

Decision maker:	Director of Children and Families
Decision date:	Wednesday, 18 March 2020
Title of report:	Contract for de-delegated schools budgeting software
Report by:	Strategic Finance Manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To renew the contract for the schools budget planning software for use by local authority maintained schools under the de-delegation funding arrangements approved by Schools Forum.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) The contract with the Access Group for the school budget planning software is renewed for the two year period from 1st April 2020 at a cost of £55,168 +VAT in accordance with the terms set out in the government's G-Cloud 11 framework contract;**
- (b) To note that the contract cost is fully met by schools under the de-delegation arrangements approved by Schools Forum;**
- (c) Options for extending the contract for a further one or two years be considered in December 2021.**

Alternative options

1. No alternative suppliers were identified on the government's G-Cloud 11 Framework contract as meeting the requirements of schools.
2. The alternative to the council purchasing the software on behalf of schools through a G-Cloud 11 framework is that schools would have to purchase the software individually if they wish to continue to use the software. This would be at least twice the cost of the G-Cloud contract as the published price for individual school purchases is significantly higher than the G-Cloud framework price. Additionally, the de-delegated funding would have to be returned to schools and the reasons for not purchasing through G-Cloud explained to Schools Forum. Paying twice the price of the G-Cloud contract would be difficult to justify and could lead to reputational damage to the council.

Key considerations

3. Schools Forum approved at their meeting on 17th January 2020 the de-delegation arrangements for the funding of the schools budgeting software at £400 per school and as the existing purchasing waiver expires in the 2019/20 financial year, a new contract is necessary.
4. It was originally agreed that the school budgeting software would be re-tendered in conjunction with the requirement for a school management information system. However, the school management information has been purchased separately and hence it has been necessary to source the school budgeting software contract from the government's G-Cloud 11 framework.
5. Six companies were identified from G-Cloud 11 as providing software suitable for schools and following clarification questions only one supplier, the Access Group was able to meet the necessary requirements.

Community impact

6. There is no direct impact on the community as the software provides a back office service to each school regarding budget planning services

Equality duty

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
7. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the

delivery of services. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

8. The contract costs are fully funded by schools through the de-delegation arrangements for computer licences at £400 per school as approved by Schools Forum. There are significant discounts to be achieved by the council contracting for the software on behalf of schools rather than schools purchasing individually. It is estimated the discount achieved is in the order of 50%.
9. The cost of the two year contract for 61 schools (including the PRU) is £55,168 +VAT.

Legal implications

10. The use of this software will enable maintained schools to meet their legal obligations to gather and retain information on budgets and securely transfer the same between other schools, the LA and other agencies. This software will support financial management in the council's maintained schools.
11. The renewal of the existing contract is considered to be a new contract for procurement purposes. Therefore the award of the contract to Access Group will be a direct award.
12. Given the value of the new contract will be more than £50,000, under the council's Contract Procedure Rules, the council would be ordinarily required a minimum 3 competitive quotes from "appropriately qualified and competent suppliers" or where 3 suppliers cannot be identified, the opportunity must be openly advertised or the purchase made via a compliantly let framework agreement. The G-Cloud 11 framework is such a compliant framework and therefore the requirements of the council's Contract Procedure Rules have been met.

Risk management

13. The G-Cloud 11 framework contract provides for a two year contract with extensions for a further one year and another one year. As Schools Forum can only make a decision on delegation for one year at a time there is a small risk that the council will sign a two year contract and School Forum will not agree to de-delegation for 2021/22. This is deemed a small risk as the software is extremely well regarded by schools and the cost could either be charged individually to schools or in extremis met from the Dedicated Schools Grant Central Services Block.

Consultees

14. All locally maintained schools were consulted on whether they supported the de-delegation of the school budgeting software at £400 per school. Of the responses received 13 were in favour with none against.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

De-delegation is the termed used by the government to describe the process for a local authority to deduct funding from a school's budget under arrangements approved by Schools Forum.

PRU is the Pupil Referral Unit