

## **EXEMPTION FROM PROCUREMENT RULES**

### **Bereavement Services Management System**

#### **Background**

The Bereavement Services use a Crematorium and Cemetery administration system to record and retain all work cremation, burial and memorial function on behalf of Tendring District Council as the "Burial Authority". The System (Epilog) ensures that all documentation and personal information is recorded and managed in line with industry best standards.

Epilog has been used by the council for the past 15 years and has received regular updates over this time. The company "Gower" have provided an excellent service in terms of software updates, maintenance and over the phone advice. Many other councils use this system including Colchester City Council because of its flexibility and the ability to adapt the system to the needs of the service without additional cost implications.

The current Annual fee is £2354.57 excluding VAT.

#### **Current Position and Proposal**

The current Crematorium and Cemetery System has not been upgraded since 2011, and the current version is no longer supported. In order to upgrade the system, it is recommended by our IT department for the company (Gower) to host the system as they upgrade the system when required without any additional consultancy cost, however this will come with additional annual costs with the latest quote being £7,800.00 excluding VAT per annum. This will include annual support and maintenance costs of £3800.00 and annual hosting costs of Epilog Sequel 3.1 of £4000 per annum. All current and additional licences are included. The annual cost for the system will be split between the Crematorium and Cemetery cost centres.

If the system is not hosted by Gower, the disadvantages and consequences are as follows:

- **Cost** – The costings of the required infrastructure and licensing would equate to a considerably higher amount than if hosted by Gower
- **Virtualisation of the database server is not recommended** (as stated in the specification received from Gower) – This would lead to physical hardware needing to be procured and move away from our digital transformation project and aims to move our on premise (physical) estate to our Microsoft Azure environment.
- **Government Cloud First Policy** - The government introduced a 'Cloud First' policy in 2013 for all technology decisions. Therefore, if we (TDC) were to host this system, and the need for infrastructure to be on premise (physical) we would be going against the Cloud First Policy

The system is embedded within all our processes and retains personal information relating to applications for Cremation, Burial and Memorials therefore would require substantial time to procure, test and implement. Balancing the fact the current system which is managed by Gower works well. This upgrade has been adopted by other Local Authorities with no issues. It is not proposed to explore alternative solutions at this time.

Gower currently manage all of the data held on the current Epilog system which include historic cremation and burial records and updating to the new version of Epilog Sequel 3.1 will be a smooth transition. Regularising this arrangement therefore requires a formal procurement decision which includes concurrence of the portfolio holder. The cost for the upgrade for Epilog Sequel 3.1 can be met from an approved cost pressure and the annual fee can be met from existing budgets.

It is requested at this time to be exempt from procurement rules where three competitive quotes via a locked tender box would be required due to the need to upgrade the current system to gain benefits from the latest version and to ensure data is secured as the existing system no longer offers regular software updates. If at a later date it is deemed Epilog Sequel 3.1 is no longer fit for purpose then a full tender exercise would take place.

Recommended

Signed.....

James Hill  
Open Space, Bereavement and Transport Services Manager

***If you concur with the above and an exemption from procurement rules is appropriate / justified, please confirm your agreement below:***

Signed.....

Cllr Mark Stephenson  
Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance