

**Report to:** Lead Member for Resources

**Date of meeting:** 25 May 2021

**By:** Chief Operating Officer

**Title:** South East Grid Network Services Framework Award

**Purpose:** To seek approval for the award of the South East Grid Network Services Framework Agreement and subsequent East Sussex County Council Call-Off Contract.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) To approve the award of the South East Grid Network Services Framework Agreement and East Sussex County Council Call-Off Contract to the preferred supplier; and**
  - 2) To authorise the Chief Operating Officer to take all necessary actions in relation to the award of contracts**
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### **1. Background**

- 1.1. The contract to provide East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) digital infrastructure, which connects 261 council and school sites, comes to an end in December 2021. Without highly available and performant connections to all its sites, the council would be unable to meet many of its obligations.
- 1.2. ESCC led on a full EU restricted procurement procedure and undertook this as a joint procurement working with public sector partner organisations in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove.
- 1.3. The procurement will put in place a contract framework for the supply of digital infrastructure services. This framework will be used by ESCC to meet its own requirements. It will also be available to other public sector organisations across the south east of England, including local authority, health, schools and colleges.
- 1.4. A key driver for the procurement was the need to put in place significantly higher connectivity speeds to council and school sites. The procurement was designed to meet these needs and in doing so, to achieve a set of wider benefits for residents and businesses including the acceleration of ultrafast broadband deployment and 5G connectivity across East Sussex.
- 1.5. The evaluation of the tender bids was concluded in April 2021 and a preferred bidder has been identified. Given the value of the contract, the contract award is a Chief Officer and Lead Member decision.
- 1.6. There are two parts to the contract award: the first is the award of the Framework Agreement which provides a mechanism for East Sussex and other organisations to enter into a services contract with the successful bidder; the second is the award the Call-Off Contract between East Sussex County Council and the Framework provider.
- 1.7. The intention is for East Sussex County Council to fulfil the role as 'Framework Owner' and operate a client function on-behalf of South East Grid (SEG) consortium; a successor to the existing Link consortium which has managed and used services from the current wide area network contract.

## **2. Supporting information**

### ***Procurement Process***

- 2.1. A full EU Restricted (two-stage) procurement process commenced on 07 October 2020, with initial responses to the Selection Questionnaire (SQ) received on 10 November 2020.
- 2.2. Five compliant responses were received by the SQ deadline. Following evaluation of the submissions three suppliers were shortlisted and invited to tender.
- 2.3. The Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage commenced on 12 January 2021 and responses were received on 03 March 2021.
- 2.4. Following receipt of tenders, an evaluation and clarification process commenced, which resulted in a preferred supplier being identified on 16 April 2021.
- 2.5. Following the approval of the contract award, all suppliers will be notified, and a 10-day standstill period will commence. Upon completion of the standstill period the Framework can be awarded to the preferred supplier and the Framework Agreement can be signed and sealed.

### ***Contractual Arrangements***

- 2.6. A Framework Agreement has been procured to attract significant supplier attention and achieve highly competitive pricing, whilst providing autonomy and flexibility to each organisation which joins the SEG consortium and accesses the Agreement.
- 2.7. The Framework Agreement will be in place for 15 years and the maximum length of a Call-Off Contract, under this framework, will be 10 years. It is proposed that ESCC takes advantage of the maximum term of the Call-Off Contract.
- 2.8. Once the Framework Agreement has been awarded, ESCC and the other members of the SEG consortium will be able to commence their Call-Off Contracts. At this stage of the process, the specific requirements for site connections, technical configuration (e.g. circuit type and speed), the resilience configuration and the circuit term (e.g. 1, 5, or 10 years) will be confirmed with the supplier.

### ***Benefits***

- 2.9. The primary outcome will be an ultra-fast digital network that can be used by the Council and its schools, and potentially other public service partners within East Sussex. This upgraded infrastructure will support the Council's digital ambitions by providing faster, secure, and resilient connectivity to cloud hosted services. This investment in gigabit capable fibre infrastructure will provide infrastructure additionality to the investment already made in improving broadband in East Sussex.
- 2.10. One of the key objectives of the procurement was also to achieve a contractual commitment to the delivery of social value benefits for East Sussex. A full list of the proposed social value options is presented in a later agenda item which contains exempt information.

### ***Business Case***

- 2.11. The financial and additional contractual benefits are presented in a later agenda item which contains exempt information.

### **3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1. The procurement will meet the objective of putting in place a contract to provide the digital infrastructure required to meet the increasing demands for high-speed connectivity by ESCC, its schools, and the residents and businesses of East Sussex. It will also play an enabling role and contribute towards digital inclusion and recovery of the local economy
- 3.2. For the reasons set out in this report it is recommended that the award of the South East Grid Network Services Framework Agreement and East Sussex County Council Call-Off Contract to the preferred supplier is approved, and authorisation is delegated to the Chief Operating Officer to take all necessary actions to implement Recommendation 1.

#### **PHIL HALL**

##### **Chief Operating Officer**

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS

All

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None