

Extension of Framework Agreement for Planning Consultants

Report of Councillor I Pritchard

Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Development & Environment



Date:	13 March 2018
Agenda Item:	4
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Key Decision?	YES

CABINET

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 10 January 2017, Cabinet approved continued access to the NHS Construction Consultancy Services Framework to engage Urban Vision Partnership Ltd, and a level of expenditure of up to £150,000 to 31 March 2018. On 10 October 2017, due to a significant rise in workloads, Cabinet endorsed an increase in expenditure of up to £220,000 on Urban Vision to 31 March 2018.
- 1.2 Development Services and the Economic Growth Service still require the services of Urban Vision and the most cost effective and efficient procurement route is via the existing NHS Framework Agreement. Work on finalising the new NHS Framework (up to 2022) is still ongoing, and therefore, Cabinet approval is sought for a six month extension to 30 September 2018 to allow continued access to Urban Vision's consultancy services.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Cabinet Member and the Director of Place and Community to facilitate access to the NHS Construction Consultancy Services Framework for Urban Vision Partnership Ltd up to 30 September 2018, provided that the costs can be contained within existing revenue and capital budgets.

3. Background

- 3.1 Development Services and Economic Growth have been using Urban Vision via a Framework agreement (NHS Construction Consultancy Services Framework) to provide consultancy support on a range of specialist planning and environmental matters since October 2015. This has included work for major planning appeals (including in respect of 5 year housing land supply); landscape visual impact assessment; capacity support in the processing of major and minor planning applications during staff vacancies and peaks in workload; and, cover for vacant posts in planning policy (assisting with the CIL charging schedule and preparation of the Planning Obligations SPD).
- 3.2 Urban Vision is a multi-disciplinary consultancy providing development and regeneration services for the public sector. The partnership is a joint venture between Capita, Galliford Try and Salford City Council. Capita is the majority shareholder (50.1%).
- 3.3 Urban Vision only work with public sector clients and therefore has a wealth of experience and expertise in local authority planning, and most importantly – do not have any conflicts of interest. This is particularly important in major planning appeals where almost all major planning

consultancies have competing land interests and a collective interest in challenging the Council's 5 year housing supply. This is a major consideration in the success of housing appeals. The Council has previously sought competitive quotes from the private sector for expert planning witnesses (5 year housing supply) – none were received; all quoting 'conflict of interest' as the reason for not tendering.

- 3.4 The NHS Construction Consultancy Services Framework was procured via an OJEU process and runs from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2018. On 10 January 2017, Cabinet agreed a level of expenditure up to £150,000 and granted delegated authority to the Cabinet Member to allow access to the Framework to 31 March 2018. On 10 October 2017, due to a significant rise in workloads, Cabinet endorsed an increase in expenditure of up to £220,000 for Urban Vision up to 31 March 2018.
- 3.5 Development Services and Economic Growth still require the services of Urban Vision (for the reasons cited above) and the most cost effective and efficient procurement route is via the existing NHS Framework agreement. This need is more acute with the Spatial Policy and Delivery team, where recent attempts to recruit a Senior Policy Officer have been unsuccessful within a very competitive market. Work on finalising the new NHS Framework Agreement (up to 2022) is still ongoing, and therefore, Cabinet approval is sought for a six month extension to 30 September 2018 to allow continued access to the services of Urban Vision. The terms of the framework agreement does allow for a maximum 6 month extension beyond the end agreement date.
- 3.6 The funding of this consultancy support will be met from existing consultancy budgets or the recent 20% increase in planning fee income. Any expenditure planned over the next 6 months will be within existing capital and revenue budgets.
- 3.7 Cabinet may have noted that Capita has recently issued a profits warning and announced that it will be restructuring its core business in the forthcoming year. Urban Vision remains a key part of its core business - part of a joint venture with Salford City Council and Galliford Try. The Council will monitor the situation and review prior to further extensions of the framework agreement in the autumn. The risk to the Council is considered minimal given the relatively short length of the extended agreement; value of the works undertaken; and easy access to alternative agency staff cover to ensure continued service delivery.
- 3.8 Cabinet approval is therefore sought for a six month extension to 30 September 2018 to allow continued access to the NHS Construction Consultancy Services Framework for Urban Vision Partnership Ltd.

Alternative Options	1. To tender for alternative consultancy support. This would add delay to the process (impacting on service delivery); incur additional costs (additional resources to undertake the tendering exercise); and give no guarantee that appropriate consultants would be procured (without conflicts of interest). 2. Procurement via another framework agreement would add further costs and delay and would not necessarily represent greater value for money.			
Consultation	None.			
Financial Implications	The current approved budgets are identified in the tables below and these can be revised through budget monitoring in Money Matters reports or the Medium Term Financial Strategy process to reflect current service demands.			
		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Expenditure Budget				
Development Services (Consultants)		36,570	37,670	38,800
Total Expenditure		36,570	37,670	38,800

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Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	The processing of planning applications; plan making and defending appeals in an effective and efficient manner ensures the delivery of additional housing, businesses and essential infrastructure for the District – enabling planned economic growth and a vibrant and prosperous economy.
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Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	None.
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Crime & Safety Issues	None.
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	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	Failure to procure timely capacity support would undermine the Council's ability to effectively and efficiently deliver the Development Management and Spatial Policy and Delivery Service – impacting upon the delivery of planned economic growth.	To procure framework planning consultants to provide timely capacity support.	Yellow. The Council would be at risk of failing to effectively deliver the Development Management or Spatial Policy and Delivery Service – impacting upon the delivery of planned economic growth.

Background documents:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet 17 January 2017 – Key Decision: Expenditure in excess of £50,000 on Framework Planning Consultants and Temporary Senior Planning Officer. Cabinet 10 October 2017 – Key Decision: Increased expenditure on Framework Planning Consultants

Relevant web links: None
