

Cabinet

Tuesday, 15 October 2024

ADDENDA 1

13. Hyer Power project (Pages 1 - 6)

Cabinet Member: Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations

Forward Plan Ref: 2024/315

Contact: Paul Gambrell, Team leader – Zero Emission Vehicles, Innovation Service
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Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve a key decision to permit the procurement of a hydrogen production and refuelling rig that will be fully funded by an external grant and will be installed on the Highways Depot at Drayton.

16. For information only: Cabinet response to Scrutiny item (Pages 7 - 12)

Draft Customer Experience Strategy

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Divisions Affected -

CABINET

15 October 2024

Hyer Power Project (Hydrogen Fuel-Cell Range Extended Fire Engine Prototype)

Report by Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**

approve a key decision to permit the procurement of a hydrogen production and refuelling rig that will be fully funded by an external grant and will be installed on the Highways Depot at Drayton.

Executive Summary

2. The project, Hyer, is developing a prototype Fire engine and the hydrogen refuelling facility is required to allow for the refuelling of this and other potential vehicles to enable trials to be undertaken. The strategic location of the site also offers access to green hydrogen for other highway's, hard to decarbonise heavy duty vehicles.
3. Whilst the anticipated tender amount was above £500k (quote is £825.5k), unusually this would be financed from revenue funding due to the nature of the work and the subsequent usage of the infrastructure post project.

Project Background

4. The project is developing a range extender zero-emission battery electric fire engines, in combination with hydrogen fuel cells and a minimum of 16kg of onboard hydrogen fuel storage, that can meet requirements for flexibility, emergency response and the water pumping duration. The project will also build a prototype ambulance and possibly other heavy duty support vehicles, which offer the possibility of being tested by Oxfordshire District Councils and NHS' South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) opening up a wider opportunity for challenging specialised vehicles to go net zero and a boost to alternative net zero technologies.
5. The project involves several private businesses, including the lead partner, ULEMCo, the hydrogen fuel cell fleet technology expert together with the Fire

and Rescue Service's current fire appliance provider, Emergency One. The total project is £7.8m, with grant funding of £3.9m. Of that, £1.56m has been granted to the Council to meet 100% of its costs (as a public sector organisation, the Council is able to recoup all of its costs). The refuelling infrastructure equipment costs have been quoted at £825.5k. The project will see the partnership specify and build the prototype fire appliance and then for Oxfordshire Fire Service to test it as an operational platform. Any assets, paid for through the grant, would be owned by the county council at the end of the trial. Project resource costs are also met through grant funding.

6. The Council is part of a consortium that has been awarded Advanced power Centre (APC)/Innovate UK (IUK) funding to develop, test and trial up to three zero-emission hydrogen fuel-cell powered specialised vehicles. These include a fire engine, an ambulance and a road sweeper. As part of the project, the Council needs to provide a refuelling facility for the prototype trials.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

7. The Hyer project supports the Council's priority to address the climate emergency as it is examining a possible solution to decarbonise heavy fleet vehicles.

Financial Implications

8. Hyer project is fully funded by APC/IUK grant funding, there are no budgetary implications to the council.

9. Project Costs Breakdown

Description	Grant Offer Letter Cost	Materials- inc. Refuelling Infrastructure Commitments	Other Forecast Commitments
Labour	£353,534		£302,516
Materials	£1,196,500		
Fire Engine Chassis		£127,851	
Hydrogen Refuelling Infrastructure		£825,500	
Installation - Drayton		£65,000	
Operational costs		£50,000	
Refurb. Back up appliance		£60,000	
Travel & Sub	£6,000		£6,000
Other Costs 1	£8,000		£0
Totals	£1,564,034.00	£1,128,351.00	£308,516.31
Total Commitments	£1,436,867.31		
Difference	£127,166.69		

