

**Report of Head of Employment Access and Growth**

**Report to Chief Officer Employment and Skills**

**Date: 1 December 2017**

**Subject: Waiver report to award a contract for the delivery of a pilot High Speed Rail Schools Engagement Project**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. As set out in the Best Council Plan 2017/18, the Council has an ambition for Leeds to have a strong economy and to be a compassionate city, tackling poverty and inequalities. This proposed project will contribute to the Best Council Plan outcome for everyone in Leeds to earn enough to support themselves and their families, and specific Best Council Plan 2017/18 priorities around supporting economic growth and access to economic opportunities, supporting communities and raising aspirations, providing skills programmes and employment support and helping people adjust to welfare changes. The proposals will also contribute to the Council's ambition to be a NEET-free city, and support the ambitions set out in the Council's 'More Jobs, Better Jobs' breakthrough project.
2. The Council has been working on behalf of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to develop a High Speed 2 (HS2) Skills and Supply Chain Strategy (SSCS) as part of a Leeds City Region HS2 Growth Strategy. The SSCS will set out the economic benefits of HS2 particularly relating to employment growth, skills development, and business growth and productivity, and how the city region intends to help the city region's residents and businesses benefit from these impacts.
3. One of the most important interventions that is being proposed in the SSCS is a careers education programme, aimed at reaching every pupil in the city region, to make them aware of the opportunities offered by careers included in the HS2 project and, more widely, the transport infrastructure industry (which includes the construction and infrastructure, manufacturing and engineering, digital and technology, and professional

services sectors). As well as awareness raising, the careers education programme will seek to help young people understand the ways in which they can enter the transport infrastructure industry, including what qualifications are appropriate, and progression pathways. Gender diversity is an important challenge for many of the sectors which will be involved in the delivery of the HS2 project, and a representative and inclusive workforce is a priority for both HS2 Ltd, but also the LCR SSCS.

4. To develop and showcase careers education good practice to Government and partners in the city, while at the same time preparing the ground for the future implementation of the LCR HS2 Skills and Supply Chain Strategy, the Council proposes to pilot a project to develop a suite of careers education materials for both young women and teachers to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by careers included in the HS2 project/the transport infrastructure industry, to help young people and teachers understand the ways in which they can enter the transport infrastructure industry, including what qualifications are appropriate, and progression pathways; and to pilot the materials with an agreed cohort of students in Years 7 and 8 in Leeds schools. An evaluation of the impact of the pilot will also be required to inform future delivery.
5. An opportunity has arisen to match-fund the Council's budget for this project with funding from the Careers Enterprise Company which is available to support a range of school-business engagement activity in the Leeds City Region. This would increase the overall funding for the project, providing the opportunity to engage with significantly higher volumes of young people, but would also enhance the prestige of the pilot through CEC's endorsement.
6. This match-funding can only be secured through entering into a contract with a specific provider who is able to draw down the funding and deliver in local schools. In this instance, the Ahead Partnership, a local social enterprise with considerable experience and expertise in schools-business engagement delivery (including significant provision in the city), including contracted delivery of programmes for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, is able to draw down CEC funding. For this reason, it is proposed to waive Contracts Procedure Rules (CPRs 8.1 and 8.2) and award a contract directly to Ahead Partnership for the delivery of the project.

## **Recommendations**

The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is recommended to:

- Waive CPRs 8.1 and 8.2 (need for competition and invitation of tenders for an intermediate value procurement) and award a contract to the Ahead Partnership to deliver a High Speed Rail Schools Engagement pilot project
- allocate funding of £18,000 from the Employment and Skills Strategic Account to the contract.
- note that the Head of Employment Access and Growth will be responsible for the implementation of this decision.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the rationale for a decision to waive Contracts Procedure Rules (CPRs 8.1 and 8.2) and award a contract directly to Ahead Partnership to deliver a pilot project to raise awareness of career opportunities in high speed rail and transport infrastructure more generally, with a focus on preparing the city's future workforce for the opportunities that the HS2 project will offer.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority has been asked by Government to develop a Growth Strategy for High Speed 2, setting out how the Leeds City Region intends to maximise the benefits of the construction and operation of the railway, and beyond that, the jobs created across the area through the catalytic impact of the line opening in 2033.
- 2.2 One important element of the HS2 Growth Strategy is a Skills and Supply Chain Strategy. This will set out the economic benefits of HS2 particularly relating to employment growth, skills development, and business growth and productivity, and how the city region intends to help the city region's residents and businesses benefit from these impacts. The development of the Skills and Supply Chain Strategy (SSCS) is being led by the Council's Employment Access and Growth team on behalf of the Combined Authority.

