programme, which cited the need for an improved online

offer from the council. This initial feedback was based on a resident website survey December 2020 to January 2021, and subsequent work informed by this feedback for identifying improvements to online services.

The proposed solution will support the council in meeting accessibility standards for access to and the use of online resources. In the design of new online services to be deployed within the solution further resident engagement is expected.

6. Reasons for the decision: (summary)

- 6.1 The recommendation in this report is to approve the direct award to Granicus-Firmstep Limited for a Digital Experience Platform, which will enable the development and ongoing improvement of our online offering to residents. The decision is in line with the Council's IT application road map and the IDS vision of Islington having a cloud first Strategy.

7. Record of the decision:

- 7.1 I have today decided to take the decision set out in section 2 of this report for the reasons set out above.

Signed by:

Corporate Director Resources

Date XX/XX/2022

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Contract Expenditure (exempt from publication)
- Appendix 2 – Resident Impact Assessment (not exempt)

Background papers: None

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