

DIRECTOR DECISION – DD156

Title: Consultation Platform

Executive summary

A number of consultations took place in 2021-2022, including the main modifications for the OPDC Local Plan. OPDC officers reviewed a number of options to deliver an online engagement platform. This included discussions with the GLA London Plan team who previously appointed BangTheTable for GLA planning guidance consultations. BangTheTable demonstrated significant experience in offering a wide range of both front-end user experience and back-end functionality to support accessibility and allow OPDC to efficiently and effectively analyse consultation activities, outreach and engagement.

BangTheTable were appointed under the OPDC standard purchase order conditions of contract in 2021/22 for an annual cost of £10,000 under Board approval (January 2020). It has allowed OPDC to host a bespoke online platform to help facilitate all consultations that have taken place and help OPDC remain committed to informing and involving stakeholders and the local community. Having been a successful tool for OPDC's consultations over the last year, approval is sought to extend the consultation platform for a further two years; if it is not renewed, it will severely compromise OPDC's ability to function efficiently and to consult stakeholders and the public effectively. Therefore, procuring an alternative provider would not offer value for money as the work is already underway and continuity is required.

Approval is sought for an exemption from OPDC's Contracts and Funding Code to appoint BangTheTable for a further two years via a single source route.

Decision

The Chief Executive Officer approves:

- i. Expenditure of up to £22,000 to extend the existing contract with BangTheTable for the use of online engagement software for a further 2 years.; and
- ii. An exemption from the OPDC Contracts and Funding Code to appoint BangTheTable without a competitive exercise via a Single Source Route.

Cumulative expenditure on the contract inclusive of previous approvals totals £32,000.

Authorising Director

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and has my approval.

PP: Lucy Owen – COO

Signature:



Date: 14 June 2022

PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**1. Background and context**

- 1.1 The main modifications for the Local Plan were consulted on between May and July 2021. To help support this consultation and future consultations it is important to reach a wider, more diverse audience, including seldom heard groups, and to provide consultation materials in an online accessible easy to reach format.
- 1.2 OPDC officers reviewed a number of options to deliver an online engagement platform. This included discussions with the GLA London Plan team who previously appointed BangTheTable for GLA planning guidance consultations. BangTheTable demonstrated significant experience in offering a wide range of both front-end user experience and back-end functionality to support accessibility and allow OPDC to efficiently and effectively analyse consultation activities, outreach and engagement.
- 1.3 The platform allows OPDC to have the following outcomes on consultations taking place:
 - User friendly and engaging to ensure improved outreach;
 - Ability to use OPDC branding and project specific branding
 - Accessible through different media – phones/tablets and desktops
 - Allows OPDC the functionality to display pages within London.gov.uk webpages and searchable for search engines;
 - Links to social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
 - Allows OPDC to have the flexibility to display pages with a wide range of features that are easy to implement with limited training needs; and
 - Reporting tools for analysis of all stakeholder responses
- 1.4 To date, the platform has helped support OPDC on the modifications to the Local Plan, Article 4 Direction, Old Oak Neighbourhood Area Extensions, Harlesden Canalside and North Acton streets and spaces. It has demonstrated a seamless user experience and improved our outreach and engagement with the OPDC area.
- 1.5 The Chief Finance Officer Report at OPDC Board in January 2020 approved expenditure of £50,000 on engagement and statutory and non-statutory public consultations for the Local Plan. BangTheTable were appointed under the OPDC

standard purchase order conditions of contract for a one-year contract of £10,000 for 2021/22. We need to extend the appointment of BangTheTable for a further two years due to our ongoing consultations.

2. The proposal and how it will be delivered

- 2.1 The proposal is for expenditure of up to £22,000 over a two-year period to secure the continued use and licence for the BangTheTable OPDC consultation platform (consult.opdc.london.gov.uk) to help support OPDC in its continued requirements and commitments to effectively engage with stakeholders and the local community. In order that OPDC may continue to operate the consultation platform going forward, authorisation is sought for a two-year period.

3. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 3.1 The objective is to continue the licence with 'BangTheTable' to support future consultations for a further two years.
- 3.2 The consultation tool will have the following outcomes:
- Effective and efficient consultations by OPDC, thereby supporting delivery of OPDC's Statement of Community Involvement and Consultation Strategy
 - Transparency and appropriate access to information ensuring effective engagement and public participation
 - Continue good experience for users, with fit-for-purpose pages that are easily directed to and accessible
 - Secure storage of all documents, videos and content of all consultations

4. Strategic fit

- 4.1 Continued use of BangTheTable will help inform a number of existing and future OPDC workstreams including:
- 4.2 Delivering policy DI3, within OPDC's Local Plan regarding stakeholder engagement.
- 4.3 Informing the development of all OPDC strategies and projects that are supported by public consultation
- 4.4 Supporting the implementation of OPDC's Statement of Community Involvement and Consultation Strategy.

