

Decision by Portfolio Holder



Report reference: PLS-004-2019/20
Date of report: 30 September 2019

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning Services

Author: Simone Williams (Ext 4037) Democratic Services: J Leither

Subject: Further procurement of consultants Puttock Brown to support the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town communication and engagement Workstream

Decision: That, in accordance with paragraphs 5.2(c) and 5.5 (c), the Procurement Rules be waived to appoint consultants to assist the HGGT team with the Communication and Engagement Work Stream

ADVISORY NOTICE: <i>A Portfolio Holder may not take a decision on a matter on which he/she has declared a Pecuniary interest. A Portfolio Holder with a non-pecuniary interest must declare that interest when exercising delegated powers.</i>	
I have read and approve/ do not approve (delete as appropriate) the above decision:	
Comments/further action required: None	
Signed: Councillor J Philip	Date: 10 th October 2019
<i>Non-pecuniary interest declared by Portfolio Holder/ conflict of non-pecuniary interest declared by any other consulted Cabinet Member:</i> None	<i>Dispensation granted by Standards Committee:</i> Yes/No or n/a N/A
Office use only: Call-in period begins: 11 th October 2019	Expiry of Call-in period: 18 th October 2019

***After completion, one copy of this pro forma should be returned to
Democratic Services IMMEDIATELY***

1. Reason for decision

1.1 The Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Team (HGGT) appointed Puttock Brown under the one quote procurement rules to provide communication advice and support in the early stages of the project. Over the past year they have undertaken the following work for the HGGT project:

- a. Prepared press releases for the project
- b. Developed the HGGT Communications Plan
- c. Developed the visual branding for the HGGT

- d. Developed standard presentations
- e. Produced the HGGT 18/19 Annual Review
- f. Prepared two Homes England Bid submission designs

1.2 Puttock Brown staff now know the project very well and have developed a close working relationship with officers across all five HGGT Local Authority partners. They have regularly produced high quality communications materials for the HGGT and have, at times, worked in an incredibly responsive way to deliver to tight deadlines.

1.3 They also have a good working relationship with Newington Communications who are developing the HGGT website and social media presence and provide public relations support to the project. It is essential that all these functions are closely aligned for the project.

1.4 The HGGT team will shortly be undertaking a procurement exercise to identify a communications firm to undertake the tasks/activities within the HGGT Communications Plan. This will include all day-to-day communications for the HGGT project and support the significant HGGT consultation roadshow which is being planned for later this year.

1.5 This procurement exercise will be a priority for the new Communications and Engagement Officer when he is in post, but it is still likely to take at least 3 months for a company to be in place.

1.6 Until this procurement exercise is undertaken, HGGT requires the continued services of Puttock Brown for the provision of day-to-day communication and engagement support.

1.7 It is suggested that the existing contract be extended by a further £25,000 to enable this to happen.

1.8 Given the nature of the support needed, it is neither practical nor desirable to seek alternative quotes at this stage. To do so would introduce unnecessary delay to the project and there would be a long lead-in period whilst another company gets up to speed with the project.

2. Options considered and rejected

2.1 Option – to pursue competitive tendering for communication and engagement support for the interim period

2.2 It is neither practical nor desirable to seek alternatives quotes for this work, as the HGGT team has an existing relationship with the consultant involved and the nature of the work is an extension to previous work that has already been carried out.

2.3 Option – to not commission any consultants support for the communication and engagement support

2.4 If no consultant is commissioned, the HGGT team will fail to meet its commitment to communicate engage effectively and widely with all stakeholders.

3. Background Report

3.1 In partnership with four local authorities, the Council has signed up to delivering the HGGT project which will provide thousands of new homes, jobs and new infrastructure such as open space and new schools for existing and new residents in Epping Forest District, as well as Harlow and East Herts.

3.2 Together, the five local authorities have established a HGGT team who have been working over the last year on initiating project governance arrangements, developing guidance and raising the profile of the HGGT. This work has been underpinned by effective presentations, branding and marketing from Puttock Brown who have been working to the Communication and Engagement workstream.

3.3 To continue the work of the HGGT communication and engagement workstream, it is necessary to commission the support of Puttock Brown who have undertaken previous activities for the project. Puttock Brown's continued involvement will ensure the HGGT team meet their commitment to consult widely and effectively on the delivery of the new HGGT communities.

3.4 The HGGT has recently appointed a Principal Communication and Engagement Officer to manage the workstream going forward and provide additional support.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 Funding for this work falls within the current budget to support the delivery of the HGGT. Puttock Brown's fees will be in line with their current costs. The budgetary position will continue to be monitored.

5. Legal and Governance Implications

5.1 The details of the approach taken in respect of the Procurement Rules (2016) is set out within the report above.

6. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

6.1 The delivery of the HGGT is in accordance with the Council's approach to 'Safer, Cleaner, Greener' agenda.

7. Consultation Undertaken

7.1 Corporate Procurement Officer (TBC)

8. Background Papers

None

9. Impact Assessments

N/A

10. Risk Management

Consultation and engagement are fundamental to the success of the HGGT. Delivery must be inclusive and provides the opportunity for stakeholders to shape, influence and take ownership of the new communities. In doing so, the HGGT team also need to raise the profile of their commitments set out in the Vision. The HGGT team will work closely with the consultant to successfully manage the communication and engagement workstream.

11. Equality Analysis

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as Appendix A to the report.

12. Key Decision Reference (Y/N): N