



EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Digital and Customer Services
LEAD OFFICERS:	Director CE
DATE:	08 September 2023

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Departments
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WARD/S AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
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SUBJECT: Procurement of Unified Communication Telephony Solution

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To seek approval from the Executive Member for Digital and Customer Services to commence the procurement of a new Unified Communication Solution Telephony for the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member:

Approves the procurement of the new solution through an FTS (Find a Tender Service) restricted process for a three year period with the option to extend for up to a further four years.

3. BACKGROUND

The Executive Board previously approved a programme of works which included the introduction of the new telephony solution in June 2022. Due to a shortage of staff in the department and with other projects taking priority this was delayed but they are now in a position to proceed. The current telephony solution runs across multiple separate systems which is complex to manage and problematic when issues arise. The proposed Unified Communications solution will offer a consistent set of products to manage all of the Council's requirements in one single system.

The Council currently uses Skype for business for external calling and Microsoft Teams for mainly internal processes, having two systems causes confusion with staff and results in staff receiving calls across both platforms. The current Skype for business system being used is coming to end of life giving the Council no option but to replace this system over the next 2 years.

The Council also still uses a number of PSTN lines (traditional phone lines) these are used predominantly for lift lines, alarm lines etc. These lines need to be replaced by December 2025 due to the service being withdrawn by BT Openreach, the tender will also include for the winning provider to work with us to provide alternative digital telephony solutions to replace these.

For the procurement route, a number of framework options were investigated;

Crown Commercial Services – Network Services 3 framework, there are currently 70 suppliers on the framework including 1 local supplier.

KCS framework – Communication Solutions and associated telephony services, 11 suppliers on the framework but no local suppliers.

YPO framework – Network Connectivity and telephony services, there are currently 21 suppliers on the framework but no local suppliers.

There are currently 3 suppliers in the borough that we are aware of that have the capability of delivering the services, in order to promote growth in the borough then all of these should be given the opportunity to bid for requirement. It is therefore proposed that the procurement is done through an FTS restricted process rather than a framework. This is a 2 stage approach where any company can respond to a pre-qualification stage. This would assess their past experience of delivering the services required before being shortlisted to a minimum of 6 suppliers who would then progress through to the main tender stage.

The tender will then be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:

Price – 40%

Social Value – 15%

Quality – 45%

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

There are currently too many ways of contacting staff internally. Due to the lack of seamless communication solutions, this can result in having multiple calls ringing in across the various platforms. Simplifying this process would be beneficial for both staff and external customers

The PSTN switch off in the borough is set for December 2025, the Council needs to have put in new solutions to replace these prior to that date.

The current Skype for business solution is going end of life in January 2024 with extended support at an additional cost available until December 2025.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Communication is at the core of every business. It enables collaboration among colleagues, aids productivity, and can lead to excellent customer experiences. Making sure staff are equipped with the right tools is key to effective communication.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The department already holds a revenue budget for unified communications of £120k per annum and a capital budget of £338k it is expected that any new solution should be provided from within this budget envelope.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The procurement process proposed to be used to tender this contract complies with the requirements of the Council's Contract and Procurement rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are will resource implication to roll out the new solution for the IT department which will be factored into existing work plans.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

None with this report.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded and published if applicable.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Peter Hughes
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DATE:	16/08/2023
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	Executive Board Decision – 08/07/2021 – Digitally Connected – Microsoft 365 and Unified Comms.
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