

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted *N/A*

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: CUSTOMERS

1. DECISION TAKEN

- 1.1 Procurement of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System on a four year contract from Firmstep Ltd through a Single Tender.

2. DECISION TAKER

- 2.1 Howard Crompton, Service Director - Customers

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN

- 3.1 5 May 2020

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 To enable the Council to continue with its CRM system and to implement its Customer & Councillor Portals with the minimum of disruption to services.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The Council has been monitoring the market in terms of CRM products available and this product is considered not only fit for purpose now but also for the foreseeable future and can support our objectives around channel shift and self-service. Nevertheless, the Council could re-procure the CRM system which would delay progress with the channel shift programme and prevent the Council from benefiting from the knowledge and expertise of staff on fixed term contracts. Re-procurement would also require the Council to include software development/testing within the mobilisation period which increases the Council's risk if development/testing of such software is unsuccessful.

- 5.2 There is no operational need for the Council to change its CRM and the cost of change and the disruption (in particular to the Council's channel shift programme) would far outweigh any potential savings by moving to a different supplier.

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

- 6.1 Consultation has taken place with the Leader of the Council, who is the Executive Member and he agreed the re-procurement with Firmstep as part of the Single Tender process prior to this delegated decision being taken.

7. FORWARD PLAN

- 7.1 This decision does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 In 2014 the Council carried out an open tender procurement exercise to replace its CRM system. At the time as it was no longer fit for purpose or providing best value. The contract was awarded to Firmstep who provided a system that the Council has

been able to develop internally over the years to meet the changing needs of its services and customers. Along with the CRM an e-forms package and a self service portal is also provided as part of the contract.

- 8.2 A number of Councils in the County have moved to the Firmstep CRM recently following procurement exercises, suggesting it is still proving to be good value. The intranet and website are also provided by Firmstep free of charge whilst the Council remains a CRM customer. Firmstep has very recently announced that they will no longer provide the web site and Intranet solutions free of charge from November 2021 when the existing solutions are desupported. They are actively working towards developing a partnership arrangement with a third party supplier to provide this service. This gives the Council 18 months to decide what options it wishes to pursue in terms of replacing its web site and Intranet
- 8.3 In order to continue to meet the changing demands of our customers by providing more options for self service, availability 24/7 and additional channels for customer service, the Council needs to invest further in developing the platforms and systems that can deliver this.
- 8.4 As part of the on-going channel shift work, Officers have been looking into how we can further develop the CRM system with the supplier to provide greater automation and integration. An outline proposal has been prepared, indicating the development work we want to achieve.
- 8.5 This development work would include integrations with Northgate for Council Tax, Tascomi for Environmental and licensing, Locata for Housing and Idox Uniform for planning, this would allow customers to sign on to the Customer Portal and view all of this relevant information in one place as well as raise and track requests for service.
- 8.6 Additionally this would include a new Councillor Portal, which would provide Councillors with a wealth of customisable information in one place and enable them to direct constituency enquiries to the right Officer for advice.
- 8.7 The current five-year contract with Firmstep expired in February 2020.
- 8.8 The Council has been very happy with the performance of the Firmstep suite of products and the quality of the service that has been provided.
- 8.9 When considering a single supplier, the Council has to be satisfied that it is achieving value for money. Factors to take into consideration in this case are:
 - The annual costs of the previous CRM system was approximately the same for the CRM only
 - The full annual revenue costs for the Firmstep solution have been heavily discounted
 - New CRM systems have recently been implemented at two Hertfordshire Councils at a higher cost
- 8.10 This would support the fact that the Council is receiving value for money.
- 8.11 CRM systems are large and complex and migrating from one system to a different system would be disruptive and not without risk. A change was forced on the Council in 2015 because its then CRM system was to be de-supported and so an alternative had to be found.
- 8.12 On this occasion, no such pressure exists and indeed on the contrary Firmstep has invested in the product to be able to deliver the enhanced functionality that the Council is seeking.

- 8.13 On that basis, it would seem to be in the Council's best interests to enter into a new contract with Firmstep for delivery of the existing products and enhancements detailed at 8.5 and 8.6. The decision has therefore been taken following the approval of a single tender to award such a contract to that company.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 (No. 2095) require officers undertaking non-executive decisions to record (amongst other things) an award of a contract that *materially affects* the Council's position in a written delegated decision. At NHDC this is any award of a contract or financial decision, that is or is likely to be above £50,000. This contract award is above £50,000 and therefore has to be confirmed by the relevant officer taking the decision.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The financial breakdown of the component parts of the contract are commercially sensitive and a Part II item.
- 10.2 The total cost of the four-year contract is £172,269. This will be funded from existing budgets.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council will be able to enhance access to Council services whilst providing opportunities to create more efficient practices, through automation and ultimately a reduction in contact levels that require officer intervention. The risk of not doing this is that the Council will be unable to offer improved and useful self service to its customers and therefore unable to fully promote and deliver channel shift and associated benefits.
- 11.2 The risk associated with changing the CRM system is that it will potentially be both costly and disruptive to the Council and will delay implementation of important enhancements which will improve services to customers and realise financial savings.

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 The enhancements proposed are a part of a wider implementation plan to further automate access to the Council's services, which will enable customers to communicate with the Council at times that suit them. This will assist those who are not readily available to communicate with the Council during normal working hours.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this decision.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no immediate Human Resource implications to this report.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

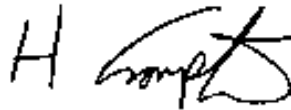
- 14.1 None.

15. APPENDICES

15.1 None

NOTIFICATION DATE

15.05.2020



Signature of Service Director – Customers:

Signature of Executive Member Consulted ...Non-Executive decision

DateN/a.....

This is a non-executive decision. Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

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