

Record of Officer's Decision

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Date of Decision:	20 December 2024
Decision Maker (Officer):	Jane Jennings Development & E-Services Manager Will Lodge Communications Manager
Authority for Delegated Decision (Cabinet/Committee Decision or Scheme of Delegation – provide reference):	Part 3, Schedule 3 – Delegation of Executive Functions delegated to Officers paragraph 4.4 (1) <i>With the exception of the matters which the Leader of the Council has determined are to be discharged by the Cabinet or individual Portfolio Holders, as detailed in the Cabinet Scheme of Delegation, the Chief Executive and the Corporate Directors have delegated authority to discharge all executive functions within their respective service areas as set out in Article 12, having authority to act on all such matters. The Chief Executive shall determine from time to time what the service responsibilities of the Deputy Chief Executive and each Corporate Director and Head of Service shall be.</i> <i>(2). The delegation of powers to officers is underpinned by the principle and culture of consultation and liaison with Members, as appropriate and the ability for officers to refer matters to the relevant decision maker i.e. individual Portfolio Holder or a meeting of the full Cabinet, where it is felt that this is appropriate due to the nature of an issue</i>
Identify which Portfolio Holder(s)/Committee Chairman consulted?	Consultation has taken place with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance (Cllr Mark Stephenson); and the Portfolio Holder for Assets (Cllr Peter Kotz)
Ward Member(s) consulted?	N/A
Is it a Key Decision?	No
Is it subject to call-in?	No
Decision Made:	Officer decision to purchase e-newsletter software 'e-shot' supplied by Forfront Ltd on a 1-year contract with the option to extend for a further +1 year.

	The software allows TDC to send out direct electronic communications to those signed up to it. Email communications are standard practice for the vast majority of organisations, including local authorities, and can cover a range of topics such as news, vacancies, committee updates, and any number of service-specific bulletins. In our increasingly digital age almost everyone has an email address, with most having it at their fingertips on a smartphone, making this vital communications channel. It is proposed TDC would begin with a news newsletter and from there build a portfolio up. While this would require careful exploration and analysis, there is the potential for RoI; for example, through reduced missed waste and increased recycling credits.
Reason for Decision (if a report was produced to support the Decision, refer to or attach it):	Reason for the decision: 1) Policy. The adopted Communications Strategy has a target to adopt at least one email newsletter by the end of March 2025 (subject to all the necessary approvals); this project was also included in the previous Communications Strategy. It could potentially deliver across Our Vision, but in particular 'Financial sustainability and Openness'. 2) Finance. There was a previous cost pressure for this project for the 2024-25 financial year and ongoing for future years. Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 15 November 2024 an in-year budget adjustment of £19,000 to support the project, as part of the Financial Performance Report 2024/25 - General Update at the end of September 2024. Following market testing of various software solutions, the officers' preferred choice is e-shot from a company called Forfront Ltd. This option would cost £9,500 for year 1, and £6,000 thereafter. 3) Value for Money. Their fees and charges are comparable with IT industry and to note: this pricing is (a) the cheapest of three quotes obtained by officers (while also being the preferred option following a demonstration and research among other Essex authorities); and (b) based on prices which are part of the G-Cloud 14 Procurement Framework. 4) A trusted technology support partner. Forfront Ltd have proven to be the preferred choice for several Essex authorities following research conducted by the

	Essex Digital Partnership (EDP) with the majority using e-shot and others currently migrating over. 5) Cybersecurity and Information Governance. Forfront Ltd follow NCSC guidelines for email security and anti-spoofing. Have a UK based infrastructure, data storage and operations and use channels that provide the best Return on Investment (ROI). The company also has the following Security Governance and Risk Certifications: WCAG 2.1 AA or EN 301 549, government security clearance up to Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS), ISO/IEC 27001 certification, Cyber essentials and Cyber essentials plus. 6) Partner ethos. As neighbouring authorities also use the same solution, they are willing to work alongside council IT resources to share knowledge/ information, assisting in the development of new skills sets, to improve the current system and implement new processes benefiting the digital services available to the residents of Tendring. 7) Framework agreement procurement in accordance with our procurement rules of procedure.
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	The procurement route is through the UK G-Cloud framework (G-Cloud 14) is in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy framework. Adequate funding is in place following the decision by Cabinet as part of the finance report at the November 2024 meeting. A Data Protection Impact Assessment and an Equality Impact Assessment have been completed as part of this project.
Details of any Alternative Options Considered and rejected (together with reasons):	Alternative provider: Alternative providers were considered as part of the procurement process. This option was rejected as the selected supplier demonstrated Best Value for the Council. In-house solution: Feasibility of building a solution in-house was considered by the Council's IT Service but ruled out as beyond the capacity with current workloads. Not continuing the project: This was ruled out as this is a specific action of the adopted Communications Strategy and meets other business case criteria (such as finance and risk).

Details of any declarations of interest (by Portfolio Holder/Committee Chairman who was consulted by the officer, which related to the decision) If relevant, a note of the dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer:	N/A	
Reason Decision, or supporting Report, is not published: <i>Tick one or more of the specific exemptions, and Give more information in the final box with regards to why the exemption applies and outweighs the public interest test (which is in favour of disclosure).</i>	☒	Not applicable – Decision [and report] to be published
	If Report is not to be published – tick one of the following boxes:	
	☐	
	☐	N/A
	☐	
	☐	
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Officers

Signed: J Jennings

Jane Jennings

Title: Development & E-Services Manager



Will Lodge

Title: Communications Manager