



Northumberland

County Council

RECORD OF DELEGATED DECISION TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER

TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S FINANCE AND CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

**Title: Decision to Award Wide Area Network Contract to
Commsworld Ltd**

Cabinet Member: Cllr Wearmouth

Purpose of Report

Approval of the Business Case to award a 20 year contract with a total value of £22.7m for the provision of Northumberland County Council's Wide Area Network.

Recommendation

It is recommended that a 20 year contract for the provision of Wide Area Network services is awarded to Commsworld Ltd. The contract award fulfils the objectives outlined in the supporting business case. The associated Business Case referenced in Appendix A has been approved by the S151 officer with consultation with the Portfolio Holder

Link to Corporate Plan

The Council's budget is aligned to the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan 2018-21 "A Council that Works for Everyone"

Key Issues:

The Openness of Public Bodies Regulations 2014 set out requirements for the recording and publishing of local authority decisions. This includes decisions

made by officers under delegated powers. This record is produced in order to comply with the legislative requirements.

Background/Reasons for the Decision

Delegated Authority

Delegated Authority to approve this business case and associated contract award was requested through a Financial Performance paper presented and agreed at Cabinet on 8th March.

- Recommend that full Council agrees in principle to the addition of the Wide Area Network (WAN) project to the Capital Programme, pending the submission of a comprehensive business case by the Director of Information and Technology.
- Recommend that full Council agrees that the approval of the business case and agreement to the signing of the WAN contract is delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

The decision to delegate authority was furthermore granted at County Council on 4th May 2022.

- RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the following minutes be received (1) Tuesday 8 March 2022 (2) Tuesday 29 March 2022; and County Council, 4 May 2022
 - (b) the following resolutions be approved as they involve Budget and Policy framework **matters:- (i) Minute No.95 (xiv) and (xv) of the 8 March 2022 meeting (Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at end of December 2021)**

Background

Northumberland County Council requires a Wide Area Network to provide secure and resilient data connectivity between all council sites. Our current Contract expired in September 2022 and has been extended for 12 months. The council cannot extend this contract beyond this extension. The council therefore needs to secure a new contract to provide Wide Area Network Services from September 2023.

A paper was presented at Cabinet on March 8th outlining the need to secure a new WAN contract and it was recommended and resolved that investment for the WAN would be added to the capital plan, pending a full business case. Delegation to the S151 officer of contract award and business case approval was recommended and approved at Cabinet on March 8th and subsequently accepted and resolved at Full Council on May 4th 2022. The Business Case

referenced in Appendix A has been approved by the S151 officer with consultation with the Portfolio Holder

The council undertook a robust procurement process beginning in April 2022. The procurement process concluded on 4th October 2022 and Commsworld Ltd were identified as the winning bidder.

Options Considered

A “do nothing” option is not viable due to the essential nature of the connectivity that the WAN provides and the impending contract end date of Sept 2023.

Information services considered a like for like WAN Replacement, based on our current solution and services. This was deemed inappropriate given the growing reliance on cloud-based digital services to support the operations of the council.

The procurement process considered bids from other suppliers and scores were awarded based upon cost and quality.

Implications Arising out of the Report

Policy	The recommendations of this report support the priorities and the vision and values included in the NCC Corporate Plan. Without continued access to the tools provided by this licence agreement, the council would not be able to fully deliver it's operational responsibilities.
Finance and value for money	The recommendations of this report enable the Council to provide essential IT tools and systems to support the councils core operations.
Legal	This decision complies with Regulation 7 of The Openness of Public Bodies Regulations 2014. The written record of this decision will be published in accordance with Regulation 8 of these Regulations. No member of the relevant local authority decision making body has declared an interest in this matter
Procurement	Procurement engaged and facilitated competitive exercise through an open framework
Human Resources	No impact

Property	No impact
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>This project will help reduce Digital Inequality across Northumberland by providing much needed new full-fibre connectivity across the county.</p> <p>As set out the background paper Broadband Connectivity Update – Sept 12th Northumberland still lag behind the national average for properties with full-fibre connections, with the UK average being 38.79% and Northumberland 7.85% behind with only 30.94% of properties being able to connect to full-fibre (1000mbs).</p> <p>Positive impact –the significantly improved availability of high-speed broadband will support residents with disabilities to access services and communicate online more effectively.</p> <p>Positive impact - Creation of new roles within Community Action Northumberland (CAN) and NICRE (National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise) will develop a program of work with the village halls network to create local support networks to enhance digital skills for disabled residents.</p> <p>A full Equalities Impact Assessment was completed and is referenced as a background paper</p>
Risk Assessment	
Crime & Disorder	No Impact
Customer Consideration	
Carbon reduction	<p>The provision of improved connectivity to the council sites and to the wider county will help make working from home easier and more viable.</p> <p>Everyday use of cloud and video conferencing and the more general rise of online communications and commerce has opened the opportunity for many to work and do business remotely and from home (also reducing commuter</p>

	<p>travel and congestion). This is a trend that can be expected to continue with wider access to full fibre broadband which makes remote working more achievable and effective</p> <p>A Carbon Impact Assessment was completed as part of the Business Case and is attached as a background paper.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	
Wards	All

Appendix A

[WAN & Full Fibre Business Case v0.9](#)

Linked previous reports and decisions

- [Broadband Connectivity Update – 12th September 2022](#)
- [Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of December 2021](#)
(Cabinet 8th March 2022)
- [Cabinet minutes 8th March 2022](#)
- [Full Council Minutes 4th May 2022](#)
- [Key Decision Notice](#)
- [Carbon Impact Assessment - WAN](#)
- [Inequalities Impact Assessment - WAN](#)

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that relevant officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full name
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Jan Willis
Chief Executive (acting)	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Wearmouth
Leader of the Council	Cllr Sanderson

Author and Contact Details

Chris Thompson: Chris.thompson01@northumberland.gov.uk

DECISION TAKEN

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER WITH CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Subject: Decision to Award Wide Area Network Contract to Commsworld Ltd

Decision: That the contract for the provision of Wide Area Network services is awarded to Commsworld Ltd. The contract award fulfils the objectives outlined in the supporting business case

Decision Taken by:

In Consultation With:

Jan Willis
Executive Director of Finance
& S151 Officer

Cllr Richard Wearmouth
Portfolio Holder for Corporate
Services

Date: 25.10.2022

Date: 25.10.2022

