

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 8th May 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director-Environment

SUBJECT: Appointment of Urban Vision Partnership Limited to deal with planning and associated applications made in respect of the Mersey Gateway.

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report requests that the Sub Committee ratify and confirm agreement with actions taken by the Strategic Director-Environment, to appoint Urban Vision Partnership Limited to process the applications in connection with the Mersey Gateway scheme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the actions taken by the Strategic Director-Environment to appoint Urban Vision Partnership Limited are approved.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

To overcome previously identified capacity issues budget provision had been made to appoint, temporarily, an officer to deal with the applications in connection with the Mersey Gateway scheme. Budget provision of £50k for 2008/09 was made to recruit an additional planning officer.

Although traditional recruitment processes were followed no appointment was made due to a lack of suitable candidates. Furthermore, it was recognised that the appointment of an officer, with the required level of experience would not be possible by the time the Transport and Works Act application (the principal application for the Gateway) is submitted to the Planning Authority for consideration. Three applications for associated highway and listed building consent were submitted at the end of March.

Due to the extremely tight timescales and urgent need to have an experienced officer available and in place to process these applications, a decision to recruit a temporary consultant from Urban Vision Partnership was made. The appointment of a consultant will ensure that all of Gateway applications will be processed on time.

To accord with Standing Orders (Part 4, 4.1.) the recruitment would normally have followed a formal tender process during which a minimum of three estimates would have been sought. However, for the reasons of expediency explained above this procedure was not followed.

Prior to appointing Urban Vision several other agencies were contacted to ascertain whether it would be possible to recruit via this process. In practice not all agencies could provide an officer with the level of experience required, nor could they do so at a competitive rate.

Urban Vision Partnership Limited, who are a partnership between Salford Council, Capita and Morrison had both capacity and quality and offered value for money.

A fixed fee of £16000, which it is considered represents very good value for money was agreed with Urban Vision.

It is still hoped that the appointment of an appropriately skilled officer can be made later in the year, to assist with the next stage of the application/Inquiry process

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate steps taken to ensure that the statutory procedures associated with the delivery of the Mersey Gateway are not delayed.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The cost of securing the appointed consultant will be met from within existing budget provision.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Ensuring that the Mersey Gateway applications are efficiently processed and no delays are caused to the delivery of the scheme will be of benefit to all of the Council's priorities and objectives.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Failure to process the applications within the identified timeframe would prejudice the timing of the Public Inquiry and result in additional cost to the scheme.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

See 6.0 above.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Application documents	Rutland House, Runcorn	Liz Beard
Contract with Urban Vision	Rutland House, Runcorn	Liz Beard