

Decision by Portfolio Holder



Report reference: PLS-002-2019/20

Date of report: 05 July 2019

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning Services

Author: Claire Hamilton (Ext 4006) Democratic Services: J Leither

Subject: Partnership Agreement with Sustrans to deliver Active Travel Services to the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project

Decision: That, in accordance with paragraphs 2.8 and 10.1 of the Council's Procurement Rules (2018), the Procurement Rules be waived to enable the direct appointment of Sustrans to deliver Active Travel Services for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project.

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: None	
Signed: Councillor J Philip	Date: 18 th July 2019
<i>Personal interest declared by Portfolio Holder/ conflict of interest declared by any other consulted Cabinet Member:</i> None	<i>Dispensation granted by Standards Committee: Yes/No or n/a</i> N/A
Office use only: Call-in period begins: 19 th July 2019	Expiry of Call-in period: 26 th July 2019

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Democratic Services IMMEDIATELY***

REASON FOR DECISION:

Following the unsuccessful attempt to directly recruit to the HGGT Principal Active Travel Officer position, it is recommended that Sustrans be commissioned to recruit, train and support an embedded Active Travel Officer for the HGGT team through their Partnerships Programme to develop and implement a programme of activities related to walking, cycling and wider place shaping in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) area.

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OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

An options appraisal has been undertaken which has considered the following options:

1. Establish an embedded officer role through Sustrans' Partnerships offer;
2. Instruct external Private Consultants to complete the works required through a Direct Award;
3. Instruct alternative charity/ organisation/ cycling lobby to complete the works required through a Direct Award;
4. Invite open tenders to complete the works required;
5. Re-advertise the job via HGGT website;
6. Explore other recruitment routes;
7. Try to complete this work in-house.

Option 1 is the preferred and recommended option. An extended options appraisal has been undertaken and is provided in Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND:

The introduction of an innovative and sustainable transport corridor (STC) for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) is fundamental to the delivery of 23,000 homes in and around Harlow over the next 15 years and beyond. In order to accommodate growth of this nature, a significant modal shift is needed which must see at least 50% of all journeys being made by sustainable means – walking, cycling and public transport. This target is set out in the draft HGGT Transport Strategy.

The proposed STC will link the new and existing communities with the station, town centre and employment zones to encourage as many people as possible to travel sustainably. It is critical that this infrastructure investment is preceded by behaviour change work with as much lead in as possible. As such, the HGGT Team advertised for roles within the expanding team in March 2019, including the post of Principal Active Travel Officer. Their primary role would be to offer design expertise and develop and undertake a programme of behaviour change activities to promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport across the development sites.

The job was advertised on the HGGT microsite <https://harlowandgilstonjobs.co.uk>, as well as various other websites such as www.jobsgopublic.com. This meant that the advertisement reached a broad catchment of potential applicants. Despite this, when the advertisement closed on 15/04/2019, there were no applicants for the Active Travel Officer role, so a number of alternative options were considered.

Sustrans were then approached to see if they were interested in offering support for recruiting an Active Travel officer, based on their extensive expertise and existing partnership working.

SUSTRANS:

Sustrans is a leading UK charity working to make it easier for people to walk and cycle for more of the journeys they make every day. They work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

The opportunity for placing an appointment in the HGGT team is based on Sustrans' existing partnerships model of embedded Active Travel Officers specifically trained to work in Local Authorities. Sustrans' Partnerships programme provides local, regional and national partner organisations access to the skills, knowledge and resources needed to deliver a strategic approach to walking and cycling infrastructure projects.

At a local level, Sustrans' partnership officers advise and lead on the ongoing development and delivery of active travel strategies, ensuring council investment is well directed. At a regional level, their partnerships identify cross-border investment priorities and engage relevant stakeholders. At a national level, they link with major public and private stakeholders, including government bodies, institutions, public transport operators and the communities they serve. Sustrans works across all scales, engaging decision-makers, whilst enabling and empowering communities to participate in delivery of all active travel infrastructure.

