

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	17 May 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Provision of Forestry Consultancy Services
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/082
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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 a period of five years to 2021, after which time the need and basis for such services would be reviewed in light of performance and outcomes.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i) Instructs Officers to issue a Procurement Exercise for the Provision of Forestry Consultancy Services for the period 2016-2021 and that Officers report back to Committee in August 2016 on progress made

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The anticipated value is in the order of £50K over the 5-year period. This is based on an assumed average input requirement of 2 days per calendar month at an estimated professional fee rate of £400 per day inclusive of expenses and is derived from recent previous experience.

As with previous procurement exercises the quotation 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 quoting 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 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, increases in timber revenues from timber, firewood and supplying fuel for Biomass boilers e.g Duthie Park.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal: Quotation 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 wood fuel / biomass plant) that far outweigh what could otherwise be achieved over the same timescale using ACC's internal resources.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The challenges to maintain our woodlands

Aberdeen City Council currently owns approximately 400 hectares of woodland situated across the city.

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

There is now the need for proactive management of the Council's existing 400ha woodland resource to avoid losing momentum and compromising the success of current woodland projects.

To implement the action points for woodland management plans that have, as yet, had no work done, 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.

Additionally, a new phase of Government funding, WIAT III, has been announced This is currently being applied for and will incorporate woodlands within the Don Corridor and in Torry. This has the potential to help manage and improve access to several of the Council's woods such as Danestone, Woodside and Seaton.

The requirement for securing the above consultancy services is therefore now urgent. These services will focus on the tasks outlined in the attached Appendix '**Forestry Consultant Terms of Reference**'.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

Through all of its woodland management the Council always strives to make its woodlands more sustainable, attractive places to be. With good access and infrastructure they should be easily accessible to all sections of society with good path networks and interpretation. Visits to them should aim to improve mental and physical health

Previous experiences from earlier projects mentioned have highlighted how well maintained woods with good path networks achieve all of the Council's aims and an extension of these works is very necessary.

Improving Staff Experience –

The last decade has shown that when working in partnership with professional foresters the scope and breadth of woodland management has vastly improved. They are able to focus on single issue tasks that current resources would not permit.

Completion of projects gives tremendous job satisfaction when these partnerships bear fruit.

Improving our use of Resources –

The unusual nature of this proposal, that is, all funding must be generated externally before fees are paid ensures that the Council achieves a very clever use of resources.

By maximising potential income from projects with professional forestry knowledge, the Council achieves its objectives –well run and sustainable woods-for no cost.

Corporate –

Contributes to the following sections of Aberdeen: The Smarter City –

- We will embrace the distinctive pride the people of Aberdeen take in their city and work with them to enhance the sense of well-being here, building strong communities which look out for, and look after one another.
- We will challenge inequalities wherever they exist and bring our communities closer together.
- We will promote Aberdeen as a great place to live, bring up a family, do business and visit.
- “Promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's citizens to lead more active, healthier lives.”
- “Provide a clean, safe and attractive streetscape and promote biodiversity and nature conservation. We will encourage wider access to green space in our streets, parks and countryside.
- Assist the Council in delivering the Single Outcome Agreement's National Outcome 12 “We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations” and will contribute to several other outcomes including No.6 “We live longer, healthier lives”, No. 7 “Tackling inequalities” and No. 10 “We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need”.
- The report contribute towards the delivery of the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy 2011-2016

Other corporate and service initiatives that the report will contribute to will include:

- The achievement of creating Scotland's first climate change park at Hazlehead.

Public –

This project is all inclusive to all members of society and it is thought that an “Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment” is not required. From past experience it is clear that any potential woodland related works are likely to be of interest to the public. There will be

other public interests identified and initiatives developed which will involve social enterprises, the local community and other local organisations over the duration of the consultancy.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

This report is seen as a benefit to all, the assessment of risk associated with this report is very low.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Forestry Consultancy Report to Housing and Environment Committee 2010.

Forestry Consultancy Bulletin Reports to Housing and Environment Committee 2011

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Appendix 1

THE Granite City FOREST

TERM FORESTRY CONSULTANCY, WOODLAND & PROJECT MANAGEMENT 2016-21

Terms of Reference for Consultant Framework

The anticipated specific day-to-day requirements of the forestry consultant in connection with the above are as set out in the Schedule below:

	Description
Ongoing Woodland Projects - On-going Maintenance Programme, 2016-2021	
1	Continue with regular monitoring of condition of all planting sites during the term consultancy period with respect to weed control, vermin damage, tree losses, vandalism etc., and provide silvicultural advice / prescriptions to ACC as required to achieve full establishment whereby no further maintenance will be required.
2	Prepare specifications and bills of quantity for weed control, beating up and other maintenance works as appropriate and obtains quotes as required by ACC to carry out remedial works in compliance with ACC's procurement procedures.
3	Prepare Work Instructions and Contracts for remedial works as required.
4	Provide regular progress reports to ACC and attend site meetings with ACC and/or contractors as required.
5	Supervise remedial works to satisfactory completion.
6	Receive, review and recommend for payment contractor invoices as appropriate.
7	Prepare and submit any relevant grant claims as appropriate.
On-going tree and woodland planting within the Granite City Forest - Design & Implementation	
8	Identify potential future planting sites in conjunction with Aberdeen City Council Officers.
9	Prepare preliminary maps, outline planting design, technical forestry and silvicultural advice, proposals and costings and discussion with ACC Officers (to include for all site and office-based meetings).
10	Prepare and submit relevant SRDP (Forestry Grant Scheme) and /or other relevant grant funding applications
11	Advise on aspects of the Granite City Forest project in connection with submission of Report & Recommendations to ACC Housing and Environment Committee.
12	Prepare community consultation information and/or display material and plans for the Granite City Forest tree and woodland planting programmes.
13	Prepare for and attend community planting events with ACC Officers.
14	Attend community consultation open events and Community Council meetings as required.
15	Consult with SNH in relation to deer management issues and advise ACC accordingly.
16	Assist with briefing for, and attendance at, official PR events in connection with promotion of the Project and/or the Granite City Forest.
17	Attend and assist with community planting events as appropriate.
18	Prepare tender details, bills of quantity, accompanying maps etc., for planting and other forestry related programmes as appropriate.
19	Evaluate tenders and provide recommendations to ACC for acceptances / rejections of quotations for forestry-related work programmes in accordance with ACC's procurement procedures.
20	Prepare Site Instructions (Including Hazard Plans etc) and Contracts for each contractor/site.
21	Plan, set out and supervise implementation of forestry-related work programmes to completion.
22	Receive, examine and recommend for payment all contractor invoices as appropriate.

Item	Description
On-going tree and woodland planting within the Granite City Forest - Design & Implementation (... / cont)	
23	Prepare and submit relevant grant claims.
The Granite City Forest – tree and woodland strategy, management & development.	
24	Assist ACC Officers with drafting, consultation, finalisation and periodic review of the Granite City Forest Tree & Woodland Strategy (TWS)
25	Assist ACC Officers with facilitation and development of appropriate partnership working and delivery mechanisms for implementation of the TWS.
26	Assist ACC Officers with the development and implementation of work programmes that deliver the TWS's operational objectives.
27	Maintain and update existing ACC woodland management plans, compartment and monitoring records as required.
28	Prepare woodland management plans for other ACC woodlands not yet covered by existing plans.
29	Prepare a budgeted programme, including cash flow forecast, of all silvicultural and other woodland related operations as prescribed by the management plans, including a timber production forecast, for discussion and approval by ACC. Advise ACC with regard to additional woodland operations as may be required.
30	Prepare SRDP, WIAT and other grant funding applications and action plans as appropriate to assist with implementation of ACC's woodland and city-wide strategic objectives, where appropriate working in conjunction with other ACC Officers, Projects and external partners.
31	Prepare a 3-5 (as required by ACC) year operation schedule(s) for the implementation of the woodland management programme for approval by ACC.
32	Advise and work with ACC in respect of required internal (ie within ACC) and external consultation in relation to the proposed woodland management programme, including liaison with FCS and other funding bodies as appropriate.
33	Prepare felling licenses etc., and any necessary accompanying supporting documentation as appropriate, for submission to FCS on behalf of ACC.
34	Advise, prepare and implement the management and site supervision of any timber operations on behalf of ACC, including marking of thinnings / fellings as required, Prepare of standing or roadside sales particulars and tender and contract documentation.
35	Advise, prepare and implement the management and supervision of all other relevant woodland related operations, including Prepare of bills of quantities, specifications, tenders, quotations, risk assessment and contract documentation, on behalf of ACC.
36	Receive, review and recommend for payment contractor invoices as appropriate.
37	Prepare and submit relevant grant claims as appropriate.
38	Submit periodic woodland management progress and budget reports to ACC as required.
39	Prepare periodic ACC internal Committee Reports as required.
40	Advise, prepare and implement on behalf of ACC the means for obtaining sustainable forest management certification for the Granite City Forest and, potentially, certification under the Woodland Carbon Code.