
From: Simon Jones - Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Peter Osborne - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport Growth,

Subject: Specialist Highway Support Services Framework

Decision no: 26/00046

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee –
9 September 2026

Electoral Division: None

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: The Major Capital Programme Team's existing Independent Cost Consultancy contract will expire in March 2027. This report seeks approval to procure a new Specialist Highway Support Services Framework to provide ongoing independent cost consultancy, together with specialist utility support and programme review services, to support the delivery of highway and transportation schemes across Kent. The proposed framework will maintain continuity of essential specialist services whilst expanding the support available to improve cost certainty, programme assurance and governance across the capital programme

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to approve the proposed decision as detailed in Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Major Capital Programme Team (MCPT) has utilised independent cost consultancy services for over 15 years to ensure that cost estimates developed through the design process are robust, that budgets for highway and transportation schemes are realistic, and that best value is achieved.
- 1.2 The MCPT have an existing contract in place which has a value of £4,000,000 over 5 years and has supported 69 projects to date. The current Independent Cost Consultancy contract is due to expire in March 2027, and a new arrangement is required to ensure continuity of service and ongoing support for the delivery of the Council's capital programme.
- 1.3 The Major Capital Programme Team consider that it is imperative to have an independent cost consultancy available to support the delivery of large-scale highways and transportation projects. The independence from the design work provides a third-party check which is used to support business cases and give greater confidence in project budgeting throughout the delivery of a scheme. This is particularly relevant in the short to medium term as the team continues

to manage uncertainty around inflation and project delays facing the construction industry as a result of material and labour shortages.

- 1.4 The proposed procurement expands on the existing arrangements by establishing a framework for specialist highway support services, including the additional areas of utility support and programme review alongside independent cost consultancy.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 The proposed decision is to procure a Specialist Highway Support Services Framework to replace the existing Independent Cost Consultancy contract and to expand the scope of services available to support the delivery of highway and transportation schemes.
- 2.2 The proposed framework will be structured into three service areas:
 - Lot 1 – Independent Cost Consultancy
 - Lot 2 – Specialist Utility Support
 - Lot 3 – Programme Review Support
- 2.3 Whilst each service area may be commissioned independently, grouping the services within a single framework provides a consistent procurement route for specialist support activities commonly required across the highway project lifecycle.
- 2.4 Independent Cost Consultancy (Lot 1) remains the core requirement, providing independent assurance of cost estimates, supporting business cases and construction contract administration, and ensuring that budgets remain robust throughout the lifecycle of schemes. The independence from design consultants is a key consideration, providing a third-party check on cost and value.
- 2.5 Additional specialist services have been identified as necessary to support the increasing complexity of the capital programme. This includes:
 - Specialist Utility Support (Lot 2), which improves cost certainty and coordination in relation to utility diversions and New Roads and Streetworks Act (NRSWA) requirements.
 - Programme Review Support (Lot 3), which provides assurance that schemes are deliverable through robust and compliant programmes under NEC contracts.
- 2.6 Although cost consultancy services are available through the Professional Services Framework (PSF), the framework was not designed for this specialism. In addition, the PSF does not support the Specialist Utilities and Programme Review requirement. As the required services are highly specialist and require independence from design functions, procuring these services separately ensures that KCC maintains appropriate oversight and avoids conflicts of interest, whilst reducing significant risks to the delivery of schemes.

- 2.7 The framework approach provides flexibility to commission services as required across the Council, ensuring that specialist support can be accessed where needed to respond to varying demand and programme priorities.
- 2.8 The proposed approach supports consistency of service delivery, strengthens governance and financial control, and reduces risk across the highways and transportation programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 The MCPT has an established requirement for independent cost consultancy services to support the delivery of highway and transportation schemes. These services were formalised through a contract arrangement in 2018, having previously been commissioned on an ad hoc basis.
- 3.2 The existing contract has supported a significant number of schemes across the capital programme, providing cost assurance, supporting the development of business cases, and assisting with the management of construction contracts.
- 3.3 The use of independent cost consultancy has ensured that cost estimates developed by design consultants are subject to appropriate expert scrutiny, providing confidence in project budgets and supporting decision making throughout scheme development and delivery.
- 3.4 These services have historically been procured separately from the Professional Services Framework Contract (PSFC), as they are highly specialist and require independence from the design function in order to provide an objective assessment of cost and value.
- 3.5 Through ongoing delivery of the capital programme, it has been identified that additional specialist support is required beyond cost consultancy alone. This includes:
- improved management and cost certainty relating to utility diversions and NRSWA requirements; and
 - independent review of programmes to ensure that schemes are deliverable and comply with contract requirements.
- 3.6 The proposed Specialist Highway Support Services Framework will build on the existing arrangements by incorporating these additional services, providing a more comprehensive and flexible approach to supporting the delivery of the Council's highways and transportation programme.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 A number of options have been considered for the provision of specialist highway support services. Options 1 to 3 have been dismissed for the reasons set out below. Following assessment of the available options, the proposal being progressed is to procure a Specialist Highway Support Services Framework.
- 4.2 Approach 1 – Utilise the existing Professional Services Framework (PSF)

4.2.1 The PSF primarily provides access to design consultancy services and does not include the full range of specialist services required. In particular, independent cost consultancy must remain separate from design services to ensure an objective assessment of cost estimates and avoid potential conflicts of interest.