Sustrans offers Strategic Partners access to the full range of support available from Sustrans. This includes specialist advice on design and engineering, monitoring and evaluation and community engagement. A range of training and knowledge sharing opportunities can also be accessed through the partnership.

Sustrans already support a number of local authorities across the UK. In the Midlands and East region, Sustrans are currently supporting Bedford Borough, Norfolk County Council, Staffordshire County Council, Warwickshire County Council and Blaby District Council through Embedded Officers, particularly on developing Active Travel Strategies or LCWIPs. In Essex and Hertfordshire, Sustrans officers have been working on signage strategies, community-led street design projects, and school and volunteer engagement projects amongst other training and delivery of key programmes. Sustrans are well placed to apply this experience to the HGGT project, through their dedicated Midlands and East team. Matthew Barber, Head of Partnerships for the Midlands and East, will be our primary point of contact.

Sustrans is the preferred choice over another company or consultancy to deliver this complete package. Through Sustrans, there is access to a wide recruitment field and specific talent pools for recruitment. Once employed, Sustrans will provide their officer with a highly-regarded training package alongside a range of knowledge sharing opportunities for HGGT partners and members. The range of support, volunteer resource, and specialist knowledge available from the wider Sustrans network around active travel in its entirety is unparalleled, particularly around behaviour change and engagement.

Sustrans have demonstrable success in cross sector partnership working that will help align HGGT policy aims and funding streams to improve the delivery and impact of common goals. By supporting HGGT in making the case for a commitment to walking, cycling and equitable placemaking, they will ensure that the proposed active travel infrastructure and LCWIP develops in ambition and quality.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Sustrans be commissioned to recruit, train and support an embedded Active Travel Officer for the HGGT team, in order to ensure continuity of approach and to utilise their knowledge of Active Travel principles and expertise in working with Local Authorities to maximise the sustainability agenda for HGGT.

It is not considered prudent to invite further consultants to quote for this work at this stage, as Sustrans have a strong track record of established working relationships in similar contexts, including all associated benefits outlined above. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that a tender process would result in any cost savings, or that other consultants would increase the remit of the offer above.

PROCUREMENT RULES – SECTIONS TO BE WAIVED

Given the nature of the work to be commissioned and the specialist expertise of Sustrans, it is not considered practical or desirable to seek further competitive quotes. In accordance with paragraph 5.2(c) and 5.5(c) of the Council’s Procurement Rules, it is considered that Sustrans is the most appropriately placed consultant to deliver the Active Travel work for the project.

Having determined that the existing relationship and nature of work to be commissioned under the paragraphs identified above, authority is sought to waive Procurement Rules (2018) paragraphs 2.8 and 10.1, both in relation to seeking quotes via competition.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

1. Sustrans will provide the Active Travel Officer position and associated support for a sum of £55,000 per annum plus VAT for the first year, and £56,650 per annum plus VAT for the second year
2. The funding is allocated in the HGGT project budget for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS:

EFDC is the Accountable Body for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Project which receives funding from Homes England. All procurement must take place in line with the Council’s Procurement Rules.

The detail of the approach taken in respect of the Procurement Rules (2018) is set out within the report above.

SAFER, CLEANER AND GREENER IMPLICATIONS:

The HGGT proposals are set out within the Council’s Local Plan which has been produced in accordance with the Council’s Safer, Cleaner and Greener agenda.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN:

Corporate Procurement Officer

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

See Appendix 2.

<p>Initialed as original copy by Portfolio Holder:</p>

RISK MANAGEMENT:

This work is part of the Sustainable Travel Workstream work programme and will be managed through the production of monthly highlight reports which are overseen by the HGGT Officer Group and then progress and risks are reported to the HGGT Board.

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 at Appendix 2 of this report.

Key Decision Reference (Y/N):

N/A

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Options Appraisal

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment