Herefordshire Council

Title of report: Procurement of New Planning and Regulatory Services software

Decision maker: Cabinet member for environment

Decision date: 29/04/2024

Classification
Open

Decision type
Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected
(All Wards);

Purpose
To approve up to £1,396,000.00 of expenditure required to complete procurement and implementation, and ongoing licencing and maintenance costs of a new replacement software system to support planning and regulatory services within Herefordshire Council.

Recommendation(s)
That:

a) **Expenditure of up to £1,396,000.00 from the allocated capital programme be approved to complete the procurement and implementation of a new software system to support the Council's planning and regulatory services;**

b) **The Corporate Director for Economy and Environment be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to deliver recommendation (a) and support implementation, including contract award and arrangements with the chosen supplier, within the approved budget;**

Alternative options

1. Do nothing. The current software will be unsupported in the future. This would lead to a rush to procure and implement; in the meantime the services would need to work with an inefficient system. This would mean statutory duties could not be undertaken by Herefordshire Council.

2. Do minimum. By not having a full suite of software options teams and customers would be impacted. Further IT solutions would have to be procured, likely to increase overall costs of support and integration.

Key considerations

3. The council currently uses Civica APP as their dominant line of business system in service areas including planning & building control, waste, conservation, environmental health, public health, licensing, strategic housing. It is also used by the Home Improvement Agency

4. The project is to replace Civica APP with a new software. There are three main drivers for the project:

    a. The current system is no longer fit for purpose and does not now provide what is required to support services; it is not intuitive, it is difficult to use, often has faults/downtime, has very limited digitisation, and is very labour intensive.

    b. Civica have advised that the APP product is at end of life – likely circa 2 years. If not replaced, this will leave the council without a business-critical software system for undertaking statutory processes.

    c. Value – the council has not tested the market for a while – it is known, from contact with other local authorities, that there are other systems and better value products which would enable service efficiencies to be realised.

5. The Executive Programme Board has already approved both a Mandate and a Project Brief.

6. The project has also been approved within the 2024/25 Capital Programme.

7. The implementation of a replacement software system for planning and regulatory services is one of the highest Economy and Environment Transformation Plan priorities. It will deliver multi-directorate benefits, whilst replacing a business-critical system that is about to reach the end-of-life stage.

8. The procurement of a new software solution will be progressed through an open tender route. The procurement process will be undertaken in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR). By following this principle best value is observed throughout and value for money is fundamental to the procurement activity the council carries out. The preferred procurement route has been determined according to the criteria of: cost/value for money, quality/specialisation and capacity to deliver within timescales.

Community impact

9. The current software system is used to process statutory functions of the local authority. It is no longer fit for purpose in processing these functions efficiently or to enable statutory reporting on those functions.

10. A replacement software system will replace the current limited search and reporting tools which makes responding to Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulations requests, which have a statutory timescale for response, very slow and labour intensive.

11. All service users are having to use other software systems outside of Civica, some of which are not supported, to undertake work that should be capable of being done within a fit for purpose, supported, software facility.

12. Procurement of new software will support our ambitions detailed within the Digital, Data and Technology Strategy 2024 – 2028 to adopt the latest software on modern platforms, to support residents and communities.

Environmental Impact

13. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

14. Whilst this is a decision on back office functions, the implementation of a new software system will support teams who manage waste, conservation and environmental health for Herefordshire Council, and therefore indirectly contributes to and supports the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

15. 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.

16. The procurement process identifies that the IT system procured must support accessibility for all service users in compliance with Public Sector body accessibility regulations WCAG2.1 Level AA and WCAG2.2. In addition, public sector websites and mobile apps must publish an accessibility statement.

Resource implications

17. The implementation of a new system will require;

      a. committed and dedicated officer resource from the business areas in scope;

      b. focussed support from Hoople in roles such as System Administrators, Database Administrators, and the Digital Team;

c. Electronic Document Record Management System support for document work;

d. Programme Management Office support for project management;

e. Commercial Services support for the administration of tender process and contract award;

f. Data cleansing on the old system to ensure only accurate and up to date information is transferred onto the new system.

18. It is also recommended that Business Analysts are deployed to review existing processes and design and implement new processes and ways of working, if required. Any training would be a revenue cost for the new system.

19. For operational front line regulatory services such as Environmental Health and Trading Standards (EHTS) and Housing, the current system has not delivered the breadth of connectivity, integrations and mobility originally in scope, so it is important that these elements are fulfilled within this project to reap efficiency benefits and embrace better ways of working that continue to meet existing service standards.

Capital cost of project	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Future Years	Total
		£000	£000		£000
Supplier implementation costs		130	130		260
Civica Data Consultancy		20	20		40
Hoople implementation		224	224		448
MS Server: Extended Support		11	11		22
HC project team		185	185		370
Contingency (20%)		128	128		256
TOTAL		698	698		1,396

Funding streams - capital borrowing	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Future Years	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Corporate Funded Borrowing		698	698		1,396
TOTAL		698	698		1,396

Revenue budget implications	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Future Years	
		£000	£000	£000	
2024/25 Approved Base Budget		68	68	68	
New licences and hosting costs		-	-	108	
New Revenue Cost Pressure		-	-	40	

Legal implications

20.   Procurement must be undertaken in line with the Council's contract procedure rules and the Public Contract Regulation 2015. Any personal data on the system will need to be cleansed and only accurate and up to date information should be transferred onto the new system to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations.

Risk management

21.   Risks are outlined below:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Risk: Lack of Herefordshire Council resources, leading to lengthened implementation and need to extend current contract.	Ensure appropriate and necessary resources are allocated to the implementation.
Risk: No system solution agreed and in place before end of Civica APP life, meaning teams would be unable to provide statutory services.	Agree funding and begin procurement and implementation of a replacement solution as soon as possible.
Risk: Civica issuing end-of-life notice for current software before new implementation project has started.	Agree funding and begin procurement and implementation of replacement solution as soon as possible.
Risk: Inconsistent / no-use of Herefordshire Council Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS) by services, causing double work on document 'loading' and testing.	Progress other initiatives or projects to ensure all services in scope are using EDRMS by the time of implementation.
Risk: Poor data quality in the current system.	Conduct a data cleansing exercise before project implementation.
Opportunity: The council has not tested the market for a while – it is known, from contact with other local authorities, that there are other systems and better value products which would enable service efficiencies to be realised.	Procurement of a new software system allows us to realise opportunities for a better value, more intuitive and less labour intensive system.
Opportunity: Procurement of a new system enables Transformation of processes within the Economy and Environment directorate.	The project team are working closely with other teams to understand and manage dependencies throughout project scoping and delivery.

Consultees

22. The Planning and Regulatory Software Replacement project has been approved at Full Council on 9th February 2024.

23. Political Group Consultation was held on 27th March 2024. Members were supportive of the procurement and implementation of the new software, due to the benefits to staff and efficiencies to be achieved.

Appendices
Business case

Background papers
None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 21/03/2024
Finance	Karen Morris	Date 08/03/2024
Legal	Emma-Jane Brewerton	Date 19/03/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 26/02/2024
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 01/03/2024
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 04/03/2024
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 28/02/2024

Approved by	Ross Cook	Date 05/04/2024

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