

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

2323

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Communities

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Subject:

The Improvement of Libraries Wi-Fi Services

Total Value:

£96,600.00 (Type: Capital)

Decision Being Taken:

1. To receive the Arts Council England (ACE) funding award of £96,600 for the upgrade and expansion of Wi-Fi services across Nottingham City libraries. 2. To approve the spend associated with the ACE capital scheme on libraries' Wi-Fi improvements. 3. To delegate the responsibility to the Director of Sport & Culture to sign the funding agreement with ACE and award the contract/s for the project. 4. To seek dispensation from contract procedure rule 5.1.2 in accordance with financial regulation 3.29 and 5. To amend the capital programme to reflect the expenditure detailed.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

In Dec 14, the Sieghart 'Independent Library Report for England' made recommendations for the provision of a national digital resource to keep our UK libraries as an important and valuable community hub. It highlighted the need for digital and technological improvements across UK libraries to enable citizens of ages to 'mine the knowledge of the world for free'; to bridge gaps of social, economic and digital exclusion and to empower citizens to seek opportunities.

This will not increase revenue costs to the Council as all improvements will go onto the existing infrastructure; any future infrastructure upgrades will be subject to another report.

Following this the Arts Council England (ACE) made £7.1 million of funding money available across all UK local authorities to submit a bid for funding to improve, or install, Wi-Fi services in their libraries. The ACE funding priority is to make the internet easily and freely available to everyone who enters a UK library and for libraries make the most of digital technology and creative media.

Improvements that the ACE Wi-Fi funding will bring to our library service, citizens and visitors:

- It will enable the Council library service to extend the existing library Wi-Fi service to all citizens and visitors entering one of our City libraries; the current library Wi-Fi service is available to library members only.
- It will allow us to promote our library services through the Wi-Fi solution enabling citizens and visitors to make full use of the services we provide.
- To address our current poor Wi-Fi performance issues and service limitations.
- To help our library service facilitate the promotion of digital inclusion throughout our communities and to increase on-line access for citizens.
- It will open up further opportunities for our libraries to provide increased technical and digital skills development by way of learning sessions for citizens within our communities.

Financial regulation exemption has been sought due to operational reasons and project deadline restrictions. A quote process was initiated as it was assumed that the costs would come in at a lower level. The deadline restrictions for this project are that the ACE funding requires the equipment to be purchased, installed, operational and the project completed by 31st March otherwise the funding will be lost. (See attached document Guidance for Applicants, page 2).

The ACE funding award is a great opportunity to help the Council's Library Service to develop our digital and technology services to the public. It supports the Council's priority of putting 'Citizens at the Heart' and the libraries vision of 'Creating better futures'. These Wi-Fi improvements will also provide potential for citizens to their increase economic, educational, social and cultural opportunities to bring prosperity to our local communities and put libraries at the heart of our communities.

The implementation of this project is very tight with all library Wi-Fi improvement services having to be procured, installed and working by the 31st March 2016 (as per the ACE grant requirements). This is highlighted on the project Risk Register and all stakeholders are aware of the tight deadlines.

Briefing notes documents:

Guidance-for-applicants_Wifi-public-libraries_July-2015.docx, T&C Qualifying Expenditure Grant_ACE_Oct 15.pdf, Offer letter_ACE_19 Oct 15.pdf

Other Options Considered:

1. Do nothing. That the Council Library Service does not make use of the ACE funding award to make improvements or increase service functionality to the Wi-Fi service across the library estate.
2. Accept the ACE and implement Wi-Fi service improvements as outlined in this proposal. This is the recommended course of action.

Background Papers:

Published Works:

Affected Wards: Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests: No

Dispensation from Financial Regulations: Yes

Consultations: No consultation required; those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications: There are no implications on crime or disorder

Equality: Please login to the system to view the EIA document: Equality Impact Assessment Form_Jan 16.doc

Social Value Considerations: The social value is that, by improving libraries Wi-Fi across our Council libraries estate, it will give citizens increased access to internet and on-line services, and support digital inclusion throughout our communities.

Decision Type: Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In: No
The call-in procedure does not apply to the proposed decision because the delay likely to be caused by the call in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or Vice-Chair) in his/her absence has been consulted and agreed both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all circumstances and that it should be treated as a matter of urgency.

Person Consulted: Councillor Parbutt
Consultation Date: 20/01/2016
The ACE funding deadline requires this project to be completed by 31 March 2016.

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Procurement, Equality and Diversity

Legal Advice:

This report does not raise significant legal issues. The City Council must ensure it complies with the terms of the ACE funding offer. This includes ensuring ACE consents to any project changes. This should be sought in advance of the change. Whilst it is acceptable not to undertake a tender for the services as the value is likely to be below the applicable EU procurement financial threshold the consent of ACE must be obtained as it is a departure from ACE's requirements in addition to dispensation from the City Council's contract procedure rules. The risk register needs to identify the risk of not completing the project by 31st March 2015 as failure may trigger clawback of the grant. Advice provided by Andrew James (Team Leader Contracts and Commercial) on 19/01/2016.

Finance Advice:

- 1.The cost of this decision is £96,600, which will be funded from Arts Council England grant.**
 - 2. There is minimal risk to the council as the project is grant funded as long as the scheme has been purchased, installed, is operational and completed by 31st March. If this not the case the funding will be lost.**
 - 3. This decision will not have an impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan as there will not be any increase in revenue costs to the Council as all improvements will go onto the existing infrastructure.If any infrastructure upgrades are required in the future, a further report will be required.**
 - 4. Dispensation from tendering requirements is sought under financial regulations 3.29. as there is insufficient time to undertake a competitive process due to project deadline restrictions and operational reasons that would result in the loss of grant.**
- Advice provided by Steve Ross (Finance Analyst) on 21/01/2016.**

Procurement Advice:

The quotation exercise undertaken showed that the costs involved exceeded anticipated spend levels and were above the £50,000 threshold. The Procurement Team support the approval to dispense with Contract Procedure Rule 5.1.2 in accordance with Financial Regulation (3.29) (Operational Issues) as there is not sufficient time to undertake a competitive process due to project deadline restrictions and operational reasons. The quotation process already undertaken will help serve as a measure for seeking value for money. Advice provided by Mabs Karim (Category Manager) 19/01/16 Advice provided by Paul Ritchie (Procurement Category Manager) on 22/01/2016.

Equality and Diversity Advice:

The proposal has no significant equality considerations and as stated in the EIA will only benefit all users...ensuring equity of access. Advice provided by Adisa Djan (Equalities and Diversity Consultant) on 22/01/2016.

Signatures

David Trimble (Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture)
SIGNED and Dated: 29/01/2016
Andrew Vaughan (Corporate Director Commercial and Operations)
SIGNED and Dated: 29/01/2016
Theresa Channell (Head of Corporate and Strategic Finance) - Dispensation from Financial Regulations
SIGNED and Dated: 03/02/2016

Chief Finance Officer's Comments: