

LRE

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

BT&IT

The Executive Board recently approved the procurement of 2 data links between Blackburn Town Hall and the new data centre, which will improve connectivity and resilience.

Procurement for IT infrastructure hardware and PC refresh is underway and we should soon be in a position to appoint suppliers.

Encryption software is being rolled out from 14th of June, which will improve data security.

New style PCs for public access are being installed in the Central Libraries in Blackburn and Darwen. Initial customer feedback is very positive.

Procurement

Consideration is currently being given to an ePortal procurement solution which would enable the Council to manage the full lifecycle of the tendering process online. This includes supplier sourcing, advertising the requirement, issuing the Invitation to Tender and other tender documents, supplier completion and submission of the tender return, and a closed tender box. The Council can use the eTendering tool to receive and respond to bidders' questions and to communicate with individual or all suppliers throughout the process.

The 'Chest' the North West's public sector procurement portal created by NWIEP is hosted online and is accessible to all North West local authorities. Suppliers can register to join the database and, when accepted, they then provide a profile (which they can update) of core information which reflects the information required by public sector bodies at the early 'Expression of Interest' or 'Request for Information' stage of a tender process. This significantly reduces the need for suppliers to complete procurement documentation and is especially of benefit to SMEs.

Tender evaluators are authorised to access each supplier's information online - hard copy submissions are not required and suppliers and buyers can complete this stage of the tender process with greater flexibility, at lower cost and in less time.

Some of the benefits of the ePortal for managing procurement projects are:-

- Category alerts registered suppliers when projects initiated
- Timescales templates built into the system to ensure compliance
- Procurement officers allocated roles and receive alerts
- Flags built into the system at project milestones
- Notifies suppliers about any document changes
- Tender Q&A notifications

- Suppliers reminded 24 hours before tender closes
- Full audit trail

A solution such as this would address many of the concerns expressed about tender opening along with achieving control of the tender process and providing comprehensive reports on our tender activity. Further information will be provided in due course.

Final accounts 2010

A Portfolio Outturn Report was taken to Exec Board 10th June. The full Statement of Accounts will be reported to Audit Committee in June for approval prior to external audit during the summer.

Residual Waste Procurement

Legal Services has been integrally involved in the procurement process undertaken so far to find an alternative disposal process to landfill for the Council's waste. The procurement has been undertaken under the Competitive Dialogue process which involves selecting a number of potential providers to have detailed discussions with as to potential solutions. Following these discussions each provider is asked to submit a tender and those tenders are then evaluated to determine the most economically advantageous tender. The Council has just completed the first stage of the procurement to determine which 4 potential providers the Council will enter dialogue with. Legal services will continue to provide support to the process assisting with the tender process and preparation of legal documents.

End of Weekly Pay for Permanent Employees

The last "weekly pay" day was Thursday 3rd June for permanent weekly paid staff. Staff who wished an advance to assist them in the transition to monthly pay have received this and the changes are now moving to review fortnightly pay arrangements in the coming weeks.

With Public Sector Finance under considerable pressure at this time and the position is expected to become even more challenging in the months ahead. The Council is looking at ways we can make efficiency savings especially in back office service processes. Currently the Council has weekly, fortnightly and monthly payroll runs which we process. It has been identified that if we were to move to all monthly payrolls only, cost savings for the Council would accrue.

Litigation

RIPA Training

On Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th May 2010, Legal Services facilitated training for key staff across the Council in accordance with the new statutory guidelines which came into force in April 2010, in respect of RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000). These measures cover the Local Authority's activities when covert surveillance is required to detect or prevent crime. Whilst the Local Authority does not utilise the provisions under RIPA on a frequent basis, the statutory provisions must still be enacted as the Local Authority will be independently inspected by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners. Typically the RIPA guidelines are used by staff when investigating issues such as benefit fraud.