

**Planning, Water,
Driver and Vehicle Agency**



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Local Government Chief Executives
(Via Email)

Deputy Secretary
Room 1-05
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB

Tel: (028) 9054 0540

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Dear Chief Executive

NI Planning IT System

I am pleased to inform you that all Councils have agreed to the proposals for a new Planning IT System and are content that the project proceeds to the next phase to commence the procurement of a new system for all Councils. I appreciate that a number of Councils have concerns about the proposals and in particular the estimated costs and how these costs will be distributed between the Department and local government. Taking these points in turn.

Estimated Cost

The estimated cost in the Outline Business Case is £26.7m (undiscounted costs) over the 11 years of the project. However, since we issued the business case, the actual costs for the project are currently lower than the estimate and if this continues, it will lead to an overall lower project cost. The actual costs will of course be determined through a competitive procurement process and will be set out and approved through a Final Business Case (FBC).

The procurement is being taken forward on the understanding that it will identify a planning solution that will be implemented by all Councils. There is a strong expectation that, if we work together through the procurement processes, the FBC will be able to be approved by all Councils.

Distribution of Costs

You will be aware that as part of the discussions with local government, the Department's Permanent Secretary agreed to increase our share of the project costs up to 45% plus the costs of maintaining the existing NIPP system.

In terms of the distribution of costs between individual Councils, I understand that SOLACE has agreed, as an interim-measure, that the capital costs should be shared evenly across 11 Councils and that the operating costs should be split based on fees/revenue.

In practical terms the Department will initially cover any costs during the procurement phase of the project (e.g. CPD, Consultancy, Project team etc) and then recover the relevant portion of these costs from each Council at the end of the financial year. A breakdown of each council's expected costs will be provided at the next Project Board meeting on 21 May 2019.

Next Phase – Procurement

You will be aware that the Department has a short window in which to procure and implement a new IT system. In order to assist us in progressing this, we have established a project team that includes a number of Council staff. The project team are now developing the specification and associated contract documents in order to commence the procurement of a new system by the summer. As part of this process, it is critical that Councils continue to actively engage and provide the necessary staff resources to ensure the procurement is able to be progressed as soon as possible. I have also highlighted this issue to your Heads of Planning at the recent Project Board meeting and we have committed to provide as much information as possible to your teams to help them understand the requirements and timeframes.

In summary, it is encouraging that we have all agreed to the OBC and now our focus has turned to progressing the procurement process as quickly as possible. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support.

Yours sincerely



Julie Thompson
Deputy Secretary

Copied to PPGB Members