	COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO 1 FEBRUARY 2019
	Key Decision **NO**
	Cabinet Portfolio Holder **Cllr Turner**
Corporate Aims People/Prosperity/ Council	**Date of Decision/ Referral to O&S** **1 February 2019**
	Deadline for call-in 5.00pm **6 February 2019**
	Implementation Date (if no call-in) **7 February 2019**

REPORT OF: Chief Executive- 19/39

WARDS AFFECTED: All

SUBJECT: **Contract for provision of electoral management software, inclusive of WebEros (call centre module) from Idox Software Limited**

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To seek the Cabinet Member's approval to enter into a three year contract with Idox Software Limited for the provision of a suite of electoral management solutions.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

1 To comply with EU Procurement Rules and the Council's Financial and Contract Procedure Rules.
2 To allow Electoral Services to obtain and implement from Idox Software Limited, the WebEros bolt-on (for existing electoral management software) software.
3 To allow an internal channel shift of the high volume of calls received and dealt with by electoral services staff to be dealt with more appropriately by Customer First staff.
4 To ensure value for money whilst maintaining adequate service provision during key electoral activity periods.

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS:
See Risk Matrix

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Electoral management software used within Electoral Services for the management of polls and electoral registration has been provided by Idox Software Limited (formerly Halarose Limited) for many years (10+).

1.2 Electoral services are seeking to purchase the WebEros module of the suite of products from Idox Software Limited software (which links into existing software).

1.3 WebEros allows a web based read only and document trigger functionality for Customer First staff at the Council. Obtaining the module would allow Customer First to receive and deal with the bulk of elector enquiries during peak electoral activity times, passing only the more complicated enquiries through to the back office.

1.4 As Electoral Services already use other software from Idox, Idox have proposed a new pricing structure, incorporating the WebEros module, and a three year contract term (from commencement).

1.5 The value of the proposed contract (inclusive of all modules required) is £56,194.35, which takes the purchase into the requirement to go out to formal tender (in accordance with the Council's procurement rules).

2 CORPORATE AIMS

2.1 **People** – to have a safe, happy, healthy population with people who feel valued and included:
- allowing improved front line customer enquiries to be dealt with by the appropriately skilled Customer First team will allow enquiries to be dealt with in a timely manner
- inclusion in democracy and less risk of disenfranchising electors

2.2 **Prosperity** – to develop a prosperous and innovative borough, with a highly skilled and aspirational workforce:
- In line with the Corporate Modernisation concepts, internal channel shift of bulk enquiries at key times to a more appropriately skilled and paid team:
  - achieves efficiencies through enabling more enquiries to be dealt with at the first point of contact, and

  - decreases the burden of high volume elector enquiries at already busy times for those with specialist knowledge in electoral administration

2.3 **Council** – to be an efficient and effective council which is financially sustainable for the future:

- Efficiencies are achieved through the internal channel shift of high volume enquiries
- Financial sustainability is obtained through entering into a three year contract, with a view to going to tender after the end of the proposed contract by Idox.

3   BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

3.1 Electoral Services core team (consisting of three skilled electoral administrators and a multi-hatted Manager) have historically taken all elector calls and enquiries, which at key election times sees a peak in volumes.

3.2 When large scale elections are called (scheduled or not) the call volumes peak. The following graph shows the number of incoming calls peaked at nearly 1,600 in just one week after the UK snap Parliamentary Election was announced in 2017:

2017 - calls by week (May - Dec)
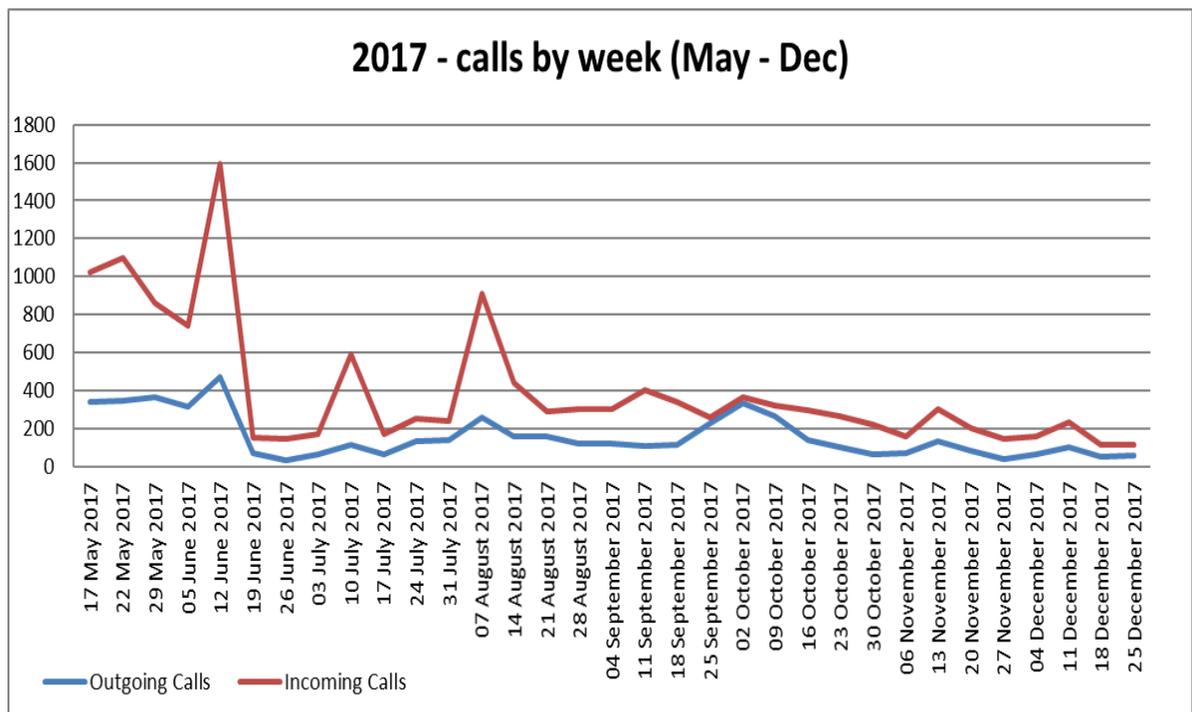
3.3 Other peaks during the year occur when the annual canvass commences with emails in July annually, and again in August annually when paper forms are sent to all households (and when reminders to those forms are sent). These annual canvass related peaks can reach up to 800 incoming calls in just one week.

