

# ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE Finance and Resources Committee

DATE 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010

DIRECTOR Pete Leonard

TITLE OF REPORT Tender for Provision of Forestry Consultancy Services

REPORT NUMBER:H&E/10/171

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## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval for Aberdeen City Council to acquire the continuation of specialist expertise to assist in the development, design, delivery and promotion of the future sustainable management of the Council's woodland resource at strategic and operational levels. This would make a significant positive contribution to the Council's environmental credentials and would help the Council become a national exemplar of Local Authority-owned and managed urban woodland.

The proposal for procuring this expertise is to issue a tender for the supply of retained consultancy services on a "no win - no fee" basis for an initial period of three years to 2013, after which time the need and basis for such services would be reviewed in light of performance and outcomes.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Committee Instructs Officers to issue a Tender Procurement for the Provision of Forestry Consultancy Services for the period 2010-2013
2. That Officers report back to Committee in April 2011 on progress made.

## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The anticipated tender value is in the order of £100K over the 3-year period. This is based on an assumed average input requirement of 8 days per calendar month at an estimated professional fee rate of £350 per day inclusive of expenses and is derived from recent previous experience. It is thought that the commissioning of the consultant will generate around £750K in grant income, timber sales etc. This figure is based on such recent projects as Tree For Every Resident Phase 1.

The Tender documentation would emphasise that the procurement by Aberdeen City Council of the specified consultancy services would be on a "**no win – no fee**" basis. In effect those tendering would do so on the understanding that consultancy fees and expenses would have to be met and absorbed by external grant and other funding.

Essentially we will not engage in work unless the Consultant has generated funds to pay for that pre agreed work and his own fees either through grant aid, European money or through improved management of our 400ha of woodland etc.

Thus all woodland related projects and activities (including continuation of the "Tree for Every Citizen" programme) would be delivered at no cost to Aberdeen City Council.

Earlier work of a similar nature has levered in external funding through various types of State Aid .

The main funding Partners for such projects have been Forestry Commission Scotland (through Scottish Rural Development Programme / Woodland In and Around Town(WIAT) and other match funding initiatives) and Aberdeen Greenspace. Whilst these will continue to be important sources of income it is intended that this post would be active in looking to secure funding through other initiatives such as the Carbon Code, SURF(Sustainable Urban Rural Fringe-an EU project for the River Don Corridor),increases in timber revenues from timber , firewood and supplying fuel for Biomass boilers e.g Duthie Park.(Housing & Environment Committee Report 16 February 2010)

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Legal:**Tender Documents and contracts will need to be drawn up for Procurement to proceed.ACC Legal Service staff and Officers from Procurement will be asked to assist in this process

**Resource:** ACC Officers currently directly or indirectly involved in tree and woodland related matters either do not have the range or depth of specialist forestry skills needed to deliver and sustain the City's woodland objectives and are in any event operating at or near capacity within their own departmental remits.

**Personnel :** Whilst working independently on his/her account, the consultant would be expected to work closely alongside, and as part of a team of Aberdeen City Council officers, in pursuance of the Council's vision and objectives for the Granite City Forest. On a day-to-day basis the consultant would report to the Council's Arboricultural Officer.

**Sustainability and Environmental:** Procuring the proposed forestry expertise at no cost to the Council will help deliver the City's woodland related projects and associated benefits to its communities, biodiversity, environment and carbon emission credentials (including support of its woodfuel / biomass plant) that far outweigh what could otherwise be achieved over the same timescale using ACC's internal resources.

#### **5. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

Aberdeen City Council currently owns approximately 400 hectares of woodland situated across the city and in 2009 embarked on Phase I of an ambitious project to implement the Council's commitment to "Plant a Tree for Every Citizen". To date the Council has planted 120,00 trees. It is projected that 90,000 trees will be planted in 2011.

Securing and implementation of the City's WIAT I and WIAT II programmes, followed by the initiation of Phase I of the Tree for Every Citizen programme, has highlighted the benefits of engaging professional forestry expertise whereby an outlay of only £5,000 by ACC has levered in funding and delivery of the order of £350K of project value to date, including the provision of management plans for the City's 400ha of woodland.

