

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

PROCUREMENT ARRANGEMENTS – DIRECT AWARD TO THE WILDLIFE INFORMATION CENTRE

REPORT BY HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Council Executive approval to make a direct award to the Wildlife Information Centre for the assessment of planning applications and to undertake a local biodiversity site assessment process for development planning.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Executive approves a direct award of technical consultancy work to The Wildlife Information Centre for the provision of advice on protected species issues in relation to submitted planning applications and progressing the local biodiversity sites process for a period from 1 June 2020 – 31 May 2023. The anticipated contract value is £31,130.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Making best use of our resources; focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; working in partnership
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Supports policies in the adopted West Lothian Local Plan (September 2018) - ENV 20: Species protection and enhancement and related environmental policies ENV 17, 18 and 19. Wildlife information will assist in Strategic Environmental Assessment. There are no Equality, Health or Risk Assessments issues.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We make the most efficient and effective use of our resources by minimising our impact on the built environment.
VI Resources - (Financial,	The technical consultancy cost can be met from

Staffing and Property)	the existing Development Planning & Environment budget.
VII Consideration at PDSP	Due to current circumstances it has not been possible to report to PDSP.
VIII Other consultations	Planning Services and the Corporate Finance Manager has been consulted on budget implications.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

The council has contracted with The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) since 2006 to provide a number of ecological and biodiversity services. The most recent contract provided for two services:

1. Screening planning applications for ecological issues; and
2. Administering the West Lothian Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) Steering Group – while Planning Services Chair this group, TWIC provide the ecological data and Geographic Information Services and ecological expertise to be able to assess these potential LBS as TWIC hold a comprehensive amount of West Lothian species records and habitat data.

As a direct award is sought and with the aggregate expenditure value exceeding the level whereby the Head of Corporate Services is permitted to authorise, Council Executive is required to consider the terms of this Report.

D2 In House Capability and Business Exemption

The council has not provided a dedicated in-house ecological advice service since the retirement of the Environment Manager in 2007, although some specialist advice is available from officers in Operational Services.

To cover that situation, a contract was instigated in 2006 with The Wildlife Information Centre, a small environmental charity based in Midlothian but part of the National Biodiversity Network. TWIC currently provide similar ecological advice for seven local authorities in east central Scotland.

There are no other suppliers of the protected species and habitat data who could be asked to tender for this specific service. The LBS process is undertaken using TWIC methodology and also ecological data specifically held by TWIC on West Lothian. If another supplier wanted to undertake this work, they would need access to TWIC's West Lothian ecological information and have to pay TWIC for access to this data thereby adding to the costs of planning application screening and advancing the Local Biodiversity Sites which are part of the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan planning policy.

The previous three-year contract was granted for TWIC in 2016/17 and it expired in March 2020. Consequently, another three-year contract is required for TWIC to continue providing these ecological services.

The contract value would be £10,065.00 for 2020/21 and there will be an option to extend for another 2 years. This is similar to the agreements that TWIC have with another four local authorities.

Costs for this contract with TWIC are as follows:

Year 1 (2020/21)	= £10,065
Year 2 (2021/22)	= £10,065
Year 3 (2022/23)	= <u>£11,000</u>
Total	£31,130

Whilst this additional consultancy cost of £31,130 is within delegated approval thresholds, the total aggregated value would exceed that delegation and Council Executive approval is therefore required.

D3 Budgetary Considerations

The cost of £31,130 can be met from the existing Development Planning & Environment budget which is funded primarily from income received from planning and other statutory applications.

E. CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the Council Executive approves a direct award for a three year period to The Wildlife Information Centre for the provision of specialist ecological services and to assist with the Development Management function of the council to assess planning applications for protected species issues as well as progressing the local biodiversity sites process supported by the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan, for the period 1 June 2020 to 31 May 2023.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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