

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Port Health and Environmental Services Committee	Dated: 07/01/2025
Subject: Cemetery and Crematorium Administration System	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes 	Providing Excellent Services Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	Local Risk
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of:	Katie Stewart Executive Director Environment
Report author:	Graham Holmes Assistant Director Cemetery & Crematorium

Summary

This report sets out the requirement to update the administration system used at the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium. The current system is outdated, non-compliant with statutory legislation and unable to serve the needs of a modern cemetery and crematorium.

A recent procurement tender exercise ended with one preferred bidder, but with all bidders having failed the financial assessment performed during the procurement process, including our current provider.

The financial risk will be mitigated by paying the supplier upon receipt of goods/services and not by paying upfront. This minimises the risk the City of London are exposing themselves to. A termination clause will be inserted into the contract by Commercial Services/Comptroller's & City Solicitors to further mitigate the risk, should the supplier encounter financial difficulty preventing them from providing the services to the level required. This would enable the City of London to exit without additional costs being incurred. Risks will be further mitigated by regular contract meetings being held between the department, the supplier and Commercial Services. This would allow the performance/financial performance to be monitored closely. Regular financial checks will be carried out on the supplier to ensure the risk of supplier is further minimised.

The Service are therefore unable to proceed without the Committee's approval.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve the awarding of the contract to the preferred bidder, GSS (NI) Ltd (PlotBox)

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Cemetery and Crematorium identified a need to upgrade the administration system it uses. A project request was submitted and approved at Project Management Office and a Project Manager and Procurement Manager were assigned.
2. A full specification document was drawn up and the tender process was conducted, attracting 5 bidders, including the 3 industry leaders in this field.

Current Position

3. The procurement process clearly indicated one preferred option, GSS (NI) Ltd (PlotBox), however, it transpired that all bidders had failed the Corporation's standard financial appraisal. All bidders were financially appraised by the City of London's Treasury Team.
This bidder was able to provide a Business Continuity Disaster Recovery Plan along with agreeing to a payment plan suggested by the City of London Treasury Team, post-contract signature.

Options

4. Option 1 - Approve the award to the preferred bidder with mitigations in place

The preferred bidder GSS (NI) Ltd (PlotBox) is multinational, with over 60 cemeteries and/or crematoria as clients in the UK and the largest cemetery in Australia (some 700 acres).

The risk of financial failure is not certain, and it is unlikely bidders would wish to undergo a second round of tendering having spent a significant resource on bidding, especially, as it is unlikely their financial situations will have changed significantly, and running an additional tender is considered unlikely to result in a different outcome, as the main three bidders are all market leaders in this field and would require additional time and resource from the City.

All fees are payable in arrears, at the end of implementation and the end of each budget year for the licence, therefore substantially mitigating any financial risk.

This is Recommended

5. Option 2 - Re-tender the provision

There are no guarantees new or different bids would be received, or tender would be successful. If retendering via a framework, we could request a software via a reseller, however, whilst this provides some risk mitigation as the reseller would be the primary contracting party, it still does not change the fact that the subcontractor organisation would retain the same level of financial standing thus risk of failure will remain. It is likely that the Service will pay a higher price for the software as resellers are likely to add a percentage fee to the total value, albeit this cannot be confirmed at this stage.

There would also be an additional cost and resource for running the tender, where the risk profile will effectively remain similar.

This is not recommended

6. Option 3 - Retain the current system

As previously stated, the system is already substandard and inefficient and cannot be further developed or made legally compliant. Furthermore, the provider, Gower Consultants, have also failed the financial assessment as part of the procurement process

This is not recommended

Proposals

7. It is proposed to allow for the procurement of the Plot Box system from GSS (NI) Ltd (PlotBox) over a 5yrs contract with a 2yr extension option.

Key Data

8. The one-off cost to implement the system is £96,095, with a yearly licence fee of £34,4200 over the 7-year contract.
9. The system will allow for seamless delivery of all administration of the service, including: -
- cremation and burial documentation
 - digital mapping of the site to include every grave and memorial within the memorial gardens
 - memorial safety testing
 - online booking
 - online Permit applications
 - electronic signature
 - Automatic renewal of both grave and memorial agreements
 - cloud storage
 - drag and drop documentation
 - Works alongside all SAP financial systems

10. This will reduce our paper and postage costs which currently stand at £33,000pa, streamline the service by reducing duplication, reduce the current perceived 30% inefficiency due to multi point manual handling of documentation and work orders, manual archiving of documentation.
11. GSS – Plot Box have supplied robust Business Continuity and Application Disaster Recovery plans

Corporate & Strategic Implications

12. Strategic implications - This proposal aligns with and will support the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-2029, specifically Providing Excellent Services and Flourishing Public Spaces by allowing the Cemetery and Crematorium to future proof the administration of Cremations, Burials, and post service memorisation. This brings the service in line with competitors who already offer similar levels of service to the bereaved and industry stakeholders.
13. Financial implications – A recent procurement tender exercise ended with one preferred bidder, but with all bidders having failed the financial assessment performed during the procurement process, including our current provider.

The Service is therefore unable to proceed without the Committee's approval.

For the recommended option, the one-off cost to implement the system is £96,095, with a yearly licence fee of £34,420 over the 7yr contract.

Mitigation of the resulting financial risk is through all fees being payable in arrears, at the end of implementation and the end of each budget year for the licence.

14. Resource implications – None
15. Legal implications – Current system is not legally compliant after a change in cremation paperwork on 9th September 2024 following an amendment to The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 implementing The Medical Examiners (England) Regulations 2024.
16. Risk implications – Attached as Appendix 1
17. Equalities implications – None following a test of relevance.
18. Climate implications – None
19. Security implications - None

Conclusion

20. Whilst there is a financial and risk implication with awarding the contract, both are low risk, whilst the benefit to the service to enable the Cemetery and

Crematorium to be legally compliant and industry leading in all aspects of serving the bereaved, and the bereavement industry as a whole is extremely high.

21. All the above have been considered carefully and despite the concerns raised by the financial assessment it is believed that the benefit to the service far out ways the risk, which I why I propose for approval by your committee.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Risk Matrix

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