The breadth of specialist forestry expertise required to help the City achieve its woodland-related aspirations dictates that prospective consultants must be able to demonstrate established track records in the following areas:

- planning, funding and practical delivery of urban woodland management projects where there are multiple objectives and stakeholder interests, and particularly in a Local Authority context;
- trained and experienced in forest and urban woodland design;
- all aspects of woodland management and silviculture, including timber production forecasting, harvesting and marketing;
- GIS skills;
- first hand experience in the community woodland sector, including public and other community consultation and engagement;
- intimate knowledge and experience of private and public sector funding streams and grant schemes, particularly SRDP (RDC-RP) applications;
- ability to communicate effectively at policy, strategic and operational levels;
- strategic and operational knowledge of certification, the UK Woodland Assurance Standard and the new Woodland Carbon Code.

### **Risk Assessment**

Without external consultancy assistance:

High

- the City's current and future woodland-related projects and aspirations will not be met;
- those projects that have been initiated are at increased risk of failing, resulting in potential grant / funding reclaims with associated loss of credibility for the Council;
- the multiple social, environmental and local economic benefits from management of the City's existing woodland resource will not be achieved.

With external consultancy assistance:

Low

- Cost to the Council (professional consultancy costs covered by external grant other funding and woodland generated income streams);
- Professional consultants engaged at own risk;
- Risks of future failure of woodland-related projects mitigated.

### **Timing**

After-care of Phase I of the "Tree for Every Citizen" programme (Housing and Environment Committee Report 11 January 2010) is on going and planning and delivery of Phase II are at a critical stage, notwithstanding the need for continued proactive management of the Council's existing 400ha woodland resource. To avoid losing momentum and compromising the success of the Tree for Every Citizen programme to date, but also to capitalise on the acquisition of woodland management plans for its other woodlands, specialist forestry consultancy is currently being provided on a *pro bono* basis - an unsustainable arrangement beyond the very short term - pending a more formal and stable procurement process.

The requirement for securing the above consultancy services is therefore now urgent.

## 6. IMPACT

This report links to the Aberdeen City Council's Single Outcome Agreement and Community Plan in terms of the following National Outcomes:

- (1) We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe:
- (2) We live longer, healthier lives.
- (3) We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
- (4) We have strong, resilient and supportive communities, where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
- (5) We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect and enhance it for future generations
- (6) We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

This report also links generally to the Council's policy statement, Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking, by promoting the city as a Better place to live and work.

In more specific terms, the report links to Vibrant Dynamic & Forward Thinking as follows:

- (1) Environment  
Aberdeen's environment - natural and built - is part of what makes our City unique. Aberdeen City Council has a duty both to protect that environment and to play its part in protecting our planet.

The partnership will:

- (2) Adopt and implement policies which safeguard Aberdeen's green belt and green wedges
- (3) Institute a programme of tree-planting with the objective, with partners, of planting one tree for every citizen by 2011
- (4) Minimise the impact of council activities on the environment, including being carbon neutral overall by 2020 and a commitment that all new council developments will be carbon neutral.

(5) Through the provision of this consultancy work, projects that will support the implementation of the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy 2009, Proposed Openspace Strategy, 10:10 Commitment, and Air Quality Plan 2006 will be delivered in a cost effective manner.

An Equalities and Human Rights Impact assessment is not required as our procurement functions and procedures have been reviewed to ensure that our contractors and suppliers meet our equalities criteria and legal obligations.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf/\\$FILE/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf/$FILE/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf)

Policy and Resources Committee, 10 June 2008 – Item 7.3 Tree Planting Project

'Combating Climate Change - a role for UK forests' (Forestry Commission)

(See <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7y4gn9>)

Housing and Environment Committee 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010- A Tree for Every Citizen

Housing and Environment Committee 16 February 2010- H&E/10/012- Biomass heating at Duthie Park Winter Gardens

Terms of Reference for Consultant-schedule on request from Arboricultural Officer

Economic Development Sub-Committee 23 February 2009-Item 6c-SURF

## **8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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