## **3 Main issues**

### **Reason for contracts procedure rules waiver**

- 3.1 The draft SSCS is proposing a range of interventions that will help the city region's residents and businesses benefit from HS2 in an inclusive and sustained way. One of the most important interventions that is being proposed is a careers education programme, aimed at reaching every pupil in the city region, to make them aware of the opportunities offered by careers included in the HS2 project and, more widely, the transport infrastructure industry (which includes the construction and infrastructure, manufacturing and engineering, digital and technology, and professional services sectors). As well as awareness raising, the careers education programme will seek to help young people understand the ways in which they can enter the transport infrastructure industry, including what qualifications are appropriate, and progression pathways.
- 3.2 Gender diversity is an important challenge for many of the sectors which will be involved in the delivery of the HS2 project, and a representative and inclusive workforce is a priority for both HS2 Ltd and the LCR SSCS.
- 3.3 A range of CEIAG activity with a particular focus on STEM subjects, which are closely allied to HS2 and the transport infrastructure industry, are already being delivered in the city region's schools. These include the #techgoals programme, funded by WYCA and delivered by the Tech Partnership, and the European Social

and Investment Fund supported Future Jobs Programme. These programmes offer a strong platform on which future provision can be based.

- 3.4 We have identified an opportunity to develop and showcase careers education good practice to Government and partners in the city while at the same time preparing the ground for the future implementation of the SSCS, and create a focus on gender diversity within the high speed rail workforce.
- 3.5 In developing this proposition, we have drawn on the extensive consultation with businesses, industry bodies, and education providers undertaken in the development of the SSCS, as well as our existing understanding of the CEIAG position in the city.
- 3.6 We are therefore proposing to deliver a pilot project to be delivered in three Leeds schools which will:
- develop a suite of careers education materials for both students and teachers to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by careers included in the HS2 project/the transport infrastructure industry, and to help girls and teachers understand the ways in which they can enter the transport infrastructure industry, including what qualifications are appropriate, and progression pathways. Particularly strong links to apprenticeship opportunities should be made;
  - pilot the materials with a cohort of pupils (120 per school) in Years 7 and 8 in three Leeds schools through tailored sessions, including enterprise challenges, delivering to 360 pupils in total;
  - ensure a strong representation of young women in the cohort, reflecting the importance of gender diversity in promoting careers in the field;
  - evaluate the materials/delivery to inform future delivery. Ownership of the materials developed will rest with the Council.
- 3.7 Existing careers materials have been developed by HS2 Ltd and piloted in some schools, and it will be important to draw on these materials to ensure alignment with good practice. However, we also want to tailor materials to the Leeds CR and Leeds labour market, ensuring our residents get a more locally representative understanding of the opportunities that HS2 offers them. So while the provider will be asked to draw on existing materials, the provision will be new and bespoke to the local position.
- 3.8 Another important principle we wish to observe is the co-design of the materials, involving both employers and teachers themselves. The provider will be asked to work with relevant employers in the design stage, alongside representatives from the Council's School IAG Network. This will ensure the materials are the best possible fit with industry expectations and the expertise of educators, as well as securing ownership from both parties. Finally, we wish to ensure that the project complements and is aligned to existing provision as set out in 3.3.

