

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3293

Arcus planning back-office system renewal

Executive summary:

This Mayoral Decision (MD) seeks approval to spend £280,800 on a two-year extension of the licence Arcus, the back-office system that supports the GLA's planning service.

Arcus has been in operation for the past four years and has enabled workflow management and efficiencies across the service. The system is used across the Development Management, Viability, London Plan and Environment teams; and facilitates closer collaboration with Transport for London. The system enables shared access to, and management of, planning referrals and documentation.

Renewing the contract will allow the GLA's planning service to continue its work. It will also enable further streamlining and collaboration initiatives across the teams, helping them to deliver a more joined-up and efficient service.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves expenditure of £280,000, to cover the cost of an Arcus licence from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2026. This includes:

- 92 system-user licences
- 70 PDF measuring-tool licences
- 30GB file storage
- 5,000 customer/community logins per month.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Signature:

19/9/24

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (the GLA Act), the Mayor is responsible for strategic planning in London; must produce a strategic spatial strategy for London; and must keep this strategy under review. The Mayor also reviews strategically important applications through the application referral process; and can call them in to be determined.
- 1.2. In 2019, under MD2525, the GLA undertook a procurement to replace its in-house system at the time, PAWS. Because the Mayor's planning processes are very different from those of other planning authorities, only a few back-office system providers were willing to develop solutions that met the service's specific needs. The winning supplier was Arcus, and the new planning back-office system went live in 2020. The PAWS system was decommissioned shortly afterwards.
- 1.3. In 2022, under MD3044, the GLA signed a new two-year contract for Arcus to provide user licences and storage costs for its planning back-office system. This contract had an option to extend for another two years; and provision for a second two-year extension beyond that.
- 1.4. The GLA Planning team must be able to operate as both a strategic policy body and a local planning authority. It therefore requires a range of tools and functionality, along with clear, robust business processes, to support its functions.
- 1.5. This open, up-to-date back-office system has had many benefits, including:
 - workflow improvements
 - faster submission for boroughs
 - online payments for pre-application meetings and planning performance agreements
 - the ability to monitor, track, report on and share information about referable applications.

Any future system must aim to maintain and build on these benefits. This will enable the service to further streamline its business processes; minimise staff overheads; and deliver sustained and better services.

- 1.6. The system is now used to manage the workflow of users that input into the GLA's planning referral process, including Environment, and Housing and Land. This has enabled a more joined-up process; and reduced delays (and risks of delays) in helping the Mayor deliver this statutory process. This is particularly important given the tight timescales for the Stage 1 and 2 referral processes. There have been further benefits in terms of the collaboration programme, where Transport for London (TfL) staff can now access, and participate more easily in, the referral process. The Planning team is currently embedding more of the processes used by TfL's spatial planning teams into the same platform.
- 1.7. This extension option was included in the original contract. This decision would enable that extension to be applied.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Objectives

- 2.1. Renewing the licence would deliver the following outputs and objectives for our back-office system:

- continuing to embed robust and lean business processes across all of the planning service's development-management functions
- a clear set of processes (including process documents) enabling workflow tools to make the planning process more transparent
- a live dataset showing how the GLA's planning service has performed, with monitoring data for the service and referral process
- minimising overheads.

Other benefits

2.2 Adopting the Arcus system enabled other potential benefits, which will be maintained through renewal, including:

- the decision-making process is more transparent for Londoners
- increased recording and reporting of affordable housing
- faster consultation processes, and integration of consultees' comments into the process
- workloads and pressures across the planning service are more visible; and logjams in the planning process are spotted earlier
- reduced pressure on TfL's IT department (who have recently replaced the GLA's Technology Group)
- better interaction with remote and agile working
- integrated payment systems enabling payment for services upfront – this will reduce management overheads, and reduce potential for unrecovered debt.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The GLA is subject to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This Act requires the identification and evaluation of the likely potential impacts, both positive and negative, of GLA decisions on those with protected characteristics. The Mayor must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This may involve, in particular, removing or minimising any disadvantage suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic; and taking steps to meet the needs of such people. In certain circumstances, compliance with the Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one.
- 3.2. The project is unlikely to have any particular impact, or difference in impact, on any persons with a protected characteristic. The day-to-day changes from this project will be limited to the GLA's internal business processes. It is not expected to create any adverse impact on staff with protected characteristics; but this will be monitored, and any matters that arise will be managed in line with HR policies.