10. Labour includes Innovation Service, Fire Service and a small provision for other services such as legal.

11. Materials includes provision for chassis for fire engine, refurbishment work on back-up appliance, hydrogen refuelling infrastructure purchase and installation costs and operation costs whilst in use.
12. Other costs are now not required for its original purpose and can be allocated for other use on the project as needed.
13. Costs for hydrogen refuelling infrastructure requiring the key decision to progress are met by the project budget

Comments checked by:

Rob Finlayson, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
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Legal Implications

14. The Council published a tender on the Procurement Partnership Ltd (TPPL) Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) framework portal in June 2024. The proposed supplier has been identified following all required procurement procedures in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The Council is looking for the supply of a green hydrogen refuelling facility as a turnkey solution covering design, build, commissioning, and maintenance-including all such as civils, electrical, plumbing, and any other requirements necessary for full installation and commissioning.

Comments checked by:

Marina Lancashire, Contracts Lawyer,
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Staff Implications

15. No additional staff would be employed and staffing to support the project is covered by grant funding

Equality & Inclusion Implications

16. Project has created number of jobs and apprentice opportunities

Sustainability Implications

17. Hyer project is in line with delivering the Council's corporate priority 1: put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.

18. The Council has the opportunity to demonstrate a new technology innovation the world's first green hydrogen fuel-cell powered fire engine.
19. The planned hydrogen facility will allow the production of green hydrogen benefitting other council owned specialised and emergency fleets.
20. It Contributes to the Council's net-zero target and decarbonising the Council's own fleet – particularly hard to decarbonize heavy duty vehicles.
21. Assists in enabling the local hydrogen economy.
22. Aligns strongly with the government's growth priorities - energy, infrastructure and innovation as set out in the Autumn Statement 2022.

Risk Management

23. The project is funded through external funding agency, with contingency built into the costs to ensure a minimal financial risk to the council.
24. As the project involves trialling a fire engine, there is the risk of vehicle failure leading to compromised service delivery. However, resilience measures are being built into the project in the form of a 'shadow' fire engine (a refurbished existing vehicle) funded from the project.
25. The most significant risk at present is if the key decision approval set out in this report is not forthcoming or timely, the project timing would be compromised with the possibility of not being able to complete the project and resultant reputational risk to the Council.
26. There are no interdependencies with any other specific projects albeit the project would have links to One Fleet and fleet decarbonisation ambitions and would help to enable an emergent local hydrogen economy.
27. The project is being delivered by the iHUB, closely working with the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, and the Climate Action Delivery team. The project is also supported by Environment and Place, Highways Team and the Highways Operators (Milestone)
28. The Project Management team keeps and maintains a full Risk Register to manage and mitigate any risk that is envisaged or realised during the delivery of the project.
29. Prior to refuelling infrastructure tender publication, a full hazard identification Assessment of the Drayton's Highways Depot site was carried out by an independent advisor involving highways team, Health & Safety managers, highways operators, environmentalists and climate action team members.
30. The Council's insurance team also has consulted the Council's insurance providers to assess the risk and to secure the right cover for the refuelling infrastructure and the fleet.

Consultations

31. As a part of the project delivery, dissemination and educational activities are part of the Council's project delivery team. There are some public events planned once the infrastructure is installed and functional to demonstrate this innovation to stakeholders and communities.

Lorna Baxter
Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

Annex: Nil

Background papers: Nil

[Other Documents:] Nil

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October 2024

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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Draft Customer Experience Strategy

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services

Date response requested:² 27 February 2024

Response to report:

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¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
<p>That the Council reviews within the Customer Experience Strategy - and more widely - its use of the word 'customers' as the preferred term to refer to those in receipt of collectively paid-for public services.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>When carrying out the internal engagement for this strategy (November 2023 to January 2024) we engaged over 250 employees to review the term 'customer' and have reflected responses in a word cloud infographic in the strategy (page 8) exploring all the terms we use to describe the people we serve.</p> <p>The final definition shared in the strategy (page 9) defines customer as "any individual, group or organisation that interacts with or receives assistance, support or guidance from the council". This broad definition covers everyone, including those in receipt of services paid for by the public.</p> <p>A recent intranet article, posted on the 14th of August, covering the customer experience strategy outlined the range of customers that the council has from residents to road users and business's which showcased the broad scope of the definition.</p> <p>We plan to discuss this further internally to finalise a definition for the council.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<p>That the Council takes further measures to increase public understanding of its financial limitations</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Within the strategy (page 7) we have reflected on the increased demand for services with the limited budget available. This requires a shift in approach towards customers self-serving where appropriate which will direct the council to focus on more complex cases that require further support. This reduction in overall demand through a greater use of self-service will ensure we can deliver consistent customer service within finance limitations.</p> <p>We have included a graphic, also on page 7, which outlines how the council will reduce overall demand such as better early intervention, signposting and greater use of partners. This will help those who read the strategy understand the measures the council are taking to meet the challenges currently faced.</p> <p>Separate to the strategy the consultation and engagement team have created budget simulator exercises which have enabled customers to try and set their own council budgets. They have also used this tool to engage young people in conversations around public finance.</p> <p>A budget for 24/25 was simulated by 1300 people including 88 secondary school children. There were also 140 online feedback forms submitted. For the 25/26 budget, there have been over 1000 submissions using the budget simulator tool.</p>
<p>That the Council works more closely with district/city and town/parish councils to reduce for residents the impact of the complexity of multiple layers of local authority</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>We have identified this internally as an issue and have recently launched our Oxfordshire Councils Charter with the districts, towns and parishes. This framework will support further conversations on improving customer experience across Oxfordshire.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		<p>As part of the customer experience action plan, we are working with OCC communications team and partners to improve understanding around the services that the council and our partners offer through social media/resident engagement.</p> <p>Finally, an upgrade to our telephony system to an omni-channel approach (phone, email, WhatsApp etc) in November has the possibility to improve auto-redirection of customers to the appropriate service. A further update on this functionality can be provided when the new system is live.</p>
That the Council identifies the steps it can reasonably take to extend improvements in service standards to subcontractors.	Partially accepted	<p>Since going live with the strategy, we have met with individual directorates including Environment and Place which use a large number of subcontractors to promote the principles.</p> <p>We have a communications plan for the strategy internally which includes all service areas and this will allow us to embed the principles to all colleagues and subcontractors.</p> <p>We may explore adding information on the customer experience strategy to our subcontractor's induction period but this will be a wider piece of work.</p>
That the Council monitors the effectiveness of its complaints-handling as part of its Customer Experience Strategy.	Accepted	<p>Following feedback from this scrutiny committee we added a fifth principle to our strategy around learning from feedback. We have a dedicated improving the customer experience project to review and unify the complaints process and system which is currently live. An update on the new process/system will be shared once available.</p> <p>Regular updates around corporate complaints are currently shared through the business management and monitoring report.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<p>That the Council includes within its profiles of user groups those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, and those for whom English is a second or other language.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>When engaging for the strategy respondents were from a range of places across the county. The 3 postcode areas we received most feedback from, were: OX16 - Banbury area (22%), OX4 - East Oxford area, including Cowley, Blackbird Leys, Rose Hill (19%), and OX28 – Witney area (9%), which coincide with where we carried out in person engagement. (The engagement report for the strategy has a postcode map.) These areas include some of our most deprived wards in the county.</p> <p>We have committed to doing more in our action plan including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in comprehensive research that encompasses a wide range of demographics, including age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and abilities when designing our services • Partner with local organisations, community leaders, and advocacy groups to leverage their insights which will provide context and help bridge gaps • Invest in multilingual support and translation software, clear signage, and accessible technology <p>We are working with the co production lead in the council to engage with seldom heard groups including English not as a first language and socio-economically disadvantaged groups when designing future customer-experience processes.</p> <p>In the action plan we committed to creating user profiles for training and designing process around our customers. A further update on progress will be provided at the end of year 1 of the strategy.</p>
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