- 3.9 In doing the above we will demonstrate to local partners, including schools and employers, but also to Government and our young people:
- the quality of existing CEIAG provision but the need for further investment into CEIAG as part of the LCR HS2 Growth Strategy;
  - our willingness to utilise/bend mainstream/existing resources to support the implementation of the LCR HS2 Growth Strategy
  - our appetite to hit the ground running in the implementation of the HS2 Growth Strategy
  - our commitment to improving the scale, quality, and relevance of CEIAG for young people;
  - our commitment to a labour market that is more inclusive and representative, particularly in terms of gender; and
  - our appetite for working in partnership with schools and employers in co-designing provision.
- 3.10 Delivering the pilot project effectively, and maximising both outcomes for young people and learning for any future work, will require a provider to have:
- experience of designing, delivering, and evaluating careers education activity across one or more of the following areas: Transport; Construction and infrastructure; Engineering and manufacturing; Digital and technology, all of which feature in High Speed Rail/Transport career occupations and pathways;
  - experience of designing materials for school-based activity, in partnership/informed by engagement with employers and teachers, as well as a track record in working with employers to deliver activity, ideally in Leeds schools.
- 3.11 The above criteria limit the number of potential providers capable of delivering this project effectively.
- 3.12 A significant opportunity has arisen to match-fund the Council's budget for this project with £14,000 of funding from the Careers Enterprise Company which is available to support a range of school-business engagement activity in the Leeds City Region. This would increase the overall funding for the project, providing the opportunity to engage with significantly higher volumes of young people, but would also enhance the prestige of the pilot through CEC's endorsement.
- 3.13 This match-funding can only be secured through entering into a contract with a specific provider who is able to draw down the funding flexibly. In this instance, the Ahead Partnership, a local social enterprise with considerable experience and expertise in schools-business engagement delivery (including significant provision in the city and across sectors pertinent to the project), including contracted delivery of programmes for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority including the

ESIF Future Jobs programme, is able to draw down CEC funding. For this reason, it is proposed to waive Contracts Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2 (need for competition and invitation of tenders for an intermediate value procurement)) and award a contract directly to Ahead Partnership for the delivery of the project.

- 3.14 Due to commitments to the Careers Enterprise Company (who require a minimum of 120 outputs per school in order to draw down funding), and to a school, Abbey Grange, which has already indicated availability in term two of this academic year, Ahead Partnership has advised that they can deliver the pilot project in three schools. The other two schools will be identified by the Council in conjunction with the Head of Learning Improvement in Children and Families Services. It is also the case that given the time constraints on delivery, with the Council's funding needing to be committed and spent in the current financial year, it is appropriate to target delivery on schools which are ready and already committed to working with the provider. The selection of the two schools will be agreed with the Executive Member.

### **Consequences if the proposed action is not approved**

- 3.15 The Employment and Skills service has identified £18,000 of time-limited funding to commission this provision. The funding must be spent in the 2017/18 financial year. The time-limited nature of this funding means that a rapid mobilisation, and learning from practice and mainstreaming that learning is of critical importance to give the project sustainability.
- 3.16 Not proceeding with a contract award to the Ahead Partnership would also mean that the Council would be unable to match-fund the budget for this project with £14,000 of funding from the Careers Enterprise Company that the provider can draw down. This would significantly limit both the overall funding for the project, and the opportunity to engage with significantly higher volumes of young people.

### **Advertising**

- 3.17 No advertising has been carried out. It is considered that the capability and capacity of organisations to deliver this project is considered to be very limited. Further, the capacity of providers to draw down Careers Enterprise Company funding to match-fund Council funding is limited. It is not considered that the procurement would be of interest to organisations in other EU member states.
- 3.18 Given these factors, it has been considered inappropriate to advertise the project or procure in line with CPRs 8.1 and 8.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 The Executive Member for Employment, Skills and Opportunity has been consulted on this decision. Colleagues in the Council's Learning Improvement service have also been consulted in the development of the project ambitions. The Projects, Programmes and Procurement Unit have been consulted on the approach to Contracts Procedure Rules.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 An equality impact screening was completed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017. This identified that the decision to award a contract to the Ahead Partnership for the delivery of the pilot project would not have an impact on equality, diversity and inclusion characteristics.

