

REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING
Council	18/1/2017

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SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
Renewal of Contract with Firmstep	Corporate Support & Assets	John Healey	

SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

South Ribble Borough Council currently utilises a cloud based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution from Firmstep.

The product is used as the key platform for our Website, CRM solution, customer account management, mobile work solution and a back office system as well as our on-line Self-Serve platform ensuring that the Council remains effective and efficient now and in the future

RECOMMENDATIONS

With effect from the 23rd March 2017 it is recommended to extend the existing contract with Firmstep for a further 12 months with the current supplier for the reasons set out in this report.

DETAILS AND REASONING

The current CRM and Website solution is provided by Firmstep – the product, as well as providing our Website, is essentially a forms based package allowing customers to contact the council using a variety of channels either on-line, on the phone or via the Gateway Reception. It is also used as a back office system for Neighbourhood Services.

Over the seven years that the Firmstep product has been in use there has been considerable development effort completed to ensure a variety of service requests are available. Service requests for waste enquires (which integrates with the FCC CRM), littering, parks and fly posting (to name just a few) have been developed in house and are tailored to our systems. The questions asked, change according to customer responses and the full request is tracked from the initial query to the final closure. The requests can be raised on-line, over the phone or at reception using a single Customer account. The Self-Service provision allows customers to contact the council and raise issues on-line – we currently have 13,658 self-service accounts active.

Recent developments in the Firmstep platform have enabled job allocation to be delivered via a mobile app allowing mobile enforcement and requests to be directly pushed out to Neighbourhood officer's mobile devices meaning the staff no longer need to return to base to receive their next job.

The current Firmstep annual maintenance cost is £21,420 and a further £5,250 for the mobile device application. This life cost over the previous 7 years is shown in the tables below compared to the cost of continuing with our previous selected technologies.

	Firmstep Platform (including Website from 2013/14)
Initial Setup 2010/11	£30,377 (Year 1 maintenance included)
2011/12 maintenance costs and self-service (phase 1) , telephony and payment integration	£34,925
2012/13 maintenance costs and self-service phase 2 and Web site implementation	£28,900
2013/14 maintenance costs and Website implementation and go live	£26,925
2014/15 maintenance costs	£20,400
2015/16 maintenance costs and server migration, new form training and mobile application development	£36,300
2016/17 maintenance costs	£26,670
Total whole life costs	£204,497

	Previous Technologies
Previous Upgrade Costs 2010/11	£30,000 + £30,000 hardware costs
2011/12 Previous maintenance costs (actual 2011 figures)	£47,812 (actual quoted 2011 figures)
2012/13 maintenance costs + 2% as per contract (ongoing)	£48,768
2013/14 maintenance costs Website maintenance costs	£49,743 £7,844 (WebStructure maintenance)
2014/15 maintenance costs Website maintenance costs	£50,738 £8,000 (WebStructure maintenance)
2015/16 maintenance costs Website maintenance costs	£51,753 £8,160 (WebStructure maintenance)
2016/17 maintenance costs Website maintenance costs	£52,788 £8,323 (WebStructure maintenance)
Total whole life costs	£393,929 *

* This figure excludes any Website upgrade and hardware costs as these are unknown

As previously stated the current solution has been in place for 7 years, has worked well and, as can be seen, has offered substantial savings – circa £200,000. It is intended to continue using the Firmstep platform for a further 12 months

As this project is continued maintenance the current ICT revenue budget can be used to finance this solution.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these. The risk assessment which has been carried out forms part of the background papers to the report.

FINANCIAL	There are no financial implications for the revenue budget as this contract is currently budgeted for in the base budget.
LEGAL	<p>The original contract with Firmstep was entered into in 2010.</p> <p>Clause 10 of this contract specified that the original term of the contract was for 3 years. After that the contract would continue until terminated on 12 months' notice.</p> <p>Audit have confirmed that the procurement carried out prior to entering into this contract was in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs).</p> <p>Paragraph 34 of the CPRs allows for any contract which has been procured in accordance with those rules to be extended in accordance with its terms.</p> <p>Hence it is considered acceptable to extend this contract for another 12 months. However, as this contract has already been extended several times it is considered overwhelmingly desirable for Information Services to carry out a more in depth test of the market as soon as possible in order to consider more fully competitors' products and decide whether a formal procurement exercise would be desirable prior to any decision being made as to the future of the contract beyond this year.</p>
RISK	<p>The main risks for consideration are summarised here:-</p> <p>Should the contract not be extended for a further 12 months, the Council will be exposed due to the current CRM solution becoming unavailable.</p>
THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY	There are no equality issues arising from this report.
OTHER (see below)	

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None