

North Yorkshire Council

Executive Members

30 May 2023

Extension of Contracts for Weather Station Bureau Service and Weather Forecasting Services

Report of the Assistant Director - Highways and Transportation, Parking Services, Street Scene, Parks and Grounds

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For the Corporate Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation to:
- i. authorise utilisation of the second and final extension available under the Weather Station Bureau Service contract with Vaisala Limited. This will extend the contract for an additional 24 months from 05/07/2023 – 04/07/2025;
 - ii. authorise utilisation of the second and final extension available under the Weather Forecasting contract, provided by Metdesk Limited. This will extend the contract for and additional 24 months from 05/07/2023 – 04/07/2025.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of the delivery of highway services in North Yorkshire, the Council uses weather forecast and weather data to help plan highway service delivery and monitor conditions across the network. This is particularly prevalent during the winter season where this information is used to determine what maintenance activities should be carried out (gritting, ploughing etc). It is also used in the summer months, where information on rainfall and wind speed can help to mitigate the impacts of storms and flooding and also higher surface temperatures during periods of hot weather.
- 2.2 In order to carry out these functions, two separate contracts are in place to provide relevant information to the Council. These contracts are
- Weather Forecasting Contract – delivered by MetDesk Ltd
 - Weather Station Bureau Service contract - delivered by Vaisala Ltd
- 2.3 Both contracts commenced on 5 July 2018, with an initial term of three years, with two options to extend for two years (maximum Term of seven years). The first two-year extension has been utilised, from 5 July 2021 to 4 July 2023. It is proposed the Council exercise the final option to extend these contracts from 5 July 2023 to 4 July 2025.

3.0 SUMMARY OF THE CONTRACTS

- 3.1 Weather Forecasting Services. This contract provides weather forecasting services to the Council. The data in these forecasts is used primarily to inform the Council's winter maintenance plan. The Council has a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the roads and the winter maintenance plan is a critical part of this. The winter maintenance plan is enacted between 1 October – 30 April. Therefore, it is important this service is in place.

- 3.2 The service provides weather forecasts across the 10 climatic domains within North Yorkshire. During the winter period this can be up to three forecasts per day to accurately show the changing weather patterns. This is critical to ensure the roads are salted at the correct times to help to prevent ice forming. The service also provides longer range forecasts to allow plans to be set out in advance then amended if required by daily forecasts. There is a 24-hour advisory service available from Metdesk.
- 3.3 Along with predicting ice on the roads, the service is also used to monitor rainfall to detect potential flooding events and notification of other weather warning such as high winds.
- 3.4 Although this service is primarily used in the winter months, it is available all year round. In the summer it is still used to monitor rain fall and wind speeds, but also to predict high temperatures, which can also have a detrimental effect on our roads and require maintenance to be carried out.
- 3.5 Weather Station Bureau This contract provides weather station bureau services to the Council. This service involves the maintenance of 27 weather stations placed across the county, the collection of the data and analysis of this data for use by our highways team. The contract also covers the purchase and installation of new weather stations, cameras or sensors where required.
- 3.6 The weather stations can provide the following data:
- Air temperature
 - Surface temperature
 - Level of salt on the road
 - Photo of the area
- 3.7 This information is updated every 10 minutes giving a real time view of the area where the stations are located. We have access to weather stations in surrounding areas, giving us weather data over a wider area. Also, the information is available to the public via the Council's website to help inform their travel arrangements. This is one of the most viewed pages on the Council's website.
- 3.8 Alongside the weather forecasting contract, the information is primarily used during the winter period (October – April) to plan the winter maintenance of the highways
- 3.9 This service is linked to the weather forecasting contract with Metdesk Limited, as outlined in Section 3.1 to 3.4 of this report. Metdesk use the information collected from the weather stations to inform their forecasts for North Yorkshire. The data is also used to monitor how accurate the forecasts are and improve future forecasts. The weather forecasts from Metdesk enable an overall winter maintenance plan to be established. The real time data from the Vaisala weather stations allow this plan to be more finely tuned to the situation on the ground. Alerts can be set up if temperatures drop, which notify highways duty managers enabling the appropriate responses to be put into place.
- 3.10 As part of this contract ten new solar/wind powered weather cameras and two new weather stations have been purchased at the cost of £200k in Autumn 2021. 16 original weather stations have been upgraded at a cost of £265k. These have been purchased to broaden the coverage we have across the county. The more data we have allows our highway team to better implement our winter maintenance plan, reducing the risk of ice forming on the roads, ensuring the highways are safe for drivers and helping to increase the accuracy of forecast information helping to improve efficiency and reduce operational costs. The extended coverage will also help the public, who can access these cameras to inform their travel plans.

4.0 PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 The performance of both suppliers has been good through the initial five years of the contract. Annual reviews are carried out with both suppliers where any issues or areas for improvement are identified and actioned as needed.
- 4.2 Given the performance of the existing suppliers, it is proposed that the final extension to the contract is utilised. This would allow for a plan for future procurement, for the service post July 2025 to be determined and actioned as needed.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not activating the contract extension was considered as an alternative option. On review it was identified that, given the current performance of the existing suppliers and certainty of costs for the next two years, it would be sensible to extend the existing contract until July 2025. This extension would allow for more detailed procurement plan to be established ahead of going back out to the market for new contracts starting July 2025.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Costs for both contracts are fully accounted for within the existing winter service operational budget for the duration of the contract extensions. The costs are fixed within the contract and are in line with the expenditure in 2022/23. This will assist with budget planning for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposed contracts with Metdesk Ltd and Vaisala Limited are extensions to existing contracts, both of which are expressly provided for in the original contract. The extensions are therefore in accordance with Regulation 72(1)(a) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An initial equality impact assessment screening has been completed, see **Appendix A**. This has identified that a full equalities impact assessment is not required as the proposals within this report do not negatively impact any individuals or groups with protected characteristics.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A climate change impact assessment has been completed, see **Appendix B**. This has identified that the contract extensions should be beneficial as they allow for continued better planning winter service activity and resources, which should help to reduce emissions through more effective fleet management and decision making.

10.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Extending the contracts is the lowest cost option and given the current performance of the respective contractors it is a low-risk approach. The duration of the extension will allow for procurement planning to be carried out ahead of a new tender process to enable contractors to be selected for the contract from July 2025.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 11.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation:
- i. authorises the utilisation of the second and final extension available under the Weather Station Bureau Service contract with Vaisala Limited. This will extend the contract for an additional 24 months from 05/07/2023 – 04/072025.
 - ii. Authorises the utilisation of the second and final extension available under the Weather Forecasting contract, provided by Metdesk Limited. This will extend the contract for an additional 24 months from 05/07/2023 – 04/072025

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix B – Climate Change Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

Barrie Mason
Assistant Director - Highways and Transportation, Parking Services, Street Scene, Parks and Grounds
County Hall
Northallerton
9 May 2023

Report Author – James Gilroy Team Leader Highways Asset Management
Presenter of Report – James Gilroy, Team Leader Highways Asset Management

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

Initial equality impact assessment screening form			
This form records the equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.			
Directorate	Environment		
Service area	Highways and Transportation		
Proposal being screened	Extension of contracts for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter Service Bureau • Weather forecasting 		
Officer(s) carrying out screening	James Gilroy		
What are you proposing to do?	Extend the existing contracts from July 2023 until July 2025		
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	To maintain existing services and systems to enable the delivery of winter service operations and other highway council services that rely on accurate weather information and data.		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	The current proposal will not lead to a reduction in planned resources but will aim to gain more efficient processes.		
Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYCC's additional agreed characteristics			
As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is this service used by groups of people with protected characteristics? • Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? • Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? 			
If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your Equality rep for advice if you are in any doubt.			
Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don't know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Sex		X	
Race		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Gender reassignment		X	
Religion or belief		X	
Pregnancy or maternity		X	
Marriage or civil partnership		X	
NYCC additional characteristics			
People in rural areas		X	
People on a low income		X	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		X	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known	N/A		

inequalities/probable impacts (e.g., disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.			
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	N/A		
Decision (Please tick one option)	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Continue to full EIA:
Reason for decision	The services provided through the contract extensions help to enhance of service delivery in North Yorkshire and do not adversely impact any groups / individuals with protected characteristics		
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	Barrie Mason		
Date	16/05/23		

Appendix B Climate change impact assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to help us understand the likely impacts of our decisions on the environment of North Yorkshire and on our aspiration to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030, or as close to that date as possible. The intention is to mitigate negative effects and identify projects which will have positive effects.

This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. The final document will be published as part of the decision making process and should be written in Plain English.

If you have any additional queries which are not covered by the guidance please email climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk

Please note: You may not need to undertake this assessment if your proposal will be subject to any of the following:

Planning Permission
Environmental Impact Assessment
Strategic Environmental Assessment

However, you will still need to summarise your findings in in the summary section of the form below.

Please contact climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk for advice.