## **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The proposals set out in this report contribute to the Best Council Plan 2017/18 outcome for everyone in Leeds to earn enough to support themselves and their families, and specific Best Council Plan 2017/18 priorities around supporting economic growth and access to economic opportunities, supporting communities and raising aspirations, providing skills programmes and employment support and helping people adjust to welfare changes.
- 4.3.2 The proposals will also contribute to the Council's ambition to be a NEET-free city, support the ambitions set out in the Council's 'More Jobs, Better Jobs' breakthrough project.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 The costs of this procurement is being met from the Employment and Skills Strategic Account, and is time-limited funding with expenditure to be committed no later than March 2018. Awarding a contract to the Ahead Partnership will increase the funding available to the delivery of the project, resulting in significant value for money and leverage being achieved through the Council's funding.
- 4.4.2 Effective contract management will ensure the Council achieves strong value for money from the project. Furthermore, although the sum of money allocated to the project is relatively small, the potential to demonstrate both impact and value for money in delivery to partners, especially Government, may increase the prospect of securing further funding for similar activity through the LCR HS2 Growth Strategy.
- 4.4.3 The timetable for the implementation of the decision is by the end of March 2018.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 There is no appropriate ISP, Exclusive Supplier, existing provider or Third Party Framework Agreement for the delivery of this project, and therefore CPR 8.1 stipulates that competition is required as the procurement is valued at or over £10k but at or below £100k. CPR 8.2 requires the Council to invite at least three written tenders.
- 4.5.2 In taking the decision to waive CPR 8.1 and 8.2 and award a contract, the Chief Officer must be confident that the decision represents best value, and represents an appropriate approach which is unlikely to be challenged. The Chief Officer must also consider whether the Chief Procurement Officer's comments and advice should be sought in accordance with CPR 1.3.

- 4.5.3 In this instance, the expertise and experience of the Ahead Partnership is considered to be highly appropriate and unique to this project, and offers significant confidence in their capability to deliver. In addition, their capacity to draw down match-funding from the Careers Enterprise Company, a facility not open to other providers, offers the opportunity to not only double the overall funding for the project, providing the opportunity to engage with significantly higher volumes of young people, but would also enhance the prestige of the pilot through CEC's endorsement. For these reasons it is recommended that the Chief Officer waives CPRs 8.1 and 8.2 and proceeds to award a contract. It is not recommended that the Chief Officer seeks comment and advice from the Chief Procurement Officer, who will receive a copy of this report and the delegated decision notice.
- 4.5.4 All other legal implications relating to the procurement of the service outlined in this report have been considered and addressed in this report.
- 4.5.5 This is a significant operational decision that it is not subject to call in.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 Project performance reports will be required on a monthly basis, and will form the basis for a contract management meeting between the Council and providers. A risk management plan will be developed and monitored as part of contract management arrangements.
- 4.6.2 To provide appropriate support to project participants, the providers will be required to provide suitably qualified and experienced personnel to deliver the contract, including current DBS registrations in place where required.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 This project is a significant opportunity to develop and showcase careers education good practice to Government and partners in the city while at the same time preparing the ground for the future implementation of the LCR HS2 Growth Strategy, particularly the Skills and Supply Chain Strategy and create a focus on gender diversity within the high speed rail workforce. The award of a contract to Ahead Partnership, an expert and experienced provider of schools-business activity and CEIAG, able to draw down match-funding from the Careers Enterprise Company, offers an opportunity to increase the available funding for delivery and improve the value for money of the Council's funds, as well as maximising outcomes for larger numbers of students to be engaged through the pilot.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is recommended to:
- Waive CPRs 8.1 and 8.2 (need for competition and invitation of tenders for an intermediate value procurement) and award a contract to the Ahead Partnership to deliver a High Speed Rail Schools Engagement pilot project

- allocate funding of £18,000 from the Employment and Skills Strategic Account to the contract.
- note that the Head of Employment Access and Growth will be responsible for the implementation of this decision.

6.2 The Head of Employment Access and Growth will be responsible for the implementation of this decision.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 There are no background documents.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.