



IDOX Software Procurement

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To seek approval to enter into a 5-year renewal of the contract with IDOX Software Ltd for the planning, building control and land charges software.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to approve the award of contract to IDOX Software Ltd for the provision of the Planning, Building Control and Land Charges software for a period of 5 years at a total cost of £306,855.59.

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	Yes.
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Sustainable South Kesteven Enabling economic opportunities Housing Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The Council's indicative budgets for 2025/26 onwards includes provision for the procurement of software to provide the databases for Planning, Building Control and Land Charges.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Procurement

- 1.2 It is confirmed that a fully compliant procurement process has been completed and the Council's Procurement Lead has been consulted throughout the process.

Completed by: Helen Baldwin (Procurement Lead)

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 There are no significant legal and governance implications arising from the report which are not already reflected elsewhere in the report, particularly in relation to procurement and compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 1.4 The report could not be added to the Cabinet Forward Plan in time to give 28 days' notice, and therefore the General Exception Notice process has been followed as per Paragraph 17 of Part 4(2) of the Constitution (Access to Information Procedure Rules). The decision is also exempt from call-in due to its urgency. The notice is available at:
- 1.5 <https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s43705/General%20Exception%20Notice%20and%20Exemption%20From%20Call-In-%20Planning%20Software.pdf>

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. There is a clear commitment in the South Kesteven Corporate Plan (2024-2027) to ensure that the Council is an effective Council. The mission is to deliver trusted and high quality and value-for-money services that meet the needs and expectations of our residents.
- 2.2. To do this the Council requires software that enables planning and building control applications and land charges requests to be managed efficiently and effectively.
- 2.3. The Council currently uses Idox software Ltd to provide the software applications Uniform and Total Land Charges (TLC) which are used by Planning, Building Control and Land Charges.
- 2.4. The current contract expires on 29th October 2024.
- 2.5. The renewal contract would be a direct award issued via the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6259 – Lot 3 Housing, Environment and Planning Software.
- 2.6. The proposed contract will run from 30th October 2024 to 29th October 2029.
- 2.7. Costs for the renewal are as follows:

Year 1 – 30/10/2024 – 29/10/2025	£57,797.65
Year 2 – 30/10/2025 – 29/10/2026	£59,531.58
Year 3 – 30/10/2026 – 29/10/2027	£61,317.53
Year 4 – 30/10/2027 – 29/10/2028	£63,157.06
Year 5 – 30/10/2028 – 20/10/2029	£65,051.77

- 2.8. Uniform is a case management system used by the planning and building control teams and has a number of modules and related applications within it that support the day-to-day management of these services. This includes:
 - Planning (applications, enforcement, tree preservation orders, listed buildings, appeals and public/consultee access)
 - Building Control (building control applications, dangerous structures and a remote working/site visit application)
 - Electronic Document management systems for both planning and building control
 - Land Charges (Total Land Charges)
- 2.9. This is a renewal of contract, therefore the cost of procuring the software was included in the already agreed indicative budgets for 2025-26.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. The Council's Planning, Building Control and Land Charges databases are currently stored within the IDOX software. If the contract is not renewed, then the Council will not have a license to access and update this data.
- 3.2. The Building Control service (East Midlands Building Consultancy) is a shared service provided across three authorities, South Kesteven, Newark and Sherwood District Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council. South Kesteven is the host authority and is responsible for holding and sharing data with both Councils.
- 3.3. Rushcliffe and Newark and Sherwood Councils also currently use Idox within their own planning departments.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The Council could consider replacing the software with another product. However, the existing control expires on 30th October and there is insufficient time to source, develop and transfer data to a new system. This option has been discounted.
- 4.2 Whether the Council could enter into a shorter contract has been explored. However, this is not possible to therefore this option has been discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. It is recommended that the Council renews with Idox software for 5 years.
- 5.2. Changing to another software supplier will increase costs to the Council and could also cause compatibility problems with our partner authorities for Building Control information to be accessed by their own Idox installations.
- 5.3. The IDOX software has been used by the Council for a number of years and is embedded in the service provision. To switch to another operator would be complex and take a considerable amount of time. The Council is legally required to hold databases for Planning and Building Control and if an alternative provider was sourced it would take time to design a new system and ensure that these registers are transferred properly. The system is used by both officers and the public who use can view planning and building control registers online. Additionally, significant work has been carried out in the last year to use the Public Access function allowing residents and statutory consultees to interact with the system. This includes viewing and commenting on planning applications online which has resulted in a reduction in administration work and a greater transparency for officers, Councillors and members of the public.

The Land Charges software (TLC) is linked to Uniform and pulls planning and building control data in order to provide land charges searches quickly and efficiently for our customers.

- 5.4. Software costs are spread across the duration of the contract so a three- or four-year contract would mean a significantly higher cost per year for the same service. A three-year contract would have a higher annual cost of approximately £67,000.
- 5.5. The procurement of the software has followed a compliant process.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Feedback was given from the service areas that currently use the software (Planning, Building Control and Land Charges) regarding the suitability of the current product.