

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Executive on Monday 11th July 2022

**APPROVAL OF EXTENSION OF CONTRACT WITH PROPTECHSUPPLIER THE
FUTURE FOX**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance

Classification	This report is Public
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PURPOSE / SUMMARY OF REPORT

To seek agreement to extend the Council's contract with the Future Fox to cover the extension of the Council's PropTech project using the Round 2 funding award from the Government's PropTech Engagement Fund.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Council has been selected as one of the pilot authorities under the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' PropTech Engagement Fund and that the Council secured an initial £100,000 for plan-making consultation work through the Round 1 of the Fund in October 2021.
- 1.2 To help deliver this opportunity, the Council ran a tender exercise and procured a suitable PropTech software provider to test a new and innovative method of public engagement on plan-making, including a sizeable social media advert campaign, that would encourage greater numbers of people getting involved in how their settlement could grow. This exercise saw the Future Fox being identified as the preferred contractor and the contract with them was entered into on 31st March 2022 and covered services to the value of £72,015.
- 1.3 Members will also be aware that the Council has utilised this new software for the Initial Consultation Exercises for both the Shirebrook and the Creswell Growth Plans and that levels of engagement have been positive.
- 1.4 Based on this positive experience, officers have been working closely with officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities to provide

feedback on the pilot and to explore further opportunities that would benefit Bolsover District. To this end, a further funding bid was submitted to Round 2 of the PropTech Engagement Fund and this has seen the Council be successful again and receiving a further £95,800 for its plan-making work. This funding was received in April 2022 and under the Fund's terms the Round 2 project is required to be delivered by September 2022.

- 1.5 As a result, proposals for the Council's plan-making work have been developed and an updated fee proposal has been secured from the Future Fox to deliver the Council's exciting digital consultation proposals. The updated fee proposal would see the cost of the contracted works increase to £170,315.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 The sum of £170,315 is significant but it is considered that the project is ground breaking and will represent a remarkable innovation in plan-making consultation, utilising gamification, i.e. using game formats, to help participants understand and explore how development proposals are put together and to make their own masterplanning suggestions, and virtual and augmented reality technologies to help participants visualise proposals. The software development being carried out by the Future Fox to deliver the Council's vision is significant and is expected to result in new planning software products being available on the market – a key purpose of the Government's PropTech Engagement Fund.
- 2.2 The Future Fox are placed to deliver the software development and deliver this in time to form the basis of the Council's planned masterplanning consultation for the Shirebrook Growth Plan in July / August. However, to enable this the current contract value would need to be extended to enable the Round 2 work to be commissioned and a purchase order issued. Due to the amount involved, the increased cost of the proposed work would push the contract value above the Council's Key Decision value and this is the reason for this report.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council's success in securing funding from the Government's PropTech Engagement Fund is a benefit for Bolsover District and the authority and should see innovative digital consultation proposals being developed and rolled out. As such, enabling the Round 2 proposals to proceed in the manner described above is desirable.
- 3.2 Therefore, the agreement of the Executive is sought to extend the Council's contract with the Future Fox to cover the extension of the Council's PropTech project using the Round 2 funding award from the Government's PropTech Engagement Fund.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 It would be possible to not extend the Future Fox's contract value, although this would not achieve the benefits of the project for the District and would potentially create reputational problems for the Council. Therefore, officers have not considered alternative options.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Executive agree to extending the value of the contract with the Future Fox to £170,315.

Approved by Councillor Duncan McGregor, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance

IMPLICATIONS:

Finance and Risk: Yes ☐ No ☒

Details: The costs involved are fully funded by the Government grant received from the PropTech Engagement Fund. The money has already been received and is sufficient to cover the proposed contract value.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes ☐ No ☒

Details: The legal implications of the funding and contract have been reviewed by the Legal team and are found to be acceptable. There are no data protection implications related to the contract.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes ☐ No ☒

Details: There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please indicate which threshold applies	Yes
Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	Yes

District Wards Significantly Affected	All
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Details: Councillor Duncan McGregor, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance and Councillor Tom Munro, Chair of Planning Committee

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy and Environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling housing growth; • Developing attractive neighbourhoods; • Increasing customer satisfaction with our services.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title

Background Papers
<i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>