

POLICY AND RESOURCES

CABINET BOARD

4TH SEPTEMBER 2008

DIRECTORATE OF ENVIRONMENT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING – G.WHITE

INDEX OF REPORT ITEMS:

PART 1 – Doc.Code: PRB-040908-REP-EN-GW

SECTION B – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION.		
Report Item	Page Nos.	Wards Affected
1. Officer Urgency Action. Local Development Plan Process.	2-3	All

ITEM NO. 1
PART 1 SECTION B.

The following Officer Urgency Action has been determined by the Head of Planning Services in consultation with the requisite members for Immediate Implementation.
This matter is for Information only.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROCESS

Purpose of the report:

To advise Members of the need to purchase software to facilitate the preparation of the Local Development Plan and other engagement exercises.

Background:

When the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 was introduced the Government replaced the old system of Unitary Development Plans with new Local Development Plans (LDP). This sees a much greater emphasis on public consultation than previously. It also requires a substantial amount of complex information and consultation that should be available electronically as well as in paper copies. This complements the Government's e-government initiatives by improving the service we give our customers.

Acquisition of Software

In deciding the way for the Council to progress this, the Planning Policy Team within Planning Services has carried out investigations as to how an improvement can be facilitated including discussions with a number of other authorities. Whilst there are a number of software packages that could target some of our requirements only one has been identified which would specifically address all of the requirements.

The software in question is Limehouse Software which is an established package in use by a number of Local Authorities already. The two elements: Publication and Consultation have been designed specifically to meet the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and WAG requirements. This relates to informing users, electronic planning system and electronic capture of planning related information.

The system offered by Limehouse Software has the potential to save substantial staff time in analysing consultations, summarising data and producing reports and documents. The LDP process is conditional upon ongoing consultation.

The system can also be used to provide a consultation process covering all service areas within the authority.

In carrying out investigations and negotiations a price was agreed of £73,500 for a three year agreement with Limehouse that included substantial discount provided by the Term Agreement that was confirmed on or before 4th July 2008. As a consequence the software was acquired on the basis of an Officer's urgency action.

Funding is from the Planning Services LDP budget and an e-government group grant.

Decision

That the Authority enters into an agreement with Limehouse by signing the necessary Term Agreement.

Wards: All

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