

From: Roger Wilkin, Director of Highways, Transportation & Waste

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee Meeting - 17 November 2016

Subject: Re-procurement and award of contract/s for Soft Landscape Rural Swathe and Visibility Cutting

Key decision 16/00115

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 11 March 2016

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Countywide service - All electoral divisions

Summary:

The Soft Landscape Rural Swathe and Visibility Contract ends on 31 March 2017. The contract value is £300k - £310k per year. A Key Decision is required to award a contract/s for this essential service as the value of the contract exceeds £5m over five years

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport on the proposed decision to re-procure and delegate authority to the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste to award a contract/s for the Soft Landscape Rural Swathe and Visibility Cutting service as attached at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 During the last 12 months the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee (ETCC), a Member Task & Finish Group (T&FG), Strategic Commissioning Board and Corporate Board have considered the service needs, commissioning options and the future funding of Soft Landscape services.
- 1.2 The re-procurement of the Rural Swathe and Visibility Cutting contract follows the recommendations and decisions of the above bodies.

2. Report

- 2.1 The majority of the Soft Landscaping service is discretionary. The T&FG recommended devolution of discretionary soft landscape services to local councils.
- 2.2 The rural swathe and visibility cutting services are considered 'safety critical' and part of the statutory requirement to maintain a safe highway not generally considered appropriate for devolution. Currently the service is delivered through publically procured contracts and through agreements with two Districts (Dover

and Shepway) and five parishes in Sevenoaks. No other local councils have expressed an interest in delivering this service.

- 2.3 In the Commissioning Plan Report dated 21 July 2016 to the Strategic Commissioning Board several options were considered for discretionary and safety critical services. The Board approved the continued procurement of safety critical services such as the Swathe and Visibility Cutting service.
- 2.4 The procurement of a new Rural Swathe and Visibility Contract will ensure that the existing service remains in place and in time for the growing season in 2017. A market of interested SMEs already exists for this work and there are sufficient suppliers in Kent to expect continuing value for money.
- 2.5 The timetable for the re-procurement and award of contract is:

Swathe & Vis Contract 2017 Activity	Potential Timetable
Publish ITT	29/11/2017
Tender Period	29/11/2017 to 13/01/17
Tender evaluation and QA process	16/01/2017 to 01/02/2017
Internal Approval & Sign Off	17/02/2017
Contract Award	01/04/2017

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Soft Landscaping service is required to make £380k MTPS savings. Corporate Board on 4th July 2016, considered the MTFP savings required and decided that safety critical services such as rural swathe and visibility cutting should continue to be provided at the current basic safety level and that the proposed MTFP savings be achieved through reduction of discretionary services such as urban grass cutting or through devolution of the urban services to local councils.
- 3.2 The cost of the publicly procured service is estimated at £300k - £310k per annum and is made up of swathe cutting, visibility cutting and rural hedge cutting. Currently Dover and Shepway District Councils and four parishes in Sevenoaks carry out this service on behalf of KCC at a cost of £70k making the total annual cost of the service £370 - £380k. The budget for these services is £378k.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 Continuation of the rural swathe and visibility service at current levels has no legal implications.

5. Equalities implications

- 5.1 A preliminary equalities assessment for the Soft Landscape service was carried out in the last 12 months as part of the commissioning process. No impacts were found in the continuation of the current rural swathe and visibility service.

6. Other corporate implications

- 6.1 The decision to award contracts for the rural swathe and visibility has no impact in other areas of the council's work.

7. Governance

- 7.1 The Soft Landscape service is reviewed monthly by the Growth, Environment & Transport (GET) Portfolio Board.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The Rural Swathe and Visibility contract which ends 31 March 2017 needs to be re-procured to continue provision of this safety critical service.
- 8.2 The level of service will not change and hence the estimated costs are likely to remain within the current budget expenditure.
- 8.3 Procurement of this service was approved by the Strategic Commissioning Board in July 2016.

9. Recommendation:

- 9.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport on the proposed decision to re-procure and delegate authority to the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste to award a contract(s) for the Soft Landscape Rural Swathe and Visibility Cutting service as attached at Appendix A.

10. Background Documents

None

11. Contact details

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