

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted [*if applicable*]

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: CUSTOMERS

1. DECISION TAKEN

To acquire from Multiverse a skills assessment and development programme to support the development of digital and data skills across the Council, at no financial cost to the Council.

2. DECISION TAKER

Jo Dufficy, Service Director - Customers

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

28 August 2024

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 The Council has a digital strategy setting out its vision and aims for progressing its digital transformation journey. The strategy focusses on technology, people and processes and commits to working to build organisational capacity through how we work and through investing in digital skills development of our staff.
- 4.2 Multiverse are an experienced provider of digital and data skills development. They are regulated by Ofsted and the only organisation rated as outstanding in all areas of its kind. Collaborative learning and cohorts between other councils, as well as government partners like NHS & Police are available, although we are expecting that our initial cohort will be closed due to the numbers involved.
- 4.3 The development programmes offered are fully funded through the use of unspent and donated apprenticeship levies, therefore there is no financial cost to the Council. There is a time commitment, and learners will be expected to have 3 hours per week protected time in order to get the most from the programme. There are training opportunities focussing on early talent, upskilling and re-skilling.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 This is a unique offering, that provides an Ofsted rated, fully funded development programme at scale, as well as a free business value assessment that is made up of stakeholder insight sessions and a staff skills survey across the whole organisation.
- 5.2 There are no known alternative providers that offer this complete package.

6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)

- 6.1 Consultation has been made with the Executive Member for Finance and IT, Councillor Ian Albert.

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7. FORWARD PLAN

- 7.1 This decision is not a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council's digital strategy sets out the vision and how it aims to progress its digital transformation journey. There are a number of key strands relating to this which includes people, processes and technology. Each strand is of importance and critical to delivering the ambitions of the digital strategy.

- 8.2 Without an investment in upskilling and developing the digital capacity across the council there is a risk that we will not be able to adapt how we work and meet customer demands and expectations. We need not only to develop the skills to adapt to technological changes but also to ensure that we have the culture and mindset to drive and deliver digital and data projects across the council with an increased understanding and application of digital solutions and data driven decision making.

- 8.3 Such an investment would be difficult to deliver at scale without significant funding. There are courses available that specialise in these areas, but it is not realistic for the council to fund a programme like this, especially not at scale. Multiverse offer fully funded programmes using unspent apprenticeship levies that are donated by other organisations. Market analysis has determined that there are no other suppliers that offer complete service at no cost to the Council.

- 8.4 In 2023, we commissioned a digital maturity assessment of the organisation to baseline our digital skills and readiness for change at the time. Whilst this assessment gave a good level of confidence, we decided to carry out a further assessment in a year's time. The service that Multiverse provides includes a free skills capability survey and value assessment, enabling us to gather that insight data without additional cost to the council.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 14.6.4 of the Council Constitution provides delegation to service directors and states at section 14.6.4 (a) (ii):

“Entering into contracts to carry out works and/or for the supply of goods and services within approved budgets (subject also to approval of the Service Director for: Customers in respect of software or hardware contracts). All may attest the fixing of the Common Seal to a contract or Deed;”

- 9.2 The Contract Procurement Rules at 7.13 require the publication of a Decision Notice for any contract with a value of above £50,000.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The contract value has been calculated as up to £990k.

- 10.2 The cost of the programme is fully funded by Multiverse through the use of unspent apprenticeship levies that have been donated. The Council generally spends all of its apprentice levy, so there is an expectation that the costs will all be met from donated levy funding.

- 10.2 Whilst the Council is not paying for the services provided, the arrangement does allow the supplier to receive funding through the donated levies. The value received by the supplier is anticipated to be under the WTO GPA threshold.
- 10.3. As the anticipated value is expected to surpass the WTO GPA thresholds, a Voluntary Transparency Notice to alert the market and the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 will be followed.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2 The risks associated with this report relate to not engaging Multiverse. This engagement will over time address some of the challenges we face around capacity and skills.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 There are no direct equality implications which arise from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no social value implications. The development programme will benefit the employees of North Herts Council and ultimately positively impact the services provided to customers and residents.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken (Appendix B). The outcomes have been considered and there are no relevant adaptations that could be applied and no negative implications where identified.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no human resources implications.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1 None

17. APPENDICES

- 17.1 None

NOTIFICATION DATE

06 September 2024

Signature of Executive Member Consulted



Date 03/09/24



Signature of Decision Taker

Please Note: that *unless urgency provisions apply* EXECUTIVE decisions cannot be implemented until 5 clear working days have elapsed after the decision has been taken to allow for scrutiny call-in.

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS