

TO: DIRECTOR: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

DATE: 16th JULY 2014

BROADBAND AND INTERNET SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS CONTRACT EXTENSION

(Chief Adviser: Learning and Achievement)

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 To seek Director approval for a two year extension to the current contract for the provision of broadband and internet related services to Bracknell Forest schools.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the option to extend by two years the current contract with RM for the provision of Broadband and Internet related services to schools be approved by the Director.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Bracknell Forest Borough Council is committed to ensuring that schools have access to a cost effective, secure and robust broadband connectivity and education internet provider service so that they, in turn, are able to provide the best possible service to pupils in terms of teaching and learning.
- 3.2 All schools participate in the Bracknell Forest Borough Council Contract for the provision of broadband and internet services, which has an overall value of approximately £250,000 per annum.
- 3.3 This contract was signed under the South East Grid for Learning (SEGfL) Phase 3 Framework Agreements and expires at the end of August 2014. The contract allows for a one or two year extension to August 2016.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 A full re-procurement was considered but the Schools Forum, at their meeting on 13th March 2014, agreed for the option of a two year extension to the current contract to be recommended to the Director for approval.
- 4.2 The current centrally organised and managed contract has delivered a good service and no schools have indicated that they do not want to be included in the new arrangements.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Bracknell Forest schools benefit from a secure, high speed, high reliability private broadband network that was installed using significant capital funds (£200k) around 2010/11. The fibre optic connections provide well for current educational needs and offer an easy route for future expansion. The network is provided entirely for the benefit of schools – the Council has no connections. All Bracknell Forest Local Authority schools and the Academy currently buy the service through a Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- 5.2 Overall, the Bracknell Forest Schools Broadband network is a significant success. Schools express high levels of satisfaction with the service and connection speeds. Complaints are extremely rare given the number of users and the amount of access.

- 5.3 There are many significant benefits to the current arrangements, some of which are listed below:
- (a) It is an education specific private network rather than being a direct connection to the public internet. This means that security and network traffic can be controlled very effectively and there are no data download or upload limits. This is the type of connection recommended by the DfE in their buying guidance for schools (June 2013).
 - (b) Service broadband provision is over high speed symmetric (same speed for downloading and uploading) 'fibre optic to the premises'. This is significantly superior to domestic and small business connections that are referred to as 'fibre' but which rarely enter the building on fibre optic cable.
 - (c) It is a managed service with full helpdesk provision from the supplier and local escalation routes through the Bracknell Forest 'ICT Helpdesk'.
 - (d) A very effective firewall is in place to maintain system security, e.g. protecting against attempted network intrusions.
 - (e) Internet access is monitored and logged to safeguard pupils and staff and to provide a level of independent protection for Headteachers and Governors in the event of allegations of inappropriate access, etc.
 - (f) Providing the network security and filtering at a higher level reduces significantly the amount of equipment, technical expertise, responsibility and hence cost that is required by individual schools.
 - (g) Connections are filtered for education use and schools can control their own filtering locally. Further developments in filtering technology are being implemented.
 - (h) The system is very reliable and there are service guarantees and payments back to schools if the service goes down for more than a day. It has proved reliability and resilience.
- 5.4 Provision of this type and quality is expensive, although comparisons with other Local Authorities and commercial offerings indicate that the underlying costs of Bracknell Forest connections are competitive for comparable services.
- 5.5 Should the two year extension be agreed then a new procurement process, using existing EU procurement compliant framework agreements, would commence in 2015 for a new contract to start September 2016. During this time detailed discussions would take place with schools in relation to any 'smoothing' of costs and potential sign up to any new contract.

Financial Implications

- 5.6 The service is fully funded by schools.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The decision to extend this contract rests with the Director by virtue of Contract Standing Order 8.2. Legal advice concerning the extension has, with the agreement of Legal Services, been provided by external solicitors direct to SEGfL.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 As schools are responsible for financing their internet and broadband services from their delegated budgets, the Borough Treasurer is satisfied that provided schools

continue to purchase through the contract extension, no significant financial implications arise from this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 This was undertaken through the procurement stage and included within the Functional Specification for the system.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Should the contact not be extended then there is a risk that schools would lose their current high speed, secure internet service.
- 6.5 The contract requires a high level of take-up from schools to remain financially viable. All schools currently purchase the service but there is now a wide range of alternative providers that schools can consider which may impact on future purchasing decisions. This risk has been mitigated by the inclusion of a priced 'get out' clause for schools during the term of the contract.

Other Officers – Head of Procurement

- 6.6 The tendering was arranged as a mini competition under the SEGfL Framework Agreement with assistance from the SEGfL Project Director. Corporate Procurement also assisted with the evaluation process of the original contract tender process.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Schools
ICT Advisory Group
Schools Forum

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 One to one meetings, group meetings, email, telephone, written reports.

Representations Received

- 7.3 None

Background Papers

Contract Variation RM/BFBC001

Contact for further information

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Signatory Details

Director of Children, Young People and Learning:

Date: