

Subject:	Request for approval to go out to tender for a new telephony system for the corporate contact centre.
Reason for briefing note:	The current contract for a telephony system is due to end on 18 January 2024.
Responsible officer(s):	Louise Freeth, Assistant Director of Revenues, Benefits, Library & Resident Services
Senior leader sponsor:	Louise Freeth, Assistant Director of Revenues, Benefits, Library & Resident Services
Date:	05 December 2023

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SUMMARY

Approval is sought to go out to tender for various aspects of telephony as follows:

Corporate Aspects.

- 90 x SIP channels which provide the external link for telephony lines coming into the SBC virtual exchange;
- 450 x Microsoft Team User licences, which are the DDI call plans for staff;
- Reporting and real time call queue software which provides analysis of calls received, across the corporate telephony estate, measuring throughput, volume and call quality.

The estimated cost is £25.5k per year with a contract period of 3 years which would total £76.5k for the term of the contract. The current cost is £25-27k per year for which there is budget provided.

Contact Centre Aspects.

- A system for the corporate contact centre.

The estimated cost is £44k per year with a contract period of three years which would total £132k for the term of the contract.

Taking both the Corporate and Contact Centre specific costs into account would mean a total estimated spend of £208k for the term of the initial contract.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The council has a requirement to review several aspects of its telephony solution. Some of these affect the entire estate and are referred to here as being the “corporate” aspects while there is also a requirement to re-procure a telephony solution specifically for the contact centre. The latter solution was brought in during the covid pandemic and provides a generic contact centre solution.

1.2 It was hoped that the contact centre would be able to move to the Teams telephony system used by the rest of RBWM. However, this was explored with colleagues in the IT team and there is one specific feature required which Teams does not currently offer i.e. the ability for agents to be able to pause between calls in order to undertake any required follow up activity such as noting accounts with the outcome of the call etc. It was therefore not deemed appropriate to be able to utilise the Teams telephony solution at the current time for the contact centre and a procurement exercise needs to be undertaken.

- 1.3 Colleagues within IT have also confirmed that there is a requirement to re-procure several aspects of the corporate telephony solution, as outlined within the summary. We have conducted market research with various suppliers to determine whether they could offer both a corporate solution and a contact centre specific solution.
- 1.4 The current contract for the corporate aspects of the project is due to expire in July 2024 while the current contact centre contract is due to end on 18th January 2024 and there are no further extension options, therefore it will be necessary to undertake a procurement exercise. A 12-month waiver has been approved for the contact centre solution in order to allow the corporate aspects to bed in first.
- 1.5 The procurement exercise will seek a single provider that is able to deliver both a corporate telephony solution and a contact centre solution.
- 1.6 The anticipated level of spend falls below external thresholds which require full open competition, as per the Contracts and Tendering Rules a Request for Quote process can be used, inviting not less than three providers to submit a proposal.

2 KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Based on the cost of the existing contract and market research, it is anticipated that the contract value for the provision of a telephony system for the contact centre and a generic contact centre solution would be in the region of £44k per annum for a three-year contract totalling £132k. For the corporate aspects, it is anticipated that the cost would be in the region of £76.5k.
- 2.2 We are planning to let a three-year contract.
- 2.3 Under the Contracts and Tendering Rules, the Head of Service (now AD) can give approval to go out to tender.

3 RISKS

- 3.1 A telephony system is an essential requirement in order for the corporate contact centre to function and answer calls from customers.
- 3.2 The Procurement Team has provided advice on the way forward for the letting of this contract and there is sufficient time to let the new contract and have it in place for 18 January 2024.

4 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Louise Freeth, Assistant Director of Revenues, Benefits, Library & Resident Services will approve the request to go out to tender for a contract for both a Corporate and Contact Centre system on the basis of a three-year contract.
- 4.2 Louise Freeth, Assistant Director of Revenues, Benefits, Library & Resident Services has already consulted Cllr Hill as the relevant Cabinet and the Procurement Manager.
- 4.3 Louise Freeth, Assistant Director of Revenues, Benefits, Library & Resident Services will complete an Officer Decision form.