

Report to Cabinet

22 June 2022

Subject:	Planning, Building Consultancy, Land Charges & Associated Computer Systems Contract Renewal
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth, Councillor Peter Hughes
Director:	Director of Regeneration and Growth, Mr Tony McGovern
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	<p>Maxine Kidd – Planning Systems and Support Officer maxine_kidd@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Chana Bespalyj - Interim ICT Procurement Business Partner Chana_Bespalyj@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>John Baker - Service Manager, Development Planning and Building Consultancy. john_baker@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Tony McGovern – Director of Regeneration and Growth tony_mcgovern@sandwell.gov.uk</p>

1 Recommendations

- 1.2 That the Director of Regeneration and Growth be authorised to enter into a contract with Idox Software Limited for the provision of a Hosted Managed Service for the provision of a Planning, Building Consultancy and Local Land Charges Database, Document Management System and a Public Access module ICT system, for a 5 year period 6th October 2022 to 5th October 2027 at a cost of £133,000 (ex VAT) per annum.







2 Reasons for Recommendations



2.1 A new contract with Idox Software Limited is preferred on the basis that;

- The new 5-year proposal from Idox at £132,283 per annum is very much close to the existing yearly contract value of £129,000.
- Any alternative proposal to migrate will incur yet unidentified additional costs and require additional staff resources with potential service disruption.
- Continued provision of the existing hosted service to ensure service delivery under legislative guidelines for Planning, Building Consultancy and Local Land Charges.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people Supports the planning and building process of new schools, academies and colleges and upgrading of those existing	The systems in place are used daily by the Planning, Building Control and Local Land Charges service area and cross parts of all the corporate plan objective categories. The systems also hold the Local Land and Property which is the Council's official list of every property and piece of land in the Borough and is used by other IT systems within the Council.
	People live well and age well Regulates the construction of good quality housing meeting current standards keeping people in good health and homes for life	
	Strong resilient communities Quality builds make people feel safe, protected, and confident in their places of work and homes. Support industries of the future and supports the local economy to grow.	
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods Supports the implementation of the building of good quality housing that meets current standards and affordable housing.	



	<p>A strong and inclusive economy These services support the establishment of new businesses and the growth of existing businesses.</p> <p>A resilient and easy to use service for the local property market.</p> <p>A geospatial dataset to support local enterprise to make investment decisions.</p> <p>Digital data available to support planning and infrastructure projects and stimulate economic growth.</p>	
	<p>A connected and accessible Sandwell Sandwell will have significant numbers of new homes built close to key transport routes.</p>	

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Council originally entered a contract with Idox (formerly CAPS ESRI) in 2004 as part of the Local Government Modernisation Programme. The first contracts related to provision of back office systems (UNI-form) to hold information both textually and on a linked digital mapping system relating to Planning applications and Building Regulations applications, along with a 'Public Access' system to make selected information within the back offices systems available to the public via the internet.

The original contract also contained a 'Gazetteer' system to hold the 'Local Land & Property Gazetteer' which is the Council's official list of every property and piece of land in the Borough and gives each a unique reference no. This a contractual obligation on the Council as the LLPG contributes to the National Land & Property Gazetteer (NLPG). These official addresses are those used by every other IT system within the Council.

The initial investment also included the purchase of the CAPS integrated land searches system 'Total Land Charges' which retrieves information directly and uses it to produce Local property searches for the Council's Land Charges team. The service has an income target to achieve (in



competition with private companies), and this initial investment allowed for staffing economies to be realised, leading to a reduction in service costs.

Further investment followed with the purchase of the Idox Document Management system (DMS) which links to the back office and holds (electronically) the documents and images relating to each record. Once installed, the system enabled the statutory Planning consultation process to be carried out via the internet. This allows interested parties to view applications and the supporting documents online and to make comment or object via the Public Access system. Members also will have benefitted particularly from the facility to look at proposals online.

Subsequently, the Council entered in to a five year 'Managed Service' contract with Idox in 2012 resulting in:

- a reduction in the demands on the Council's ICT resource
- more services (such as the application of system upgrades and patches) being carried out by Idox staff.
- easier identification of the responsibility for resolution of system issues.

This contract was varied to include a 'Hosted Manage Service' in 2013. Idox host all the service area's Council records and documents on its own secure servers. This further simplified identification of responsibilities, reduced internal ICT resources required, improved business continuity, and allowed Idox easier access to provide support directly.

The current contract comes to an end in October 2022. Other alternative systems do not necessarily offer a Hosted and integrated option.

Over the past 18 years, a huge investment has been made in the current system with regards to resources, training, and data. The latest investments being a connector with the Planning Portal for Building Control applications to be downloaded into the back-office system both textually and in to the document management system. This has led to a more efficient working process and the creation of a High Hedges module and document management system. Investment of £15,450 (inc. vat) has been carried out in the last 12 months.

We are currently working with Her Majesty's Land Registry and Idox on migration of the Land Charges Registry. This discreet project will run



across the end of contract timeframe and might cause disruption to this government instructed piece of work if the contract is not renewed.

The current position

The current Hosted Managed Service contract is still in place until October 2022

Consultation (Customers and other stakeholders)

Feedback questionnaires are included with all Planning applications and Building Regulations application forms to seek feedback on the process and there is regular dialogue with agents, builders, and other users of the service with Planning, and Building Consultancy. The results of the satisfaction surveys (of which this system is an element) have been overwhelmingly positive.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Go out to full OJEU tender which would involve extending the existing contract to cover the time to tender, award and implement any alternative system. It is anticipated that a procurement exercise in line with OJEU legislation would take around 12 – 18 months from the invitation to tender to the implementation of a new system.



6 Implications

Resources:	The total value of the 5 Year Re-sign for existing Idox Software Limited 6 th October 2022 to 5 th October 2027 is estimated at £665,000 (ex VAT). Re-sign to be completed using the CCS DAS Framework including DAS Terms and Conditions.
Legal and Governance:	The Council must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's own Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules. To comply with these rules a procurement exercise in the form of a direct award will be made using Crown Commercial Data and Application Services Framework RM3821. This framework allows for a direct award to be made for licensing, support, and maintenance of an existing IT system. Following their direct award procedure.
Risk:	The current systems support Planning, Building Consultancy and Local land Charges in their work to ensure the provision of their services and the maintenance of statutory public registers. Interruption in the system availability could jeopardise the service and the service's ability to deliver its statutory obligations. It could also result in a potential major financial loss to the council and council reputation.
Equality:	The proposal contained within the report does not adversely affect any protected group.
Health and Wellbeing:	It supports Planning and Building Control in their work to ensure the building of good quality housing that meets current standards keeping people in good health. It also supports Land Charges in their work to ensure a smooth transition for the sale and purchase of land and property within the borough.
Social Value	Will be considered during the procurement process.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None

