

## REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2525

### Title: Planning Back-Office System

#### Executive Summary:

This Mayoral Decision seeks approval to fund the delivery of a replacement back-office system for the Planning team to manage the referral process on major planning applications.

The proposed new back-office system will enable the delivery of a top performing planning service by streamlining planning processes and increasing productivity through automation and workflow management. The back-office system will also enable the publishing of documents and replace the need for the current older, less efficient web services.

A full procurement exercise has taken place, and the most suitable product has been selected. This decision seeks approval to award a contract to Arcus Global to provide the required software.

#### Decision:

That the Mayor approves expenditure of the following from the Authority's pre-application planning reserve:

1. £201,550 for the provision and two years licensing of new back-office planning software from Arcus Global Limited; and
2. Up to £40,000 for completing the data set and setting up the system ready for use.
3. A delegation to the Assistant Director for Planning to approve expenditure of £68,000 in 2021-22 to pay for a one-year extension to the provision and licensing of the system, exercising the option that exists in the contract to do so. This delegation is to be exercised through a decision form.

#### 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:



Date:

6/11/19

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Greater London Authority Act 1999 places responsibility for strategic planning in London on the Mayor and requires him to produce a strategic spatial strategy for London, and to keep it under review.
- 1.2 The Mayor is also able to intervene in the planning process, through his power to review strategically important applications, and call them in to be determined through the application referral process.
- 1.3 The GLA is currently leading the way nationally in using technology and data to make more informed decisions relating to planning and infrastructure provision.
- 1.4 The GLA planning team needs to be able to operate as both a strategic policy body as well as 'Local Planning Authority' for the purpose of consulting on and determining planning applications, having all the tools and functionality available to it that any of the boroughs planning authorities have, including clear, robust business processes that support its functions.
- 1.5 A procurement process has taken place in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code led by Transport for London (TfL) Commercial who undertake the GLA's procurement function and have advised and conducted the procurement process. GLA have utilised a G Cloud Framework which it is permitted to use. The winning provider being Arcus Global.
- 1.6 The key benefits to the business from implementing the chosen software Arcus will be:
  - online submission of pre-applications and referable applications;
  - automated collection and updating of case related information (locally defined information requirements);
  - workflow and case management;
  - templated and auto populated reports;
  - faster and more efficient consultation;
  - publishing of documents online;
  - performance reporting; and
  - cloud hosting and access.

- 1.7 Collectively these will enable the service to streamline its business processes, limiting the need for growth in support staff overheads and delivering better services.

#### **2 Objectives and Expected Outcomes**

- 2.1 The objectives of replacing the planning back-office system are to:
  - embed lean business processes across all development management functions of the planning service;
  - limit the need for growth in support overheads across the planning service;
  - ensure there are clear workflow processes in place; and
  - have clear and clean performance monitoring data for the planning service and referral process.

**2.2 The outputs of this project are:**

- a live dataset of performance of the GLA as a planning service both in terms of:
  - a. meeting statutory targets; and
  - b. impact on the planning system;
- the planning service will have a clear set of processes (including process documents) that enable workflow tools to increase transparency in the planning process; and
- robust business process will be in place.

**2.3 There are likely to be other benefits from this project, including:**

- increased transparency in the decision-making process for Londoners;
- increased recording and reporting of affordable housing;
- reduced administration overheads;
- faster consultation processes and enabling consultees' comments to be integrated into the process;
- increased visibility of workloads and pressures across the planning service and early identification of logjams in the planning process;
- greater oversight of the impact the GLA's planning service is having on the city;
- reduced pressure on the GLA's Technology Group;
- increased ability for remote and agile working; and
- integrated payment systems enabling payment for services upfront, reducing the management overhead of payments, and increasing the amount of costs recovered.

### **3 Equality comments**

**3.1** The GLA is subject to the public-sector equality duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act (Act) 2010. The Act requires the identification and evaluation of the likely potential impacts, both positive and negative, of GLA decisions on those with protected characteristics.<sup>1</sup> The Mayor is to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as 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 it.

**3.2** The project is unlikely to have any difference in impact on any persons resulting from a protected characteristic. The change as a result of this project day to day will be internal to the organisation being changes to business processes, where matters are managed through HR policies to ensure no adverse impact on any person with protected characteristics is created. Externally the implementation of this project will ensure more transparency in the Mayor's decision making, making decisions more accessible and searchable. Provisions for compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty were included in the procurement process. The new website will need to be developed and tested in accordance with the new GLA accessibility requirements which will ensure that there is no adverse impact on any person with protected characteristics.

---

<sup>1</sup> These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and in certain circumstances marriage and civil partnership.