3.4 The number of outgoing calls, whilst lower than incoming, follow a similar trend in peaks, which in the main is caused by electors needing to be called back after leaving voice mail messages on office phones when unable to get through to staff when lines are already over-busy.

3.5 The Council's Customer First team have a bigger pool of resource to take general elector enquiries at peak election times, which tend to be calls such as:

- Where is my polling station?
- Do I have a postal vote in place?
- I'm going on holiday, how can I vote?
- Am I registered to vote at the elections?
- I've received a poll card but my address has changed
- Do I need my poll card to vote on the day?

These types of calls can be easily answered using the WebEros platform available to Customer First, with some element of training, and will significantly reduce the calls passed through the back office electoral administrators.

3.6 The electoral administrators will be able to concentrate on organising, planning and managing the polls which is where their specialist knowledge area is, allowing tight timescales and deadlines to be met within more realistic capacity.

3.7 There should be less demand in core staff time, a reduction in overtime claimed, and improved customer service.

3.8 All other existing electoral software will remain the same, which includes:

- Eros (election and electoral register management)
- AvantGuard (Postal Voting)
- VDF/Eros Scanning (form scanning)
- Atlas Geospatial (boundary changes, PD reviews)

3.9 Electoral Services have wanted to introduce this WebEros software for the past 3-4 years, but with unscheduled polls (EU referendum in 2016 and snap Parliamentary in 2017) being added to workloads in years with existing scheduled May polls, there has not been a significant window of opportunity to do so. It is felt that now is an ideal opportunity to implement this change, especially as the Electoral Services team are planning and organising elections on revised and unfamiliar warding patterns (as per the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review during 2018), and polling districts (as per recent Polling District review changes approved by Full Council on Monday 7th January 2019), and a requirement to re-publish the electoral register in February 2019, which impacts May 2019 election activity.

3.10   The impact of introducing WebEros would be fully assessed prior to the end of the proposed three year contract, in readiness for a procurement exercise in Autumn 2021.

3.11   Electoral Services would be committed to re-evaluating any contract after three years, and fully assess the impact of introducing WebEros to ensure maintaining value for money.

3.12   Electoral services will continue to monitor call volumes over the three year period, and work with Customer First staff to ensure they can facilitate the internal shift in an effective and efficient manner.

4.   CONSULTATION

4.1   Consultation with Customer First has been undertaken to analyse the call volumes and consider capacity within their team. The Customers, Communities and Partnerships Manager and the Customer Services Manager are both fully supportive of this move to introduce WebEros and agree that the volume of calls at peak electoral times would be best placed being dealt with by their team, supported by Electoral Services with training and roll-out ahead of the May 2019 polls.

4.2   Consultation with the Corporate Modernisation Team has been undertaken to ensure relevant officers within the group are aware of the proposals (such as ICT, Finance, HR) giving the opportunity to consider implications and impact for other areas of the Council, ensuring a corporate approach to delivering efficiencies and ensuring best use of Council resources.

4.3   External consultation is not required for this change in contractual arrangements and implementation of **internal** channel shift.

5   ASSESSMENT

5.1   Considerable thought has been given to the implications of going through a formal tender process at this point in time and a procurement exemption has been obtained for the reasons outlined in 3.9.

5.2   Obtaining WebEros which requires no integration development with existing systems offers a seamless introduction of a well needed shift in workload.

5.3   Entering into a three year period allows sufficient time for the impact of the change to be assessed in time for a potential change or re-assessment of the impact of doing so.

5.4   The contract offers value for money with reductions in other costs of software elements being reduced by the supplier to cover the cost of introducing WebEros as a standalone module, which has in effect saved the Council a potential spend of just over £6,000.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy Implications

There are no implications for Council policy arising from this report.