Title of proposal	Highways Capital Programme
Brief description of proposal	To seek agreement from the Corporate Director, Environment Directorate, in consultation with Environment Executive Member for Highways and Transportation, to authorise contract extensions for the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather Station Bureau Service • Weather Forecasting contract,
Directorate	Environment
Service area	Highways and Transportation
Lead officer	James Gilroy
Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment	
Date impact assessment started	09.05.2023

Options appraisal

Were any other options considered in trying to achieve the aim of this project? If so, please give brief details and explain why alternative options were not progressed.

The option to not extend the existing contracts was considered. This was not taken forward as the performance of the existing suppliers is meeting expectations and certainty of cost for remainder of the contract that it would be sensible to extend these contracts rather than establish a new contract.

What impact will this proposal have on council budgets? Will it be cost neutral, have increased cost or reduce costs?

Please explain briefly why this will be the result, detailing estimated savings or costs where this is possible.

The contract extensions will be cost neutral, as they are extensions of existing contractual arrangements. Using the systems and information provided by the systems covered by the contacts helps to drive efficiency within Council operations and reduce costs. E.g. accurate weather forecasting and information from weather stations helps decision makers identify when / what / where gritting activity should be carried out.

How will this proposal impact on the environment?	Positive impact (Place a X in the box below where	No impact (Place a X in the box below where	Negative impact (Place a X in the box below where	Explain why will it have this effect and over what timescale? Where possible/relevant please include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes over and above business as usual • Evidence or measurement of effect • Figures for CO₂e • Links to relevant documents 	Explain how you plan to mitigate any negative impacts.	Explain how you plan to improve any positive outcomes as far as possible.
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions e.g. reducing emissions	Emissions from travel	X			More efficient planning and coordination of gritting vehicles, will help to reduce emissions from the Council fleet.	

<p>How will this proposal impact on the environment?</p> <p>N.B. There may be short term negative impact and longer term positive impact. Please include all potential impacts over the lifetime of a project and provide an explanation.</p>	<p>Positive impact (Place a X in the box below where</p>	<p>No impact (Place a X in the box below where</p>	<p>Negative impact (Place a X in the box below where</p>	<p>Explain why will it have this effect and over what timescale?</p> <p>Where possible/relevant please include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes over and above business as usual • Evidence or measurement of effect • Figures for CO₂e • Links to relevant documents 	<p>Explain how you plan to mitigate any negative impacts.</p>	<p>Explain how you plan to improve any positive outcomes as far as possible.</p>
<p>from travel, increasing energy efficiencies etc.</p>	<p>Emissions from construction</p>	<p>x</p>				
	<p>Emissions from running of buildings</p>	<p>x</p>				
	<p>Other</p>	<p>x</p>				
<p>Minimise waste: Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost e.g. reducing use of single use plastic</p>	<p>x</p>					
<p>Reduce water consumption</p>	<p>x</p>					
<p>Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)</p>	<p>x</p>					
<p>Ensure resilience to the effects of climate change e.g. reducing flood risk, mitigating effects of drier, hotter summers</p>	<p>x</p>					
<p>Enhance conservation and wildlife</p>	<p>x</p>					

<p>How will this proposal impact on the environment?</p> <p>N.B. There may be short term negative impact and longer term positive impact. Please include all potential impacts over the lifetime of a project and provide an explanation.</p>	<p>Positive impact (Place a X in the box below where</p>	<p>No impact (Place a X in the box below where</p>	<p>Negative impact (Place a X in the box below where</p>	<p>Explain why will it have this effect and over what timescale?</p> <p>Where possible/relevant please include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes over and above business as usual • Evidence or measurement of effect • Figures for CO₂e • Links to relevant documents 	<p>Explain how you plan to mitigate any negative impacts.</p>	<p>Explain how you plan to improve any positive outcomes as far as possible.</p>
<p>Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of North Yorkshire's landscape</p>		x				
<p>Other (please state below)</p>		x				

Are there any recognised good practice environmental standards in relation to this proposal? If so, please detail how this proposal meets those standards.

N/A

Summary Summarise the findings of your impact assessment, including impacts, the recommendation in relation to addressing impacts, including any legal advice, and next steps. This summary should be used as part of the report to the decision maker.

The extension of the contracts will maintain the existing level of service and will help to further enhance vehicle and resource planning which can help to reduce emissions.

Sign off section

This climate change impact assessment was completed by:

Name	James Gilroy
Job title	Team Leader Highway Asset Management
Service area	Highways and Transport
Directorate	Environment
Signature	J Gilroy
Completion date	09.05.2023

Authorised by relevant Assistant Director (signature): Barrie Mason

Date: 16 May 2023