

REPORT TO CABINET

Award of Contract for Sandwell's Digital Platform and Self-Serve Customer Portal

28 August 2019



BACKGROUND

- In September 2017 the Council awarded a contract to Firmstep Ltd for the provision of a self-serve customer portal
- The contract with Firmstep expires on 13 September 2019 and we are now seeking approval to make a direct award to Firmstep for a period of 2 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years.
- The new contract includes platform hosting costs and an amount for development of new services to ensure we continue to improve and increase access to online services



SANDWELL'S CUSTOMER PORTAL – 'MySandwell'

- Over the last 4 years the council has invested significant resources into developing the portal with Firmstep
- Our vision was for users to have an '*Amazon like*' account with the council. We believe we are well on the way to achieving this with the 'MySandwell' account but there are many more services we want to bring into the portal
- The MySandwell brand is now well recognised amongst residents, stakeholders and employees
- Over 1/3 of UK councils are now using Firmstep and Sandwell has one of the highest account take up rates



MySandwell KEY SUCCESSES

- Since launch in March 2016, over 100,000 users have registered for a MySandwell account
- We now offer access to over 60 online processes
- User satisfaction rate is 90%
- The council is achieving a 52.6% channel shift rate for services available online
- £ 18million of council payments (35%) (excluding direct debit) have been made online
- Over 898,660 online enquiries have been submitted across a number of services using the Firmstep (MySandwell) platform since launch



MySandwell

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS



MySandwell – HOUSING REPAIRS

- Provides an option for users to report repairs using their MySandwell account rather than by telephone or visiting local centres
- Users can report their repairs online at a time convenient for them, 24 hours a day
- 40% of council property households already have a MySandwell account
- Over the last financial year some 83,000 calls were made to the contact centre to book repairs
- Reducing this contact will release capacity of the frontline teams to improve performance and focus telephony or face to face services on those that need them most



MySandwell – COUNCILLOR PORTAL

- The Digital Transformation team are currently developing a Members Portal using the Firmstep solution
- This is in support of the Member Development Programme
- It will enable Councillors to:
 - Manage casework
 - Easily access ‘useful information’ about the council and their Ward
 - Obtain updates on enquiries
- We will be arranging demonstrations shortly



RECOMMENDATIONS



That Cabinet:

- Approve a direct award to Firmstep Ltd for an initial period of two years with an option to extend for a further two years. The maximum value of the contract is £620k over the initial two-year period and £1.24m over four years.
- Authorise the Executive Director - Resources to execute all necessary documents.
- Authorise the Head of ICT and Revenue & Benefits to sign the contract documentation.

