

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	25 May 2023
Subject:	Council Corporate Internet and Wide Area Network Connectivity Provision		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

Following an unsuccessful procurement exercise this report seeks authority to complete a direct award to Virgin for a continuation of the existing wide area network and connectivity provision to the Council for a up to a 36-month period, whilst Sefton reviews the contractual requirements of the Council and considers alternative procurement options. This may include the opportunity to procure at a regional level with the Liverpool City Region.

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be authorised to make a direct award for 2 + optional 1 year contract via a CSS Framework to the Council's current provider to ensure the continuation of the current services in relation to the Councils Corporate Internet and Wide Area Network provision.
- 2) That the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services be authorised to grant the one-year extension if deemed appropriate.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure continuation of services

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

To re-issue the tender to market - due the time required to complete another tender exercise and the subsequent timeline for implementation this would not be possible prior to the end of the current contractual arrangement. This option will also not allow

the authority to take the opportunity potentially afforded by a regional procurement across the Liverpool City Region. (LCR).

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The service will be funded via existing Council Budgets.

(B) Capital Costs

There is no capital costs.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
No impact existing services will continue.	
Legal Implications:	
There are no legal implications.	
Equality Implications:	
There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
As this report maintains the current position in terms of network connectivity there is no impact either positive or negative on the climate emergency.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Not applicable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Not applicable.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Ensures continuity of critical service provision.
Place – leadership and influencer: Not applicable
Drivers of change and reform: Not applicable

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Not applicable.
Greater income for social investment: Not applicable
Cleaner Greener Not applicable

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.7193/23) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5393/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

The Head of Corporate Procurement has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report.

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Background

- 1.1 In January 2022 a report was submitted to Cabinet to seek approval to conduct a procurement exercise for corporate internet and wide area network provision for a period of 5 years (with the option to extend for a further 2 years), this report was approved and also provided delegated authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources & Customer Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services to award a Contract resulting from the procurement exercise and any subsequent extension to the contract.
- 1.2 A key requirement of the procurement was to make sure that there was suitable ICT core connectivity service in place for Sefton. This would ensure that the Council has the means to provide internet connectivity, network connectivity, and secure remote access as well as providing the opportunity to modernise and make improvements to the network in line with new technologies available in the marketplace such as SD-WAN (Software Defined Wide Area Network).
- 1.3 The procurement also considered the longer-term opportunities to reduce overall ICT Contract Costs to the Council by providing options within the contract for the Council to procure additional services such as Wi-Fi Services during the terms of the contract allowing for Contract rationalisation.
- 1.4 Furthermore, the authority was keen to exploit the opportunity afforded by the LCR Backhaul network, and asked suppliers to consider the use of this network where it was deemed economically advantageous to do so, thereby providing faster and hopefully more cost-effective direct internet connections, with SDWAN providing the technical overlay for managing the network traffic and associated security requirements. This change in approach would also support Sefton's move to Cloud, with enhanced security and integrated firewalls to support both an office based and agile workforce. The technology also provides the opportunity to secure remote access to all applications from any end point (thereby replacing the current VPN solution), whether the applications are in the Azure Cloud, SAAS (Software as a Service) solutions from vendors or remain on premise. Thus, ensuring that the authority has a robust, flexible, and scalable network.

2 Process

- 2.1 A detailed requirements specification was developed in partnership with the Council's external ICT provider, Agilisys, ensuring that all technical standards and design principles were included within the documentation, not only in line with market standards but also to reflect the ambitious transformation agenda as defined within the New Ways of Working Programme.
- 2.2 The Council conducted a mini competition using Crown Commercial Service framework RM3808 "Network Services" 2. The opportunity was released in June this year and expressions of interest to bid were received from 8 suppliers. However, only two bids were received when the opportunity closed.
- 2.3 The procurement evaluation team was led by the Council's Senior Manager for ICT and Digital and included the Council's ICT Lead for Contracts and Procurement, The Council's Service Delivery lead, Agilisys Subject Matter experts

including Agilisys Service Delivery Manager for Sefton, Network Engineers, Security lead, plus Agilisys subject matter experts in Connectivity Procurement and Connectivity Solutions for Local Government, with previous experience of delivering similar projects for other authorities.

2.4 In relation to the tender evaluation the focus was initially on the quality assessment, to ensure that the vendor could provide a solution that technically met the requirements of the organisation. The following scoring scale was used by the team against each question, this is the standard scale used by the procurement team in Sefton.

Score	Rating	Description
0	No Response	No proposal has been received. The response is unacceptable.
1	Unacceptable	A proposal at this rating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds very little or no confidence that the Responder can deliver the requirements due to insufficient evidence of relevant ability, understanding, skills, resources, and quality measures. Builds very little or no confidence that the Responder's approach/solution will deliver the requirements due to insufficient evidence or an inappropriate approach/solution.
2	Poor	A proposal at this rating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raises reservations that the Responder can deliver the requirements due to insufficient evidence of relevant ability, understanding, skills, resources, and quality measures. Raises reservations that the Responder's approach/solution will deliver the requirements due to insufficient evidence or an inappropriate approach/solution. <p>Note: a response at this rating includes reservations which cannot be easily resolved with the Responder pre-contract award (i.e., changes which would distort the competition) or during the contract term without impacting time, quality, or cost.</p>
3	Acceptable	A proposal at this rating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirms that the Responder can deliver the requirements through evidence of relevant ability, understanding, skills, resources, and quality measures. Provides an acceptable approach/solution to delivering the requirements utilising standard strategies, plans, tools, methods, or technologies. <p>Note: an acceptable response may include minor reservations that can easily be resolved with the Responder pre-contract award (i.e., changes which would not distort the competition) or during the contract term without impacting time, quality, or cost.</p>

4	Good	<p>A proposal at this rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds confidence that the Responder can deliver the requirements through evidence of relevant ability, understanding, skills, resources, and quality measures. • Provides a good approach/solution to delivering the requirements utilising appropriately tailored strategies, plans, tools, methods, or technologies. <p>Note: a good response may include a small number of minor reservations that can easily be resolved with the Responder pre-contract award (i.e., changes which would not distort the competition) or during the contract term without impacting time, quality, or cost.</p>
	Excellent	<p>A proposal at this rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds a high level of confidence that the Responder can deliver the requirements through evidence of relevant ability, understanding, skills, resources, and quality measures. • Provides an exceptional approach/solution to delivering the requirements utilising appropriately tailored and at times innovative strategies, plans, tools, methods, or technologies. <p>Note: an excellent response should not include any reservations.</p>
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2.5 The first moderation session completed by the evaluation team raised a significant number of questions, further clarifications were sought, these were independently reviewed by each member of the team and then a further moderation session was completed on the 5th of October 2022. Unfortunately, significant concerns were raised regarding the suitability either bidder to meet the requirements of Sefton.

3 Conclusion

Across the evaluation team of subject matter experts there was no agreement that either the of the suppliers bidding would be suitable to meet the requirements of the Sefton Contract

4 Proposed way forward

As a result of the procurement process not identifying a provider there is a need for the council to continue to receive the required service. During this time this will allow the contractual requirements of Sefton to be reviewed and consideration of alternative procurement options. This may include the opportunity to procure at a regional level with the Liverpool City Region.

As a result of this it is proposed to reprocur the existing services via a direct award for 2 + 1 year contract via a CSS Framework to Virgin to ensure the continuation of the current services in relation to the Councils Corporate Internet and Wide Area Network provision, this may include the uplift of a small number of sites to ensure they meet operational requirements. Such an approach would be in compliance with the council's contract procedure rules.