6.2 Legal Implications

Electoral Services have sought and obtained procurement exception under SBC CPR 20.2 (d) *the purchase of a named product required to be compatible with an existing installation (services)* for this purchase because to use alternative supplier would force an entire system change, which is not possible at the given time (explained further in section 3).

6.3 Financial Implications

6.3.1 There are no financial implications for the Council as the existing contract costs are higher than the proposed three year contract costs, therefore the costs are within budget.

6.3.2 Some elements of the costs can be reclaimed from external bodies when running certain polls (NYCC division elections, Parliamentary Elections, PCC elections etc). The amounts reclaimable depend on various factors such as combination polls held on the same day, percentage shared costs in certain years (appreciating local use year round) etc.

6.3.3 Customer First staff have analysed the call volumes and estimated a cost of £3,800 for receiving the incoming calls, which will be in the form of an internal recharge to Electoral Services annually. Electoral Services would cover this cost from external bodies (see above) and from potential reductions in temporary staff required at peak electoral times. The only year the cost would be wholly attributable to the Council is at the scheduled all out local elections (2019 being the only year within the contract period).

6.4 Staffing Implications

There should be a reduction in the need to rely on temporary staff to assist with incoming calls. Whilst there is no intention at this point to make any changes to permanent full time posts, the internal channel shift may lead to a re-working of duties at key election times. The impact of this change would be monitored over the three year duration and if capacity is realised, then best use of that capacity would also be explored.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications

The channel shift will ensure improved service to first line enquires from electors, with calls being dealt with in the first instance by a trained customer facing team, whose core role is to take such enquiries.

6.6   Communication Implications

The only noticeable change will be the use of an alternative telephone number for general elector enquires to drive the calls through to the call centre. This will be publicised on all election material and notices, such as poll cards, Notice of Election, and the Council website.

6.7   I have considered whether the following implications arise from this report and am satisfied that there is no identified implication that will arise from this decision: Planning Implications, Crime and Disorder Implications, Health and Safety implications, Environmental implications

7.   ACTION PLAN

Action	Team / Officer / Involvement	Date
Obtain procurement exemption to allow entry into the contract without the need for full tender on this occasion	Democratic Services and Corporate Modernisation Manager and Procurement Manager	Early January
Obtain authorisation to enter into contract	Democratic Services and Corporate Modernisation Manager	Early February
Obtain authorised signatory on contract	Legal Services	Early February
Ensure external print contractors are informed of number to print on ALL elections material		ASAP after contract agreed
Install WebEros	ICT Services	
Test and Train Core Election Team	Idox Training with Electoral staff	
Training for Customer First staff	Electoral Services, Idox Customer First Staff	Mid to late February
Go Live and mentoring during initial period of use	Electoral Staff and Customer First Staff	March 2019
Monitoring of call volumes and impact on internal channel shift	Electoral Services and Customer Services Manager	Ongoing after go live

Jim Dillon, Chief Executive

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Background Papers:
None

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT OR WISH TO INSPECT ANY
OF THE BACKGROUND PAPERS, PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR

Risk Matrix

Risk Ref	Date	Risk	Consequences	Mitigation	Current Risk Score	Target Score	Service Unit Manager/ Responsible Officer	Action Plan
1	January 2019	Failure to comply with EU Procurement Rules and the Council's Financial and Contract Procedure Rules	There could be a challenge which may delay the implementation of the contract	Legal Services have been consulted and involved with the preparation of the Contract to comply with the Councils constitution.	B3	A1	Democratic Services and Corporate Modernisation Manager	Legal Services to check contract, procurement advice re exemption
2	January 2019	Failure to meet election deadlines and timescales due to high call volumes	Breach of electoral laws, jeopardising the integrity of the polls, negative media upon the Council	Assessment of call volumes to be transferred and capacity realised to ensure proper management of polls by the relevant trained and experience electoral staff	B3	A1	Democratic Services and Corporate Modernisation Manager	Roll out of WebEros
3	January 2019	Failure to respond to elector enquiries in a timely and accurate manner	Disenfranchise electors through poor advice, negative media impact on the Council	Training and mentoring of call centre staff, engagement with relevant managers	B3	A1	Democratic Services and Corporate Modernisation Manager	Rolll out of WebEros

Glossary of Terms

Risk	An event which may prevent the Council achieving its objectives
Consequences	The outcome if the risk materialised
Mitigation	The processes and procedures that are in place to reduce the risk
Current Risk Score	The likelihood and impact score with the current mitigation measures in place
Target Risk Score	The likelihood and impact score that the Council is aiming to achieve
Service Unit Manager	The Service Unit or Officer responsible for managing the risk
Action Plan	The proposed actions to be implemented in order to reduce the risk to the target score

Risk Scoring

Impact		A	B	C	D	E
5						
4						
3						
2						
1						
		A	B	C	D	E

Likelihood

Likelihood:	Impact
A = Very Low	1 = Low
B = Not Likely	2 = Minor
C = Likely	3 = Medium
D = Very Likely	4 = Major
E = Almost Certain	5 = Disaster