## 4 Other considerations

- 4.1 This project contributes to the effective delivery of the Mayor's statutory planning responsibilities, including:
- enabling accurate data on decisions relating to the provision of housing for Londoners and genuinely affordable housing;
  - enabling joined up decisions for planning—helping utilities plan for growth so that a lack of infrastructure does not become a blocker to housing delivery—as well as providing opportunities for business to use and commercialise this information to further opportunities for Londoners;
  - increasing transparency in the call-in process and speeding up the ability of Local Planning Authorities to refer applications to the Mayor for consideration and receive timely responses that enhance the Mayor's influence in the decision-making process;
  - providing a collaborative, cross-London effort towards open data and transparency; and
  - enabling centralised collection of this data to deliver more joined up services for all, removing the postcode lottery of planning services, enabling Londoners to become more engaged in shaping the environment they live in, in line with the Mayor's Good Growth agenda.

### *Project Costs*

- 4.2 Prices were sought for a two-year contract with the ability to extend for up to an additional year. Following this a further procurement process must take place. The projected costs for the delivery of this project are as follows:
- Cost of back-office system (including hosting, initial set up, security and support for two years) = £201,550
- 4.3 There are additional costs that are likely to be incurred by the organisation, including:
- Project management £5,000
  - Data transfer work £10,000
  - Decommissioning/hardware £10,000
  - Training £5,000
  - Contingencies (inc. Storage) £10,000
- 4.4 These costs, whilst currently not confirmed, are not likely to exceed £40,000.
- 4.5 In accordance with the procurement framework used, we are only able to enter into the contract for two years, but the contract can be extended for an additional year. The cost for the year's extension would be limited to £68,000. Any extension will be subject to a further Director's Decision in accordance with the GLAs Contracts and Funding Code. The cost of this would be met from planning income.

## Risks and Issues

4.6 There are a number of key risks to the delivery of this project, including:

Risk #	Risk description and impact	Inherent risk assessment (out of 4)			Control measures / Actions
		Prob.	Impact	Overall	
1	The system is externally hosted, and hosting fails	1	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosting is managed by Salesforce through our contact with Arcus Global, an international brand with leading security controls in place</li> <li>• Hosting reports will be available to demonstrate ongoing stability</li> <li>• Stability will be reviewed as part of account management</li> </ul>
2	The system does not have all the functionality required to match the GLA's specific business processes	1	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An early review of the software has been carried out</li> <li>• Early conversations with the software provider</li> <li>• Collaborative working with the supplier and the service area to ensure all requirements are met, and where they can't be met, agreed processes are put in place</li> </ul>
3	That the changes may not create workload savings	1	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No plan in place to reduce workforce, any reductions can be achieved through natural wastage.</li> </ul>
4	That the funding allocated by the GLA may be insufficient to achieve objectives	2	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget set at a level that includes sufficient contingency</li> </ul>

## *Funding*

- 4.7 This project will be funded from funds set aside in the Pre-Application Planning Reserve by the GLA's planning service. This income has been generated through the pre-application process. These funds have previously been ringfenced for this project.
- 4.8 There are no conflicts of interest to declare for any officers involved in the drafting and clearance of this decision form.

## **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1 Approval is sought for expenditure of up to £241,550 for the purchase, implementation and licensing (software for 24 months) of a back-office system.
- 5.2 The expenditure will be funded from the Pre-Application Planning Reserves.

## **6 Legal comments**

- 6.1 Paragraphs 1 to 2 of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development or the promotion of the improvement of the environment in Greater London; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
- Pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
  - Consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
  - Consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to Section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3 Officers have indicated in paragraph 1.5 of this report that the framework under which it is proposed the services required are to be "called-off" on behalf of the GLA are in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code, relevant procurement law and requirements of that framework. Officers must ensure that appropriate "call-off" documentation is put in place and executed by the successful bidder and the GLA before the commencement of the services.

## **7 Planned delivery approach and next steps**

- 7.1 This programme will be managed as two projects:
- Business process mapping
  - Back-office system implementation

7.2 The scheduling for this project will be agreed in coming weeks at a kick-off meeting with the supplier. The supplier has committed to a full implementation prior to the end of this calendar year.

**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 either be published 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**

Is there a part 2 form - NO

**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

**Drafting officer:**

Peter Kemp and Juliemma McLoughlin have drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirm the following:

✓

**Sponsoring Director:**

Debbie Jackson 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.

✓

**Corporate Investment Board**

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 4 November 2019.

✓

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:**

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

Signature

Date

04.11.19

TOM MIDDLETON ON BEHALF OF MARTIN CLARKE

**CHIEF OF STAFF:**

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

Signature

Date

4/11/2019