

Decision by Portfolio Holder



Report reference: CUS-001-2018/19
Date of report: 15 January 2019

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Customer Services

Author: Rob Pavey (Ext 4211) Democratic Services: J Leither

Subject: Request to waive Procurement Rules – Sundry Debtor system

Decision: To waive Procurement Rules relating to the Total Contract Value in Appendix 1 (Contracts exceeding £50,001 and Minimum Number of Tenders) in order to enter into an agreement with Ash Information Systems Ltd for the procurement and implementation of a sundry debtor system for £55,000 plus an £11,000 maintenance cost for five years with an option to extend for a further two years. The total value over seven years is £132,000.

ADVISORY NOTICE: <i>A Portfolio Holder may not take a decision on a matter on which he/she has declared a Pecuniary interest. A Portfolio Holder with a non-pecuniary interest must declare that interest when exercising delegated powers.</i>	
I have read and approve/ do not approve (delete as appropriate) the above decision:	
Comments/further action required:	
Signed: Cllr H Kane	Date: 15 th January 2019
<i>Non-pecuniary interest declared by Portfolio Holder/ conflict of non-pecuniary interest declared by any other consulted Cabinet Member:</i> None	<i>Dispensation granted by Standards Committee:</i> Yes/No or n/a N/A
Office use only: Call-in period begins: 16 th January 2019	Expiry of Call-in period: 23 rd January 2019

**After completion, one copy of this pro forma should be returned to
Democratic Services IMMEDIATELY**

Reason for decision:

It is believed that the waiving of the Council's Procurement Rules will provide the most economic and efficient means of procuring a Sundry Debtor system that is sound and has been developed to enable improved customer service. The market for Council systems is limited and having explored other systems in the local government market the Ash system provides the best opportunity for the Council to develop its sundry debtor collection processes for the future.

Options considered and rejected:

To continue with the current unsupported system which places a risk on the ability for the Council to bill for goods and services.

To obtain three formal quotes from the market as the options are limited in the local government sector having approached other authorities. Alternative solutions that have been explored lacked functionality and were very limited in future development especially in terms of digital solutions.

Background Report:

1. The Council's current system for collecting sundry debts is AIMS and has been a reliable product but has lacked development over the years to move the product forward. This became evident when the supplier informed the Council that the product would no longer be supported. This therefore places the Council at risk of not being able to bill and collect sundry debts across the Council. Officers have been looking at options for the current system's replacement and has explored the local government marketplace. Demonstrations of potential solutions have been provided to a multi-service group of officers within the Council.
2. Capita, which are the current system supplier of Revenues and Benefits has a Corporate Debtors module but this has not been utilised within its user base and therefore has not been developed, with no digital development or self-service for customers planned. Another option explored was a module attached to E-Financials which is the core financial system for the authority. Again, however, this system did not meet the Council's requirements for functionality and again had not been developed for digital transformation.
3. The Councils' preferred solution is provided by Ash Information Systems. This system has a robust user base including several London boroughs who have undertaken major developments of the system. The Ash system will bring the level of transaction capability comparable to that of the effective Capita Revenues system the Council uses, with further developments down the line. The Ash system will provide a lot more functionality than our current sundry debtor system and was not provided within the other systems officers looked at. These added features include:
 - E-billing
 - Customer self-service access to their sundry debtor accounts and documents.
 - SMS text messaging capabilities
 - More automation on back-office processes
4. One major development down the line which will be exploited once the core system has gone live is sophisticated single view of a customer's debt which will bring debts from all systems the Council has to enable a customer's debt to be managed in a single contact with the Council rather than several different services.
5. The Council has obtained references from a number of authorities including the London Boroughs of Camden and Redbridge and Mansfield District Council. These references provided positive feedback.
6. It is therefore recommended that the Council enters into an agreement with Ash Information Systems for a period of 5 years with an option to extend for a further period of two years. The total cost of the solution is therefore £132,000 inclusive of the full seven-year cost. The initial funding of the implementation is met from identified DDF and ICT capital allocations.

Resource Implications: The proposed agreement would cost £55,000 per annum inclusive of all project consultancy, data migration and implementation costs), an £11,000 annual licence and maintenance cost meaning a maximum cost of £132,000 over the seven-year period. This is an increase in cost from the

Legal and Governance Implications: The decision involves a waiver of the Procurement Rules, which normally requires a minimum of three contactors to be invited to tender where the Total Contract Value is between £50,001- £250,000.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications: None

Consultation Undertaken: Other Council services who use the Sundry Debtor system were involved in the system appraisal process.

Background Papers: None

Impact Assessments: None

Risk Management: None

Equality Analysis:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as an Appendix to this report.

Key Decision Reference (Y/N): No