

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 20th January 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Corporate

SUBJECT: Waiver of Standing Orders: Appointment Of A Consultant to Develop Runcorn Town Deal Project Business Cases

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To request approval to waive Procurement Standing Orders to award a contract to develop the Runcorn Town Deal Project Business Cases.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- (1) Procurement Standing Orders 3.1 are waived to approve the appointment of Amion Consulting Limited to undertake Town Deal Project Business Cases until August 2022, the terms of which will be as included in the original contract. The value of the contract is estimated to be £150k;**
- (2) In accordance with the provisions of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 and 1.14.5 (ii) be waived on this occasion.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Borough Council has secured £23.6m to deliver the Runcorn Town Investment Plan. The Plan includes seven projects. In order to draw down funding, a robust business case for each project is required. This will need to follow detailed government appraisal guidance.

3.2 The timetable set by government for the completion of businesses cases is challenging and, therefore, Members are advised that external consultancy support is required to progress this work. Members have already agreed to an allocation of revenue funding to support for this work at the Executive Board meeting in June 2021.

3.3 It is proposed that the contract for delivering this specialist support is

awarded to Amion Consulting Limited. Amion are based in Liverpool and have previously provided specialist support to the Council on a number of regeneration projects and programmes, such as 3MG, and Sci-Tech Daresbury. They have built up a strong reputation and are well-regarded by Local Authorities in the Liverpool City Region for providing objective advice and support.

- 3.4 Amion provided technical support to the Council when developing its Future High Streets Fund submission. Although this bid was unsuccessful, information gathered by Amion was used to support the Council's successful Town Deal submission. More recently, Amion were appointed to undertake a stock-take in respect of Town Deal projects, ultimately RAG rating projects and providing input regarding the next stages of project development for respective schemes.
- 3.5 Amion will deliver seven comprehensive business cases for the Runcorn Town Deal Projects. These Business Cases will adhere to the guidance provided by Government and meet the 5-model test based on the green book appraisal as per HM Treasury guidance as well as meet Department of Levelling Up Homes and Communities Towns Fund guidance and requirements. These five models are Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management.
- 3.6 The identified projects are the Brindley Extension, Health and Education Hub, Creative and Digital Skills Centre, Connectivity project, New Homes, Unlock Runcorn and Runcorn Station Quarter.
- 3.7 Amion would be required to attend project team briefings for the identified projects and will engage with appropriate stakeholders to ensure inclusion of all the required information in the business case creation.
They would also attend Runcorn Board meetings when appropriate to update members on progress as well as regular meetings with Halton Borough Council who are the accountable body. Ultimately, the business cases will inform the decision that the Council's Section 151 Officer is required to make on behalf of the Council as set out in the Towns Fund guidance prior to the formal business case submission to Government.
- 3.8 Amion have a good knowledge of the area and have already established good working relations with project sponsors, and have an in depth knowledge of project proposals.
- 3.9 For these reasons it is proposed that this approach offers the Council good value for money, as well as an opportunity to commence this work quickly, thereby reducing the risks of business cases not being completed within the required timeframe.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no further policy implications identified in this report.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The estimated cost of the contract will be £150,000. Funding has been agreed to deliver this contract.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 The Runcorn Town Deal will supports a wide range of Council priorities. This report relates to the procurement of specialist advice to help with the delivery of these priorities.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The main risk relates to ensuring that business cases for respective projects can be delivered within the tight timeframe. If business cases are not developed to the satisfaction of government, then funding will not be made available. To mitigate this risk, the Council is seeking to appoint a consultancy that has a proven track record of developing strong business cases for the types of projects contained in the Runcorn Town Investment Plan.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None

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

None under the meaning of the Act.