

Report to Assistant Director (Communities)

July 2022

Award of Contract: Digital Customer Service Function

Report by Claire Hiskey, CEX Service Improvement Manager

Electoral divisions: All

Summary

Key decision [SSED05 21-22](#) authorised the procurement of the Digital Customer Service Function (DCSF) and the supporting digital technology and cloud software. The DCSF will be a series of enabling systems and workflows that shift customer journeys to digital channels whilst enhancing the user experience.

The procurement process did not deliver the outcome the Council required. Therefore, to ensure business continuity from 01 October 2022, the Council now intends to procure the supporting technology directly from providers to deliver the functionality and digital outcomes set out in the original decision. This will happen in phases.

A procurement process for the contact centre telephony platform has been undertaken and the Council intends to award the contract to Charterhouse Voice & Data Limited t/a Symity. The contract term proposed is 2 years starting on 01 August 2022 with a go-live date of 01 October 2022.

Recommendation:

That the Assistant Director (Communities) endorses the award of a contract to Charterhouse Voice & Data Limited t/a Symity (Company number 02804354) for the implementation and running of a contact centre telephony platform. The contract is to commence from 01 August 2022 (with system go-live date of from 01 October 2022), with an option to extend the contract by 2 periods of up to 12 months each, making the total possible contract term 4 years with an estimated total value contract of £721,224.00.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 In April 2022, the Council issued a tender for the provision of a digital customer service function that looked to combine the operational delivery of the contact centre as well as the selection of a digital transformation partner. This process did not deliver the outcome the Council required and therefore the Council will insource contact centre staff from the incumbent provider and has embarked on a series of technology procurements to deliver the function from 01 October 2022 whilst still addressing its 'digital first' aspirations.

- 1.2 The first and most significant of these procurement activities is the contact centre telephony platform that will allow business as usual activity from 01 October 2022.
- 1.3 All the Council's customer contact points, will, through the services to be procured, be subject to improvement by utilising a single DCSF, providing operational efficiencies, improving customer experience, customer notification, and harnessing expertise and innovation from external providers.
- 1.4 The new DCSF will allow the Council to rationalise and decommission current systems that will no longer be required.
- 1.5 The route to market used was Lot 3 (Cloud support) of the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework agreement G-cloud 12 (RM1557.12).

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 Following completion of an evaluation process it was determined that the most economically advantageous tender was provided by Charterhouse Voice & Data Limited t/a Symity.
- 2.2 The purpose of the procurement was to identify a supplier (a re-seller of the Anywhere 365 software product) who could support the Council with the implementation and running of a contact centre platform to respond to resident queries.
- 2.3 Charterhouse Voice & Data Limited t/a Symity is a partner of excellence of the Anywhere 365 platform (highest accreditation) meaning that they can provide technical advice and ongoing service support to the Council. Additionally, they can provide advice about integration to wider Microsoft tools, ensuring the Council can extract maximum value from its investment in Microsoft licences.
- 2.4 The total value of the contract is estimated at £721,224.00 based on an initial term of 2 years with optional extensions of two periods of up to 12 months each.
- 2.5 The contract will start on 01 August 2022 to allow for system set-up and testing and become operational from 01 October 2022.
- 2.6 The benefits of this procurement activity are that it:-
 - Will ensure a swift deployment of telephony platform
 - Allow a platform that can be built upon to support the omni channel activity (Omni channel provides seamless and effortless, high-quality customer experiences that occur within and between different contact channels i.e. SMS, Webchat, Telephone)
 - Aligns to the Council's digital aspirations of achieving 60-80% of demand opting to use the digital solutions

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 The original proposal was to procure a full digital customer service function, but the procurement was not successful. The proposal therefore provides the next best solution in terms of maintaining and assuring service delivery for what the

Council considers to be an essential service. The procurement process provided the basis for selecting the preferred supplier over other options.

4 Consultation, engagement, and advice

4.1 Consultation has been carried out with the following parties who both advised and supported the proposed solution.

- Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development
- Commercial Panel

5 Finance

5.1 Revenue consequences

The on-going contract costs will be met within the funding available in the wider strategic business case that looks at the future of all the services currently provided through the SSO contract. Implementation costs will be met from the Council's transformation fund.

Ongoing Costs:-

	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's	2024/25 £000's	2025/26 £000's	2026/27 £000's
One Off Implementation Costs	62				
Annual Service Costs	82	165	165	165	82
Total Cost	144	165	165	165	82

5.2 The effect of the proposal:

(a) How the cost represents good value

The solution offered by Charterhouse Voice & Data Limited t/a Symity provides an affordable model for the Council based on current usage and avoids the commitment to expensive and excessive bundle products. The solution leverages existing investments in Microsoft technologies including Microsoft Teams and Power BI.

(b) Future savings/efficiencies being delivered

The solution offered by Charterhouse Voice & Data Limited t/a Symity will provide the telephony platform with the ability to add further digital tools to enable Council staff to perform their roles efficiently, both on-site and remotely with a view to meeting the channel aspiration of 60-80% of demand to be dealt with digitally.

(c) Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact

The Council's Customer Experience team, alongside IT, will continue to review need and usage through the contract term and ensure the reconciliation process is undertaken.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
The current systems that support the Council's Customer Service Centre function do not novate to the County Council at end of the SSO contract.	The telephony system that is required from 01 October has been identified and is achievable within the current timeframe. This product will support the Digital Customer Service Function and the Council customer contact points from 1 October 2022. Delivery of a telephony platform will be required for day one. Experience from the ITO contract and the ability to set up telephone platforms in relatively short periods allows for reassurance.
Supporting infrastructure is nearing end of life and does not fully support the technologies employed within the new telephony solution	Procurement of replacement infrastructure that supports the telephony channels and enables integration to the new telephony solution was already being progressed and orders will be placed shortly for this hardware refresh via the standard IT refresh process

7 Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1 [Our Council Plan](#) priority: Making best use of resources;
- a. Continual efforts to achieve value for money in procuring the telephony system and support;
 - b. Making best use of resource and systems to administer services digitally.
- 7.2 The procurement (including the G-Cloud 12 Framework Agreement) has been conducted in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and complies with WSCC Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts.
- 7.3 All UK-GDPR and data protection legislation compliance requirements are set out in the CCS Framework Agreement and the supplier's service offer.
- 7.4 The CCS Framework Agreement states that suppliers will provide to the Buyer a yearly report based on its Corporate Social Responsibility activities and steps it has taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains or in any part of its business.
- 7.5 It is not considered necessary to undertake an equality impact assessment in relation to the procurement of this technology. Equality assessments will be applied to the application of the technology to service delivery to ensure compliance with the public sector equality duty. As set out in decision report [SSED05 21-22](#) the Council's IT Team is committed to monitor and review any emerging issues and ensure a plan is in place to provide for any relevant consultation and mitigations as
- 7.6 The proposal has no implications under the Human Rights Act 1998.

7.7 There are no foreseeable crime and disorder implications to this proposal.

Contact Officer: Claire Hiskey (Service Improvement Manager – Communities)

Background papers: N/A

Appendices: None