

## **CABINET**

<b>DATE</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Councillor Stephen Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources & Assets and Councillor Margaret Cracknell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education.
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Sharon Wroot Executive Director Place and Resources
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Procurement of a Children's Services Case Management Platform
<b>STATUS</b>	Open
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF NO.</b>	CB 06/23/06

### **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS**

A core requirement for North East Lincolnshire's Children's Services function is the ability to rely on a fit for purpose service and case management application that can deliver intuitive guidance to business processes and hold critical information that helps the workforce be more efficient and effective.

The procurement of an all-encompassing platform is fundamental to the future of Children's Services and significantly underpins Children's Services improvement and transformation. Integrated digital platforms increase availability of information, thereby enhancing informed decision-making and care planning for children.

This proposal is also vital to the delivery of the Council Plan, such as, joining up our data and insights capabilities, implementing diverse ways of working that better engages, and enable transformation and innovation through the optimal use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Digital as outlined in the ICT and Digital Strategy.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Council's current contract for the Children's Social Care system is due to end in December 2024, using the final extension that was available. We have previously had approval to procure an Education Management platform.

The revised intention is to procure an all-encompassing platform that covers Education and Social Care, creating a single Children's Services Platform which will align all our Children's Services applications.

In order for the Council to remain compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and ensure continuity of service, a replacement contract needs to be procured before this date and ensure that the Council achieves its duty of Best Value. The initiative to review and reduce the number of systems holding Education & Social Care related data, reinforces our belief that integrated digital platforms

increase availability of information, thereby enhancing informed decision-making and care planning for children.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approves the commencement of a procurement exercise for a Children's Services Platform and authorises the Executive Director Place and Resources, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets jointly with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education to implement.
2. Delegates authority to the Executive Director Place and Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets jointly with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education to deal with all ancillary matters reasonably arising leading to and including the award of the contract for the Children's Services Platform.
3. Authorises the Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to complete and execute all legal documentation in connection with the award.

## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

The decision allows the Council to commence a procurement exercise for the Children's Services Platform and allows the Council to award the contract.

### **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1. The Council's current contract for the Education Management application is on an annual rolling contract, currently due to end March 2024. The Council's current contract for the Social Care application ends in December 2024.
- 1.2. The Council's current methods of sustaining the existing ICT platforms for Children's services are laborious and no longer practical. The existing applications also lack service wide adoption, due to their fragmented connectivity with other applications.
- 1.3. Technology continues to change at pace and there is a pressing need to procure and develop a service and case management application that will drive Children's Services improvement and transformation plans, underpinning the Council Plan.
- 1.4. Reprocuring the contract allows the Council to remain compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and achieve its duty of Best Value.
- 1.5. This proposal also supports our ICT and Digital Strategy, moving away from legacy applications and introducing software architecture that is flexible enough to allow us to accommodate improved ways of working.
- 1.6. Preliminary Market Consultation was undertaken in February 2023 to evaluate the Council's ideas for an overall Children's Services Platform and gauge market interest in tendering for the contract. The feedback gathered during this consultation indicated that there is interest in tendering for the

contract, and the Council's ideas for the system can be achieved.

- 1.7. The market for software solutions has expanded considerably in recent years and the opportunity to amalgamate different services within one application platform is now feasible. There are also more possibilities to improve integration between separate applications where it is not practical to combine into a single application platform. Information gathered during preliminary market testing confirms that there are opportunities available.
- 1.8. A formal Invitation to Tender and award criteria will be developed, and the procurement will be undertaken in line with the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, and ensure that the replacement contract represents value for money for the Council.
- 1.9. A project team is being established in readiness to undertake the procurement which consists of officers from the service areas, ICT and Procurement. Advice will be sought from Legal Services in relation to development of the terms and conditions and formation of the contract.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1. We have an ongoing challenge in delivering an efficient and effective approach for processes that support Children's Services functions. If we do not implement a more integrated platform, we will stifle our ability to improve, and we will continue to rely upon manual and labour-intensive processes that introduce the risks identified through recent internal working groups and our 2022 OFSTED inspection.
- 2.2. There is a risk of disruption to services during the transition from the incumbent solutions to the newly procured solution. Appropriate change management will take place to ensure that disruption is avoided or reduced, and relevant communications will take place using agreed change management approaches.
- 2.3. The Councils current contracts are due to expire in March 2024 (Education) and December 2024 (Social Care), so a replacement solution needs to be procured prior to this date. It is envisaged that we may need to extend existing contracts beyond their current term to support the implementation of the single platform. These extensions will be carried out in accordance with contract procedure rules.
- 2.4. An integrated platform would give the Council the capability to integrate business activity across teams in a profound way. It would allow the Council to effectively develop links between teams to understand the needs of its young people and the subsequent impacts to social care.

