

Authority to make a direct award for the provision of Blue Badge Digital Services

Date: 28 July 2022

Report of: Head of Shared Services

Report to: Director of Resources

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for the legislation that sets out the framework for the Blue Badge scheme. Local authorities are responsible for determining and implementing administrative, assessment and enforcement procedures in accordance with the governing legislation.
- The DfT has contracts with two suppliers: one for application and badge management (Valtech), and the other for printing and despatching badges (APS). All Local Authorities in the UK may access these agreements (known as the Blue Badge Digital Service – BBDS) via 'access agreements' to the DfT central contract.
- This report seeks approval to make two direct awards for the provision of Blue Badge Digital Services to update the access agreements in place between the council and these suppliers (Valtech and APS).

Recommendations

- The Director of Resources is recommended to make two direct awards for the provision of Blue Badge Digital Services under Contract Procedure Rule (CPR) 9.5. Each contract has a value of £40k per year and the contract term is 05.02.2020 to 04.02.2024 (awarded retrospectively):
 - To Valtech Ltd ('Valtech') for Application and Blue Badge Management
 - To Allied Publicity Services (Manchester) Ltd ('APS') for Printing and Dispatch of Blue Badges

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The Blue Badge (Disabled Persons' Parking) Scheme was introduced in 1971 under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The aim of the scheme is to help people with severe mobility problems caused by visible and non-visible disabilities to access goods and services, by allowing them to park close to their destination. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 gives local authorities the power to administer the Blue Badge scheme.
- 2 The Department for Transport (DfT) is the Government's policy lead for the blue badge scheme and is responsible for the legislation that sets out the framework for the scheme. It leads on any changes to the law and on national strategic initiatives such as the implementation of the Blue Badge Digital Service (BBDS). The BBDS is a service that is available to all local authorities in England. BBDS is used to process blue badge data for the 200-plus local authorities who have entered into an access agreement with the suppliers of the service. It provides core services such as secure printing, personalisation and distribution of the Blue Badge; a central database of all active Blue Badges, historical records to support fraud and enforcement initiatives and key information on badge holders; an online eligibility checker and an online application form.
- 3 The DfT is responsible for letting the contract with the service management provider for BBDS and for the ongoing management of that contract. It specifies the security standards that the system should meet, and other technological requirements necessary to ensure compliance with the GDPR. BBDS is supported by two suppliers; one for application and badge management (Valtech), and the other for printing and despatching badges (APS).
- 4 Local authorities are responsible for determining and implementing administrative, assessment and enforcement procedures in accordance with the governing legislation. All Local Authorities in the UK may access the BBDS via 'access agreements' to the DfT central contract.
- 5 Access agreements are currently in place between the council and these suppliers. This report seeks approval to make a direct award to Valtech and APS to update the agreements in place.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 6 The proposal will support the effective and efficient administration of Blue Badges which helps people with severe mobility problems to access goods and services, by allowing them to park closer to their destination.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 7 Enquiries have been made of the DfT, PACS has been consulted and IDS have oversight in respect of the technical interfaces involved.

What are the resource implications?

- 8 There are no additional resource implications as this is a continuation of the existing arrangements in place.

What are the legal implications?

- 9 The contracts were procured nationally by the DfT and all Local Authorities in England were required to sign up to access agreements with the two suppliers. As there is genuinely no competition for these services, no legal implications have been identified.

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

- 10 No specific risks have been identified in relation to the direct award of these contracts. However, a general review of Blue Badge administration is being undertaken as part of the programme of continuous improvement within the contact centre. Any risks highlighted as part of this review will be mitigated accordingly.

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

- 11 The effective and efficient administration of Blue Badges supports Health and Wellbeing by helping people with severe mobility problems to access goods and services, by allowing them to park closer to their destination.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 12 No other options were considered as it is a requirement to use the suppliers that have been specified by the DfT.

How will success be measured?

13 The suppliers will continue to deliver services in line with the contract and customer satisfaction will continue to be monitored.

What is the timetable for implementation?

14 Immediately.

Appendices

15 None

Background papers