4.2.2 Risk: Reduced independence and assurance, potential conflicts of interest, and inability to access the required specialist services. The appointed framework suppliers are stronger on design/civil engineering aspects as opposed to specialist consultancy. Requirements for these services through the PSF would likely incur fee on fee through subcontracting.

4.3 Approach 2 – Utilise alternative national or local authority frameworks

4.3.1 Alternative frameworks have been reviewed but do not provide contractual arrangements that align with KCC's specific requirements. They also do not offer the full scope of services required within a single arrangement, which would lead to fragmentation and inefficiencies.

4.3.2 Risk: Inconsistent service provision, reduced flexibility, and potential delays in procuring services to meet programme timescales.

4.4 Approach 3 – Do nothing

4.4.1 The existing contract will expire in March 2027, leaving no provision for independent cost consultancy or associated specialist services.

4.4.2 Risk: Significant impact on the delivery of the capital programme, including reduced cost assurance, increased financial risk, and potential delays to scheme development and delivery.

4.5 Proposal to be progressed – Procure a Specialist Highway Support Services Framework

4.5.1 This proposed approach provides a tailored, flexible framework that meets KCC's requirements across multiple specialist service areas, ensuring continuity of service and the ability to respond to the demands of the capital programme.

4.5.2 Risk: Standard procurement risks, which will be managed through a compliant and robust procurement process.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The proposed framework has an estimated total value of £4,000,000 (excluding VAT) over the contractual period.

5.2 The framework will operate from 1 April 2027 to 1 April 2030, with the option to extend for a further year to 31 March 2031.

- 5.3 There is no guaranteed level of spend under the framework, and services will be commissioned on a call-off basis as required.
- 5.4 Expenditure will be funded through individual capital project budgets (predominantly from grant funding), with the option to use revenue budgets and/or grant funding where required for early-stage or unfunded work.
- 5.5 Procurement costs will be limited to officer time associated with managing the tender process and legal costs required to review and finalise the contractual documentation.
- 5.6 Value for money will be ensured through a competitive procurement process, with evaluation based on both price and quality. Tenderers will be provided with a draft contract and pricing schedule for the relevant lot, with pricing submissions based on a schedule of rates to enable a consistent and transparent evaluation.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Legal advice will be sought from Legal Services on the conditions of contract. The award of any contracts will be carried out in line with the requirements set out in the Procurement Act 2023.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and appended to this report.
- 7.2 The proposed decision relates to the procurement of specialist technical consultancy services and does not directly impact service delivery to residents. As such, no adverse impacts on protected groups have been identified.
- 7.3 The services supported by the framework contribute to the development and delivery of highway and transportation schemes across the County, which may provide wider benefits in terms of accessibility and inclusion.

8. Data Protection Implications

- 8.1 A DPIA is not required as the framework does not involve the processing or sharing of personal data.
- 8.2 No significant data protection risks have currently been identified as the services relate primarily to technical, commercial and programme management consultancy activities rather than the processing of personal data.

9. Other corporate implications

- 9.1 The decision to award this contract has no significant impact in other areas of the Council's work.

10. Governance

- 10.1 Subject to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport taking the proposed decision, authority will be delegated to the Corporate Director of Growth,

Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to take all necessary actions required to implement the decision. This will include undertaking and completing the procurement process, approving the outcome of the tender evaluation, awarding the Specialist Highway Support Services Framework, finalising the terms of and entering into all necessary contractual and associated legal agreements, and commissioning services through the framework as required. The Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport will also be authorised to exercise any extension provisions contained within the framework agreement where this is considered necessary, represents value for money and funding is available.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 The existing Independent Cost Consultancy contract will expire in March 2027 and requires replacement to ensure continuity of service.
- 11.2 The proposed Specialist Highway Support Services Framework will build upon the existing arrangements by expanding the scope of services available to include utility support and programme review alongside independent cost consultancy.
- 11.3 The framework will provide access to independent specialist expertise, improve cost certainty, strengthen programme assurance and support the effective delivery of highway and transportation schemes across Kent.
- 11.4 Approval of the proposed decision will ensure that appropriate specialist support arrangements are in place following the expiry of the existing contract.

12. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to approve the proposed decision as set out in Appendix A.

13. Background Documents

- 13.1 [Equality Impact Assessment](#)

14. Appendices

- 14.1 Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

15. Contact details

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