5. Project governance and assurance

- 5.1 The Head of Engagement and Social Values will be responsible for contract management overseeing the use and training of the consultation platform.

- 5.2 The OPDC Engagement Officer will act as day-to-day contact with BangTheTable and will report to the Head of Engagement and Social Values and escalate any issues.

Risks and issues

- 5.3 If the consultation platform is not renewed, it will severely compromise OPDC's ability to function efficiently and to consult stakeholders and the public effectively. This could result in:
- Reputational damage for the Mayor and the OPDC, among key stakeholders and the wider public: and
 - Risk of challenge and associated costs: and practical difficulties for members of the public and interested parties accessing information.

6. Equality comments

- 6.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, OPDC must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.¹²^[OBJ]
- 6.2 Continuing use of the consultation platform will support access to consultation materials. This will benefit everyone, regardless of abilities, needs, genders, beliefs, and identities. This will help contribute to delivering the key actions within OPDC's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and will ensure that London is a fairer, more inclusive, and more equal city.

7. Other considerations

1.1 Use and justification of single-source procurement route

- 7.1 This decision from seeks an exemption from the OPDC's Contracts and Funding Code so that the current platform may continue to be used for a current consultation. The current contract with the provider will expire in May 2022. Therefore, it is not possible to delay this decision to enable a competitive procurement exercise to take place otherwise the consultation will be negatively impacted. Furthermore, the current platform is necessary to continue to use due to the time constraint on training for users and finding an online consultation tool that is accessible and user friendly, both externally and internally.

¹ The protected characteristics and groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. Fulfilling this duty involves having due regard to: the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a protected characteristic or one that is connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The duty must be exercised with an open mind and at the time a Decision is taken in the exercise of the OPDC's functions.

- 7.2 An exemption from the normal procurement processes is required on the grounds that the consultation platform is a continuation of existing work that cannot be separated from the new consultations that will be taking place over the next two years.

1.2 Obtaining value for money

- 7.3 Officers are confident that the extension of the existing service to BangTheTable offers good value for money. This is based on the extensive use of platform to date, existing training of officers to utilise the platform and, as BangTheTable is utilised by the GLA London Plan team, providing a consistent user experience for users for both OPDC and London planning guidance.

8. Conflicts of interest

- 8.1 No one involved in the preparation or clearance of this Form, or its substantive proposal, has any conflict of interest.

9. Financial comments

- 9.1 The cost of the contract, £11,000 per annum for two years, will be apportioned equally between the Planning Policy, Engagement and Social Value and Regeneration and Economic Development Budgets.

Legal comments

- 10.1 The report above indicates that the decision requested of the CEO falls within the OPDC's object of securing the regeneration of the Old Oak and Park Royal area and its powers to do anything it considers appropriate for the purpose of its objects or purposes incidental to those purposes, as set out in the Localism Act 2011.
- 10.2 The procurement of the consultation-platform services from BangTheTable is valued at £22,000.00. Section 9 of the OPDC's Contracts and Funding Code (the "Code") requires that the OPDC undertake a formal tender process or make a call off from an accessible framework for procurements with a value between £10,000 and £150,000. However, section 10 of the Code also provides that an exemption from this requirement may be justified on the basis that the services comprise the continuation of existing work which cannot be separated from a new project. The officers have set out at paragraphs 7.1 to 7.3 above the reasons why the procurement of BangTheTable falls within the said exemption. Accordingly, the director may approve the exemption, if the director be so minded.

Appendices

- None

Other supporting papers

- OPDC Board Paper – Chief Finance Officers Report 30 January 2020

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information in this Form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). OPDC aims to publish the Form within three working days of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the Decision (for example, impacting a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date (when it will be published). Deferral periods are kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Part 1 – Deferral

Publication of this Part 1 is to be deferred: **No**

The deferral is until: N/A

This is because: N/A

Part 2 – Confidential information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in or attached to any separate Part 2 Form, together with the rationale for withholding the information at this time.

There is a separate and confidential Part 2 Form: **No**

DECLARATIONS

Drafting officer: Vicki-Marie Price has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirms that:



Advice: The Finance and Legal teams have commented on the proposal.



CONFIRMATIONS

Section 106 funding: This use of S106 to fund the expenditure proposal was approved via a Section 106 spend proposal form on N/A

SMT review: This Decision was circulated to the **Senior Management Team** for review on Tuesday 14 June 2022.

Chief Finance Officer

Financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this Form.

Signature: 

Date: 14 June 2022