

To: City Executive Board

Date: 7th December 2011

Report of: Head of Business Improvement

Title of Report: Award of contract for the provision of an Out of Hours Call Handling Service and Lone Worker Monitoring System to the Council.

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report:

To grant project approval and delegated powers to the Executive Director for City Services to award a contract for the provision of an out of hours call handling service and lone worker monitoring system.

Key decision? No.

Executive lead member: Councillor Val Smith.

Policy Framework: An efficient and effective Council.

Recommendation(s):

- 1) Grant project approval for the provision of out of hours call handling and a lone worker monitoring system.
- 2) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for City Services to enter into new out of hours call handling and lone worker monitoring contract(s) for the next 3 years with the possibility of a further 2 year extension.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the procurement route being undertaken to appoint a supplier(s) to provide an out of hours call handling service and / or a lone worker monitoring system to the Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council currently has a contract with the Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust, trading as Astraline, for both the provision of an out of hours calls handling and lone worker monitoring system. This contract is currently used by Oxford City Council, West Oxfordshire District Council & Cotswold District Council, The Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council.
- 2.2 The out of hours call handling service operates between the hours of 6pm and 8am (4.30pm on a Friday including weekends). There is provision in the current contract to extend these hours to accommodate bank holidays and other events.
- 2.3 Previously both services were provided by Oxford City Council via the call centre located at Beckley View. The Councils needed to find another provider of these services, at relatively short notice, by September 2010. Due to the value of the contract and the requirements of Council standing orders and EU procurement law, it was only possible to put in place an interim 1 year contract.
- 2.4 The current contract expires at the end of September 2011. The Procurement Team is tendering this contract on behalf of the named authorities in 2.1, with the additional option of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire District Councils being able to use the contract if they so wish. The procurement team together with an officer panel from the client service are in the process of re-tendering these requirements.
- 2.5 The Council spends approximately £17,000 a year on these services split as:

Out of Hours Call Handling	£9,000
Lone Worker Monitoring Service	£8,000
Total	£17,000

Since October 2010, the volume of out of hour's calls that have gone through the current supplier is 3617.

3. Tender Process

- 3.1 The value of this contract is likely to exceed the EU Procurement Regulations for goods and services over the life of the contract and necessitates an EU compliant procurement process. In addition to advertising the contract in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) this tender has been advertised via the South East Business Portal and the Council's website. The Council is carrying out a restricted tender (two stage process) and is currently awaiting the return of tenders from up to 14 suppliers.

- 3.2 The evaluation panel includes members of Procurement, the Customer First Programme Manager, the Licensing and Development Manager and representative officers from the other Councils. The financial suitability of the tenderers is being assessed by the Finance Team.
- 3.3 The evaluation panel have determined the relevant financial and technical evaluation criteria that will provide the most economically advantageous contract. Contractors must demonstrate that they are technically and operationally competent and are able to meet the specification in their tender proposal and meet the Council's requirements in relation to the Living Wage and sustainability.
- 3.4 The tender has been offered as two lots: provision of an out of hours call handling service and lone worker monitoring system. Tenderers may bid for any or both of the lots according to their expertise in providing these services.
- 3.5 The new contract will be put in place for three years, with the potential for a further two year extension at the sole discretion of the Council. Although the terms and conditions will be common to all Councils, each Council will have a separate contract with the supplier(s).

4. Savings

- 4.1 Tenderers have been requested to submit proposals which include ideas for reducing the cost of call handling and lone worker monitoring.

5. Other Options

- 5.1 The Constitution and Procurement Strategy requires officers to advise what other options are available before giving project approval and awarding a contract of over £100K. These are detailed below:

Continue as we are - The current Out of Hours Call Handling and Lone Worker Monitoring contract is due to expire at the end of September. To remain compliant and ensure best value is achieved, the Council is obliged to make provision for a replacement contract.

Use an existing contract or framework set up by another organisation - There is no suitable contract that meets the needs of the Councils.

Oxford City Council provides both services in house - Oxford City Council investigated the possibility of providing these services in-house; however, with the benefit of financial scrutiny, it was proved that it would not be cost effective to do so.

6. Benefits of this Contract

- 6.1 The tender process will enable bidders to submit competitive pricing and tailor their offers to meet the Council's requirements. The contract will also require the provider to meet the Council's policy requirements.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Customer Services currently hold sufficient budget to tender this contract and the tender price is not expected to exceed the amount spent last financial year, however this will be considered as part of the evaluation process.

The lone worker monitoring budgets are currently devolved across the service areas using this service. Going forward we will investigate the contract monitoring benefits of centralising the lone worker monitoring budgets within Customer Services.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 This contract is being tendered in accordance with the Council's Constitution and appropriate procurement law.

9. Climate Change/Environmental Impact

- 9.1 Tenderers will be asked how they are able to contribute to the Council's carbon reduction policy.

10. Equalities Impact

- 10.1 There are no equalities implications.

11. Risk

11.1

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation
Pricing comes in at a higher rate than the Council is currently paying.	H	Customer Services has anticipated that this may be the case and has allocated an increased budget for the service.
There is a much higher usage of the out of hours call handling service than in previous years.	L	It is anticipated that the increased budget allocation will cover any modest increases.

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