### **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

#### **3.1. Procure individual applications.**

This option would mean continuing with our current approach to procuring and implementing applications and we would hinder the chance to integrate working practices and consolidate information in a single place.

This option would hinder the achievement of the Children's Services improvement and transformation journey.

#### **3.2. Retain the current systems and migrate to the Cloud.**

This option would mean entering into a new contract with the current provider, which would leave the Council non-compliant with the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

This option would hinder the achievement of the Children's Services improvement and transformation journey.

#### **3.3. Do nothing.**

This option would leave the Council non-compliant with the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

It would also mean that the Council would not achieve the aims for service improvement and transformation, such as:

- The Council's ICT and Digital strategy to move our technology to the Cloud to support carbon reduction (Scope 1 emissions), improve our overall resilience, cyber security controls and availability (24 x 7)
- The Council's ambitions for becoming a data led organisation. This equates to consolidating our data in as fewer places as possible and being confident it is an accurate picture of a child, a family and their associated journeys in life and through Council services.
- It would hinder the achievement of the Children's Services improvement and transformation journey.

### **4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

There is a risk of disruption to service during the transition from the incumbent solution to newly procured solution. Appropriate planning and change management will take place to ensure that disruption is avoided or reduced, and communications will take place using the agreed channels.

## **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1. The purchase and implementation of the Children's Services Platform will be funded through a mixture of capital and revenue budgets.
- 5.2. The ongoing yearly licencing, hosting and support costs will be funded through Council revenue budgets.
- 5.3. The proposal will deliver improved value for money through an overall reduction in the number of systems and as a consequence reduce time spent on system maintenance and administration.
- 5.4. Further assurance of value for money will come from the market exercise we undertake to procure a new platform.
- 5.5. The Council's estimated whole life spend of the Children's Services Platform is c£5.2 million based on a 10-year contract with associated implementation costs.

## **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. There is a vast amount of business activity ongoing across Children's Services, that if joined in a more automated manner, could provide analytics that would be invaluable in such a crucial area. Improved visibility of interactions with children and families will enable better collaboration between services involved and increase opportunities for early interventions.
- 6.2. A single platform will be essential in supporting good practice across all Children's Services functions.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

This proposal expects to procure a cloud hosted platform that can help rationalise on-premise applications and contribute to the Councils Net Zero Carbon Roadmap.

## **8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

None.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. The capital cost of the new system is to be met from within the Council's approved Capital Investment Programme, the overall capital cost being estimated at £4.560m.
- 9.2. This scheme replaces the previously approved Education Management Platform that had a remaining approved budget of £1.200m, which can now be removed from the capital programme.
- 9.3. Once fully implemented and other systems replaced, as a result of the

integrated system, there will be ongoing additional revenue costs estimated at £0.154m per annum and this will be required to be met through the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1.** The Preliminary Market Consultation referred to and the procurement exercise are governed by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The Preliminary Market Consultation activity enables the specification to be developed, in line with the appropriate contractual documentation. Such activity enables the seeking or accepting of advice from independent experts, authorities or from market participants providing it does not distort competition nor breach the requirements for non-discrimination and transparency. The contract is the key governing document through which the resulting relationship will be governed, and Legal Services will support the completion of the contractual documentation on award.
- 10.2.** The procurement exercise will be conducted so as to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and supported by relevant officers.
- 10.3.** The delegations sought are consistent with an exercise of this nature.
- 10.4.** Officers should note that an award constitutes a further decision and will be subject to completion of an Officer Decision Record. Where key decision criteria are met such Officer Decision Record will be subject to call in. Award and implementation timelines should accommodate this.

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct HR implications.

## **12. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

No wards will be directly impacted.

## **13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Cabinet Report for the Education Management Platform.

## **14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

Carl Render, Strategic Lead ICT [carl.render@nelincs.gov.uk](mailto:carl.render@nelincs.gov.uk)

Helen Knights, Head of ICT and Digital [helen.knights@nelincs.gov.uk](mailto:helen.knights@nelincs.gov.uk)

**COUNCILLOR STEPHEN HARNESS**  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS**  
**AND**

**COUNCILLOR MARGARET CRACKNELL**  
**PORTFOLIO FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION**