

Malton and Norton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Selection of Planning Consultants to assist the development of a Neighbourhood Plan to completion.

1. MS met with Dale Casson, Ryedale DC Procurement Officer, on 4 November and discussed the process for selection of Consultants to assist the NPlan preparation, in a format which met, as far as was possible, the competition requirements set down in RDC Financial regulations.

MS was advised that,

1. while an exact specification had not been set out for the project, which could be presented to potential contractors for the submission of tender, we, the commissioning body should make best efforts to seek submissions on price, hourly rates, and estimates of likely input requirements, in response to a request common to all, and laying down the same conditions,
2. evaluation of the respective presentations submitted should be fair, equal and reasonable, and
3. the final selection should be justifiable taking into account in reasonable measure, charging rates, qualification of participants, experience in the field, availability, and potential expenses. Prior knowledge of the commissioner's situation or the project itself may have a bearing in the selection process, but care should be taken not to overvalue this element. Overvaluing a prior arrangement could be interpreted as giving preferential consideration. This needs to be avoided.

2. Following a one-off attendance and advice session delivered by Mike Dando of Directions Planning, the Group wrote in June of 2015 to DP to request an estimate of costs, hourly rates and the likely professional inputs required to deliver a plan through the stages agreed. DP responded with a proposal dated 24 June. Following his meeting with Mr Casson of RDC, MS spoke with a further five potential contractors, all of which had a degree of experience mentoring or guiding Neighbourhood Plans: Four of these expressed a willingness to receive the invitation to make a proposal: Indigo Planning of Leeds, KVA Planning Consultancy of Helmsley, Rural Solutions at Skipton, and Checkley Planning at Leeds. The invitation sent was virtually identical to the letter sent previously to DP and was based upon the very same agreed stages document. Despite some follow-on phone calls with two of these, in the event only one, KVA of Helmsley submitted a proposal.

3. The two proposals were evaluated at a meeting called by the Chairman of the NPSG (who had been delegated the authority to recommend a selection)), and attended by Cllr King and Cllr Lloyd-Williams along with Clerks, RT, TH and MS.

KVA made a proposal based upon an estimate of required professional input into the project, of £25,000 over 72 days, plus expenses. The base charge rate is £50.00 per hour. Fee estimate is contained at Appendix 2.

DP's proposal estimated a cost for professional guidance of the project as £14250 over 28.5 days plus expenses. The base charge rate is £62.50 per hour. The fee estimate is on page 3 of proposal.

These were very different estimates of what the project might entail, particularly in terms of the potential input requirement at the various stages. On balance it was felt that the DP team of Dando and Jukes had broader and more varied experience of plan guiding than Ms Atkinson from KVA, whose direct experience was limited to one, albeit a large project, in Ripon. It was felt that the DP team proposal represented the best value as well as the least risk in terms of the capacity of the contractor to deliver.

4.. The progress to this stage was presented to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group at its meeting on 19th of January 2016. Members agreed to endorse the recommendation of the Chairman that the proposal of Directions Planning be accepted and the appropriate engagement formalities be made, subject to confirmation that the Ryedale District Council Procurement Officer is satisfied that the Group has made best efforts to meet the competition requirements in the course of the selection process.

MS

29/01/2016