4. Other considerations

Project costs

- 4.1. Extending the contract will create the following licence costs:

Description	Unit price
1 October 2024 – 30 September 2025	£140,400
1 October 2025 – 30 September 2026	£140,400
Total	£280,800

4.2. Key risks and issues

Risk description	Probability 1 (low) to 4	Impact 1 (low) to 4	Mitigation/risk response	Risk rating
Seeking and implementing a replacement system would add costs and resources; and would mean a long period without a back-office system whilst the new one is put in. Use of this platform is central to delivering the benefits of collaboration between the GLA and TfL.	1	4	Renew the Arcus licences.	Green
Arcus has been, and remains, developed to streamline the GLA's planning processes as much as possible. Not renewing would mean losing momentum on these benefits.	1	3	Renew the Arcus licences.	Green
Dependency on one supplier who has developed a tailored product for the GLA.	2	4	The system is built on a Salesforce platform, so it can be managed by other suppliers if required. We will also plan for an early procurement process before September 2026 (when the next extension period ends). This will reassess the market and explore alternative back-office systems.	Green

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.3. The GLA's planning service is key to delivering the Mayor's London Plan. This back-office system supports processing, monitoring and decision-making on referable planning applications, which are assessed against the range of London Plan policies for new developments.

Conflict of interests

- 4.4. Special regard must be given to risks around parties' interests in the development process. There are occasions where suppliers will act for developers and planning authorities at the same time. Safeguards are in place to ensure that conflicts of interest do not normally arise; where they do, appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place. These include ensuring: the GLA data environment is secure, and access is managed by the GLA only; and clear relationship-management is in place with the supplier.
- 4.5. There are no conflicts of interest to note from anyone involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

Impact assessments and consultation

- 4.6. This decision concerns the objectives set out in London Plan policies. The London Plan's development included a public consultation process and an integrated impact assessment, incorporating sustainability, community safety, health and equalities assessments. There is no requirement to further consult or undertake an impact assessment specific to this decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The contract for the GLA's back-end planning system will end in September 2024, and so needs renewing. The system supports the planning service, which is a statutory responsibility of the Mayor.
- 5.2. The renewal cost is £280,800 across two financial years (£140,400 per year), to be funded from:
- the Planning budget
 - recovery of costs from other users of the platform, including TfL and the Environment team
 - reserves accrued from planning income, held for the purposes of delivering the planning service.
- 5.3. The specific amount from each source is to be confirmed. However, there is sufficient overhead in the Planning team's reserves to cover the cost, if necessary.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The Mayor is responsible for strategic planning in Greater London. His statutory powers are set out in Part VIII of the GLA Act and the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008; this sets out which strategic planning applications are referable to the Mayor.
- 6.2. Section 30 of the GLA Act gives the Mayor the power to do anything he considers will promote the improvement of the environment in Greater London. Section 34 of the GLA Act gives the Mayor the authority to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of any of the GLA's statutory functions.
- 6.3. Renewing this licence will ensure the Mayor can carry out his strategic planning and environmental functions efficiently and effectively. As such, it may reasonably be regarded as facilitating, or being conducive or incidental to, the exercise of the Mayor's powers detailed above.
- 6.4. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the PSED – namely, the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender reassignment, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief) and persons who do not (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.5. If the Mayor makes the decision sought officers must ensure that the extension option is exercised in accordance with the contract before the extended services commence.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Appointment of supplier	30 September 2024
Contract start date	1 October 2024
Contract end date	30 September 2026

Appendices and supporting papers:
None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Peter Kemp has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Philip Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Jules Pipe has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 16 September 2024.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

16/09/2024

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor.

Signature:



Date:

16/09/2024

