

**Report of:** ICT Principal Service Support Officer

**Report to:** The Deputy Director of Children & Families

**Date:** December 2019

**Subject:** Approval to waive Contract Procedure Rules (CPR's) 8.1 and 8.2 and award a contract to Comm-Tech Voice & Data Limited (UK supplier of Mushroom Networks) for the purchase of hardware and support & maintenance in relation to the provision of Mobile Internet for Youth Services.

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: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

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### Summary of main issues

1. The legacy Viprinet mobile internet solution used by the mobile libraries is no longer supported and had to be replaced due to risks concerning PSN compliance, relating to the lack of support and unpatchable vulnerabilities.
2. The mobile libraries solution has recently been deployed using Mushroom Networks hardware and considerable resource effort has gone into ensuring the solution meets the network requirements of libraries, events and any other Council business unit that requires mobile internet services.
3. The justification for seeking to waive CPR 8.1 and 8.2 and award a contract to Comm-Tech Voice & Data Limited (Comm-Tech) is that the solution from Mushroom Networks is the only commercially available alternative to the Viprinet solution and Comm-Tech are the only UK based supplier capable of selling and supporting the Mushroom Networks devices.
4. The Council have already successfully utilised the Mushroom Networks hardware from Comm-Tech for the Leeds Triathlon, various Council events and for Mobile Libraries and the solution has proven to be a flexible, secure and reliable service.
5. A similar technical solution is available and is of a similar price but does not meet the Council requirements in terms of flexibility, supportability and security compliance.
6. The hardware is specialised in that it bonds multiple SIM cards from different service providers into a single secure network, capable of providing network connectivity to staff and members of the public. This provides a secure network capable of presenting Council managed networks such the corporate LAN or Leeds Free Wifi connectivity experience.

7. Comm-Tech are also able to provide and manage SIM cards for the Mushroom Networks devices, decreasing the cost of ownership of the solution and provide much needed network coverage in areas where O2 data coverage is weak.
8. If no contract is awarded, Youth Services (managed by Children's and Families Directorate, Learning for Life Service) will not be able to provide internet access to the public or to staff on the buses. This will pose significant reputational risk and prevent the Council from engaging with "hard-to-reach" communities by providing support locally to assist young people in education, towards employment or to assist them with resolving local issues.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Deputy Director of Children & Families is recommended to approve a waiver of CPR's 8.1 and 8.2 and award a contract to Comm-Tech Voice & Data Limited for the purchase of hardware and support & maintenance for a period of 3 years at a cost of £52,515.

This cost includes initial capital hardware spend (£42,255), support over the 36 month period (£2,430/annum equating to £4,860 for years 2 and 3) and the potential for up to £5,400/annum for SIM cards from service providers outside of our existing corporate O2 contract.

2. The total value of the contract is maximum of £52,515.

## **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Deputy Director of Children & Families to waive CPR's 8.1 and 8.2 and award a contract to Comm-Tech Voice & Data Limited for the purchase of hardware and support & maintenance for a period of 3 years.

- 1.2 Total for the contract is maximum of £52,515.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1.1 Leeds City Council has utilised Mushroom Networks hardware (provided and supported by Comm-Tech) previously to provide mobile networking services to Leeds Triathlon, Mobile Libraries and to various mobile events.
- 2.1.2 The Mushroom Networks hardware is also seen as a viable and cost effective alternative to that of providing a leased line in remote locations, such as Lyneham Farm, Leeds.
- 2.1.3 The Council cannot renew their legacy Viprinet hardware support and this has since been replaced with Mushroom Networks hardware for mobile libraries. Changing technology choice for the solution at this stage would incur considerable resource effort and the associated costs in re-engineering to achieve the same delivered outcome.
- 2.1.4 If the Council does not provide a mobile network solution for Youth Services, the newly refurbished Youth Services vehicles will not have internet services.

## **3 Main issues**

### **Reason for awarding the contract**

The justification for seeing a waiver of CPR's 8.1 and 8.2 to award a contract to Comm-Tech is that the Mushroom Networks hardware and 4G bonding technology products are proprietary and therefore only Comm-Tech, as the sole UK supplier, can provide the necessary technical support.

### **3.1.1 Options Appraisal**

#### **Option 1 - Do Nothing**

Should the contract not be awarded, the Council would be unable to provide any SLA service guarantee to directorates on both failure / incident resolution relating to any mobile networking provision.

#### **Option 2 - Award contract to Comm-Tech Voice & Data Limited (UK)**

The use of mobile networking for Youth Services is seen as a key requirement for Children's and Families Directorate, Learning for Life Service.

Comm-Tech Voice & Data are the only UK based partner for Mushroom Networks partner in the UK to provide such a solution and were recommended by Mushroom Networks. Given our existing experiences with the hardware and support of events and mobile libraries implementations, it would be highly beneficial to Children's and Families Directorate to continue to provide mobile internet services to remote staff and young members of the public where required.

As Comm-Tech Voice & Data can also provide and manage 4G SIMs, it is seen as beneficial to the overall solution as there are no other Council services where non-corporate SIMs from other service providers are required. As such, the ability to provide and support the hardware as well as act as an agent for mobile network service provider SIMs reduces the overhead on internal IT support in managing the solution.

## **4 Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 The Head of Children's and Families Directorate (Customer) has been consulted and this report reflects the continuing requirements for a high bandwidth Mobile Networking solution.
- 4.1.2 ICT Service Delivery (Service owner) and Head of ICT Strategy, Architecture and Commissioning (Stakeholder) have been consulted and this report reflects the continuing requirements for support of such a high bandwidth Mobile Networking solution. In addition, consultation has taken place with ICT Strategic Sourcing for advice on appropriate sourcing routes.

### **4.2 Equality and diversity/cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 There are no Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration issues associated with this decision.

### **4.3 Council policies and best Council plan**

- 4.3.1 The service enables the Council to engage with "hard-to-reach" communities by providing support locally to assist people into employment or assist them with resolving local issues.

- 4.3.2 The service also underpins cross cutting Council requirements to provide a range of essential services and functionality to all connected employees of the Council and its citizens.
- 4.3.3 Becoming a more efficient and enterprising Council – the solution directly supports the achievement of this best Council plan objective. This includes improving customer satisfaction (from resolving issues in a timely manner based on SLAs), creating flexibility within our workforce (software supports Changing the Workplace objectives for new ways of working) and becoming more enterprising (introduction of new applications and services based on the software).

#### Climate Emergency

The mobile internet solution is aligned with the Council policy on climate emergency by reducing requirements for the implementation of fixed or leased line internet provisions, particularly for shorter term projects.

The Mushroom Networks equipment is specifically designed to be low power consumption and to be powered by batteries in a vehicle. To minimise power consumption further, the equipment is powered off when not in use.

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

- 4.4.1 Resource costs to change the use of Mushroom Networks solution to support a refreshed mobile internet based solution would be estimated to be in the region of 1,000 hours and would not be best use of Council funds. The Mushroom Networks solution provides a centrally managed, secure and flexible solution with no additional Cisco routing infrastructure required per site.
- 4.4.2 The value of purchases of Mushroom Networks equipment via Comm-Tech is estimated to be in the region of £76,000 over the last 3 years, which successfully provided services to the Council's coordinated events such as Leeds Triathlon, internet access for on-site staff, delivery of a mobile libraries internet solution for nine (9) mobile libraries vehicles, Box Office payments and various other events including those at Council sites such as Temple Newsam.
- 4.4.3 This equipment will enable us to remain PSN compliant and provide secure, reliable mobile network access for remote locations or where a network is required to be provisioned quickly or in a temporary capacity.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information and call-in**

- 4.5.1 The award of a contract at this value by waiving CPR'2 8.1 and 8.2 is a Significant Operational Decision and is not subject to call in. There are no grounds for keeping the contents of this report confidential under the Access to Information Rules.
- 4.5.2 Due to the level of spend it is considered that there is the potential risk of challenge that organisations interested in providing these services have not been provided with an opportunity to tender for this work. In addition, there is also a risk of challenge that interested organisations may argue that there are no real technical reasons justifying the Council seeking a waiver of CPR's 8.1 and 8.2, and that the Council is simply seeking to circumvent the application of the rules. However, due to the reasons set out in section 3 above these risks are perceived to be low.

- 4.5.3 These comments should be noted by the Deputy Director of Children & Families and in making the final decision should be satisfied that doing so represents best value for the Council

### **Risk management**

- 4.5.4 Should the contract not be awarded, the Council would be unable to provide any SLA service guarantee to directorates on any mobile internet solution for Youth Services. This directly supports both Front Line Council service provision for Youth Services and other back office users across the Council.
- 4.5.5 Any risks associated with the delivery and on-going provision of hardware and support & maintenance once the contract is awarded will be managed by the Council's Contract Manager in accordance with the Contract Management Plan and the Comm-Tech Service Delivery Management Plan.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 To ensure the continued provision of mobile network access for mobile libraries and Council coordinated events, the contract should be awarded to Comm-Tech Voice & Data Ltd.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Deputy Director of Children & Families is recommended to approve a waiver of CPR's 8.1 and 8.2 and award a contract to Comm-Tech Voice & Data Limited for the purchase of hardware and support & maintenance for a period of 3 years at a cost of £52,515.
- 6.2 This cost includes initial capital hardware spend (£42,255), support over the 36 month period (£2,430/annum equating to £4,860 for years 2 and 3) and the potential for up to £5,400/annum for SIM cards from service providers outside of our existing corporate O2 contract.
2. The total value of the contract is maximum of £52,515.

## **7 Background documents**

- 7.1 None