

Legible Leeds: Direct Award to Placemarque for the provision of artwork and design services

Date: 6th March 2023

Report of: Head of City Centre Management

Report to: Chief Officer, Operations and Active Leeds

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report recommends that a direct contract award of contract is made to Placemarque for a period of two years commencing on 01 March 2023, to carry out artwork and design services for the 'Legible Leeds' wayfinding project.

The value of the work (around £30k - £40k across two years) is classed as Intermediate Value Procurement under Contract Procedure Rule (CPR) 8.

Recommendations

- a) The Chief Officer, Operations and Active Leeds, is requested to approve the direct award of contract under Contract Procedure Rule 8.3, to Placemarque for a period of two years, to carry out artwork and design services for the 'Legible Leeds' wayfinding project. The contract will commence on 06 March 2023 for a period of two years and at a contract value of £30k-£40k.

What is this report about?

- 1 The 'Legible Leeds' pedestrian wayfinding system was originally approved by Executive Board in 2009, with the ambition of improving the visitor experience to Leeds city centre, ensuring people are able to navigate their way around on foot, driving awareness of, and footfall to the key visitor destinations.
- 2 Since 2009, the Legible Leeds project has been gradually extended to the point where there are over 100 wayfinding signs on-street, and over a million maps have either been printed or downloaded.
- 3 Placemarque won a competitive tender process in 2016 and were awarded a three year contract that expired in 2019. Since then, because the work related to Legible Leeds is piecemeal and low-value by nature, a formal contract wasn't re-entered into, but the Council has retained the services of Placemarque when needed.
- 4 Placemarque carry out the artwork and design elements of the project. So when the mapping needs to be updated or a sign needs to change, they carry out the relevant design work. A separate procurement process for the signage manufacturer was completed in February 2023.
- 5 Physical changes to Leeds city centre over the next few years will necessitate the continued expansion and updating of the Legible Leeds network of signs and maps. Changes to the train station, City Square and Southbank continue, while Aire Park, SOYO and the Innovation Arc areas will all need reflecting in update mapping and wayfinding. For this reason, the timing is appropriate to formally enter into a contract with an artwork and design contractor again.
- 6 Even with these developments, the work carried out by Placemarque under this contract will be classed as Intermediate Value Procurement (around £30k - £40k across two years).
- 7 Contract Procedure Rule 8.3 states that "Where the relevant Chief Officer considers there is genuinely no competition such that only a particular organisation or provider can meet the Council's specific requirements (e.g. when commissioning a unique product or service) a waiver of CPRs 8.1 and 8.2 need not be obtained. However, before making any decision the Authorised Officer must consult with PACS and the lack of competition must be formally evidenced in writing and approved by the relevant Chief Officer as part of a Delegated Decision before the contract is entered into."

Justification for Direct Award

- 8 The justification for the Direct Award is that only Placemarque can fulfil the Council's specific requirements at this time because:
 - a) Placemarque hold all of the artwork for every sign and map in the city centre. Having built up this resource over the last seven years, it would be expensive and resource-intensive (given the relatively low value of the contract) to transfer these assets over to any new supplier, and for that supplier to be able to technically work with those assets. It is therefore considered that Placemarque is the only provider that can meet the Council's specific requirements.
 - b) Placemarque won a competitive procurement exercise in 2016 and their prices have remained in line with inflation since that date. Their latest quote will apply for the period of this proposed contract.

- c) Placemarque's staff are the same as those when awarded the original contract in 2016. Wayfinding projects by their nature require an in-depth understanding of a place. Placemarque have acquired that understanding of Leeds city centre and no other provider could realistically develop this knowledge without a significant investment of time and resource.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 9 This proposal will result in a two year contract being directly awarded to Placemarque for the artwork and design services for the Legible Leeds wayfinding project. This will maintain the continuity of service and expertise on this project, that has been built up since 2016.

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

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 10 The Legible Leeds project drives awareness of the destinations and amenities on offer in Leeds city centre. It encourages journeys to be made on foot.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: Hunslet and Riverside, Little London and Woodhouse

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 11 Extensive consultation has been carried out in respect of the main project, but not related to this technical decision.

What are the resource implications?

- 12 This proposal is designed to save time, money and officer resource by continuing a successful service with Placemarque.

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

- 13 The key risk is that of a claim by another agency that this is anti-competitive. This risk is minimised by the clear rationale offered in section 8.

What are the legal implications?

- 14 The Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) make provision for this direct award under section 8.3, whereby the lack of competition must be formally evidenced in writing and approved by the relevant Chief Officer as part of a Delegated Decision before the contract is entered into.

- 15 However, this is an interim measure and in order to demonstrate value for money and to test the market, we will undertake a full procurement exercise to award a new contract before the interim contract expires.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

16 The other option is to carry out a full procurement exercise for a contractor.

How will success be measured?

17 The key measure of success is of the quality, speed and cost of the work provided by Placemarque.

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

18 The contract will be awarded by March 2023 and will last until March 2025. The Head of City Centre Management will be responsible for implementation.

Appendices

- None

Background papers

- None