

**Revised Decision Report – Lead Member  
Decision**

Forward Plan Reference: FP/24/03/16

Decision Date – 29/4/24

Key Decision – Yes

Confidential Information – Appendix 1

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## **Planning Systems Contract Consolidation**

**Executive Member(s):** Lead Member for Transport and Digital

**Local Member(s) and Division:** N/A

**Lead Officer:** Andy Kennell, Service Director - ICT

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## **Summary / Background**

1. Somerset Council currently operate six separate instances of Planning software, five of which support the formerly District-level Planning services across the County. Negotiations with the incumbent supplier of these ex-District systems have resulted in a proposal to consolidate the existing five individual contracts into a single, new contract, while generating savings for the Authority.
2. The five ex-District Planning systems are a mix of two applications – Acolaid and Uniform. These will not be affected by the contract consolidation, the individual instances of Acolaid and Uniform will continue to be used in their current formats until longer term transformation is undertaken in the future.

## **Recommendations**

3. The Lead Member for Transport and Digital:
  - a) Agrees to the consolidation of the 5 legacy District Council Planning and Building Control case management system contracts into a new single 3-year agreement starting on 1 April 2024 with the chosen supplier as set out in Appendix 1.
  - b) Agrees the case for applying exemption information provision as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A and therefore treat the attached confidential Appendix 1 in confidence, as it contains commercially sensitive

information, and the case for the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.

### **Reasons for recommendations**

4. The consolidation of the five instances of software into a single contract will deliver the following benefits:
  - Cost savings of approximately £173,000 over the 3-year contract period.
  - A reduction of administrative overheads and costs of managing multiple contracts with multiple suppliers.
  - A consolidated approach will enhance supply chain resilience by working with a single supplier to build a strong relationship, ensure continuity of service and respond effectively to disruption.

### **Other options considered**

5. Renewal of the existing contracts on an individual basis was considered, however this was not pursued as it will not provide the cost-saving outlined in this proposal. (See **Appendix 1 for details**).
6. Going out to the wider marketplace and incorporating the Waste and Minerals requirements currently delivered through the MasterGov application supplied by DEF Software Ltd would necessitate transformational activity in the Planning service. Somerset Council lacks the capacity to do so currently, given the Authority's primary focus on the creation of a consolidated Revenues and Benefits system.

### **Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

7. Delivery of the cost savings will contribute to overall ICT savings commitments as outlined in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

8. Funding for this contract is built into the ICT base budget, and there is an annual saving of £57,690 that the budget will benefit from because of this consolidation.

9. The current ex-Mendip contract expires in May 2025. Exiting early from this contract does not incur any additional penalties or exit fees and all savings are included in the revised contract cost. This is a consolidation of existing contracts and there are no risks arising from this.

### **Legal Implications**

10. In line with procurement rules, the new contract will be awarded through the CCS framework (CCS VAS [Vertical Application Solutions - CCS \(crowncommercial.gov.uk\)](https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk).)

### **HR Implications**

11. There are no HR implications.

### **Equalities Implications**

12. There are no Equalities implications as it is the consolidation of contracts only and will not affect the service delivery aspects of the planning and building controls functions.

### **Community Safety Implications**

13. There are no Community Safety implications.

### **Climate Change and Sustainability Implications**

14. There are no Climate Change and Sustainability implications.

### **Health and Safety Implications**

15. There are no Health and Safety implications.

### **Health and Wellbeing Implications**

16. There are no Health and Wellbeing implications.

## Social Value

17. Not applicable.

## Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

18. This proposal was approved at the Contract and Procurement Control Board on 29<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

## Background

19. In October 2023, Somerset Council ICT were asked to examine whether savings could be made by consolidating down to the cheapest incumbent supplier across several service applications thus reducing the number of systems and contracts inherited from the ex-Districts.

20. The outcome revealed that, from a cost-avoidance perspective, the focus must be on a consolidated Revenues and Benefits system, and it is not therefore possible to resource a transformative approach to Planning and Building Control while this project is underway.

21. The option to consolidate the application contracts that support Planning & Building Control was identified as an area where the Authority could make savings and move old contracts onto a compliant framework.

22. Somerset Council currently operates six separate instances of Planning software. Of these, five are supplied by Idox PLC and were operated by the former District Councils at the point that the new unitary Somerset Council was created on 1/4/23. These five are used to support what were District-level Planning services across the County and are a mix of two applications – Acolaid and Uniform.

23. The other Planning application currently in use is MasterGov from DEF Software Ltd, which was used by the former Somerset County Council to manage Minerals and Waste planning services within Somerset. As it is a separate application provided by a different supplier, it is not within the scope of the contract consolidation covered within this Decision Report.

24. There will be no changes in the products or services currently provided by each of the existing contracts, so there will be no operational or service impacts arising from the contract consolidation.

25. Discovery work for Planning and Building transformation will start during the new contract term, with a view to going out to tender during year 3 of that contract. Transformation activity will incorporate all Planning systems in use by Somerset Council, including the Minerals and Waste functions currently served by the MasterGov application.

## Background Papers

26. None.

## Appendices

- Confidential Appendix 1\_ Idox Planning systems contract consolidation

## Assurance checklist

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	9/4/24
Communications	Peter Elliott	20/3/24
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	18/4/24
Procurement	Claire Griffiths	19/3/24
Workforce	Alyn Jones	26/3/24
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	19/3/24
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Andy Kennell, ICT Director	1/3/24
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	26/3/24
Executive Lead Member	Richard Wilkins	14/3/24
<b>Consulted:</b>	<b>Councillor Name</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Local Division Members	On publication	N/A
Opposition Spokesperson	Diogo Rodrigues	19/4/24
Scrutiny Chair	Bob Filmer	18/4/24