

# Approval to directly award a new contract to IEG4 under the G-Cloud 13 Framework for the provision of Housing Benefit e-forms

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Report of: IDS Product Management (Peter Harding/ Sarah Liles)

Report to: IDS Chief Officer (Andrew Byrom)

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## Brief summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to enter a call-off agreement with IEG4 through the G-Cloud 13 Framework, at a value of £101,822.00 ex VAT. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

An eForm solution from the supplier IEG4 is currently in use by the Welfare and Benefits Service to enable the following functions:

- Make a claim for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Free School Meals.
- Enable existing claimants to submit details of any Change in Circumstances which may affect their entitlement.

The contract with IEG4 will expire 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, with no options to extend available, and there is insufficient time to implement a technical solution from any supplier other than the current/ incumbent supplier.

## Recommendations

- a) The Chief Officer is recommended to approve the direct award of a call-off contract under the G-Cloud 13 Framework for a 12-month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 for the eForm Solution. The call-off will be under the terms and conditions of the G-Cloud 13 framework.

## What is this report about?

- 1 The Council's Welfare and Benefits Service has implemented two online self-service forms for the purposes of gathering information from citizens relating to new benefit claims and the notification of any changes in circumstance.

- 2 These forms integrate with the council's revenue and benefits system, resulting in significant operational efficiencies by reducing the amount of data entry and other manual processing previously required, as well speeding up the processing of claims and changes for service users.
- 3 The current contract for the e-from solution expires 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, with no further options to extend, but there is now insufficient time remaining before contract end to implement a new technical solution, as such it is proposed to award a new 1-year contract via the G-Cloud 13 Framework to the current (incumbent) supplier at a cost of £101,822 (Ex VAT).

### What impact will this proposal have?

- 4 Continuation of service, with efficiency savings that far outweigh the contract cost.
- 5 Avoid degradation of service for service users reliant on benefits.
- 6 Provide sufficient time to not only complete competitive procurement exercise, but to also test and implement a new technical solution should a new supplier be selected.

### How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 7 No impact.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 8 Key stakeholders within the Revenue and Benefit service are in agreement that continued provision of the current eForms solutions is essential for ongoing service provision, as allowing the current contract to expire with no substitute eForm solution in place would result in massive service disruption, including long delays in cases being processed and a steadily increasing number of unprocessed backlog cases.

### What are the resource implications?

- 9 New contract cost is £101,822. All figures exclude VAT.
- 10 No technical resource implications for implementation of the solution as it would be a continuation of existing services.

### What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 11 No additional risk associated with awarding as it would be a continuation of existing services.
- 12 Failure to award a new contract could result in service failure and impact on vulnerable citizens. The service would need to revert to using paper forms, resulting in widespread impact on citizens and serious resource implications for the service.

### What are the legal implications?

- 13 This is a Significant Operational Decision, however it is not subject to a call-in. There are no grounds for keeping the contents of this report confidential under the Council's Access to Information Rules.
- 14 Use of a third-party framework is a permitted route in accordance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules (CPR) and is therefore, there is no requirement to go out to the wider market with an Invitation to Tender under CPR 12.3.2.
- 15 The G-Cloud 13 Framework is on the Council's list of approved frameworks to call-off from and by utilising this method, the Council is satisfied in the knowledge that IEG4 has gone through a competitive procurement exercise in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in order to be awarded a place on the framework.
- 16 The IDS Chief Officer is recommended to approve the direct award contract to IEG4 on the basis that this represents the best value to the Council.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success**

### **What other options were considered?**

- 17 Replace with inhouse build – potential to develop benefits e-Forms in house using existing API to integrate with Revs and Bens system. No external spend or future costs, but not achievable within current timescale.
- 18 Re-procure – Open competition or framework procurement exercise to award a new contract. Potential for a lower price or technical rationalisation, but not achievable by end of current contract due to implementation requirements. The contract would likely conflict with year-end, and testing and training requirements would cause significant disruption of service.
- 19 Do nothing – failure to award a new contract would require returning to paper forms, resulting in massive impact on benefits access for vulnerable citizens.

### **How will success be measured?**

- 20 Award of a new contract before current contract expiry
- 21 New contract end date moved away from end of financial year

### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

- 22 Award contract by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.
- 23 Product management and strategic sourcing to manage contract implementation
- 24 No additional implementation required as solution is already in use

### **Appendices**

- None

### **Background papers**

- None