

PORTFOLIO AREA – HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Date of Meeting: 2nd September, 2002

Public

Key Decision: No

Recorded in Forward Plan: No

Inside/Outside Policy Framework

Title: 10 YEAR EQUIPMENT PLAN – SANDS BOX OFFICE TICKET SYSTEM

Report of: Director of Leisure and Community Development

Report reference: LCD 26/02

Summary:

The report seeks approval for the upgrade to the existing Sands Centre Box Office ticket sale system.

Recommendations:

That the Executive recommend to the City Council:-

- (1) That the replacement of the Synchro System, Theater, with the new Venuemaster, be approved at a cost of up to £19,800 and funded by the release of £19,800 from the Repairs and Renewals Fund, and the 10 year plan be amended to bring forward to year 2002/03.
- (2) That, under Contract Standing Order 4 (2)(b), the Director of Leisure and Community Development be approved to accept one tender, that of Synchro Systems, for the supply and delivery of the Venuemaster Box Office ticketing system.

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Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

- 1.1 The Sands Centre events programme uses Synchro Systems to set up and sell tickets for the events and concerts.

Synchro was chosen prior to the centre opening in 1985 and has since installed a major upgrade in 1994 and a new server in 1999 to ensure year 2000 compliance. The system enables approximately 100,000 tickets to be sold generating in excess of £800,000 worth of income.

- 1.2 The bespoke system that Synchro operates, Theatar, is now becoming obsolete (UNIX System) and they introduced a new operating system called Venuemaster (Windows system) in 2000. At that time, they informed users that, whilst the old Theatar system would be supported for a further 18 months, they would not be able to guarantee continued support after 2002 and this has since been reiterated. It is crucial for service requirements that the ticket system is fully supported to enable the Sands to guarantee the service.

- 1.3 It had been officers' intention to adjust the ten year plan and bring forward the upgrade replacement to this year. However, due to externalisation of the service, it was felt more appropriate to make the decision after the award of the contract, leaving the preferred contractor to advise on the replacement. Leisuretime has now requested that the system be upgraded to the new Synchro Systems Venuemaster. The main reasons for this are:-

- The hardware is very old. The ticket printers are obsolete and cannot be replaced and are consistently being repaired.
- To install on Sands network to allow more users onto the system.
- To bring in line with network requirements – Venuemaster is a Windows system (Theatar operates on a UNIX system).
- Staff know the system.
- There is recognised and good support.
- Data conversion easier/cheaper than alternative.
- Our business history, i.e. reporting.
- Cheaper to upgrade rather than purchase new system.

1.4 Venuemaster is a leading ticket system in the UK and is operating at 70+ venues including: the Royal Opera House, London; the Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow; and the Harrogate International Centre. The system meets all of Leisuretime's requirements and has specific stated art features including:-

- Quick Address Software.
- Business Objects Data Analysis Tool.
- On-line Credit and Debit Card Payments.
- Internet Booking and Sales.
- Membership and Loyalty Schemes.
- Full Marketing and Financial Reporting.

1.5 The replacement/upgrade cost for the basic system is:-

	£
Venuemaster Licences	5,000
3 x BOCA printers	5,400
QAS	400
Additional Hardware	5,200
Installation/configuration	1,300
Data transfer	1,300
Training	1,200

	19,800

The ten year plan has a contribution of £19,926 which is sufficient to meet the above costs.

1.6 The IT section has been involved with this route for upgrading the system and supports the proposals as outlined, as:-

- This moves away from a UNIX system to a Windows 2000 system.
- The system will be able to be networked at the Sands and allows for greater flexibility and backup.
- Is a market leader with a large base within local authorities.

- Ongoing known support and software upgrades.
- High customer satisfaction at other installations.
- Significant cost savings by upgrading rather than replacing.

2. CONSULTATION

N/A.

3. STAFFING/RESOURCES COMMENTS

N/A.

4. CITY TREASURER'S COMMENTS

The City Treasurer can confirm that the balance on the Repairs and Renewals fund is £19,926 after the 2002/03 Equipment Fund contribution of £3,245 has been made.

Under the externalisation Leisuretime services equipment currently utilised will transfer to the preferred partner (Carlisle Leisure Ltd.). The contract requires that the preferred partner will maintain and/or replace the equipment during the life of the contract. At the end of the contract, the contractor is required to return the equipment to the Council in the same or equivalent condition that it was received in.

The relevant Repairs and Renewals Fund balances against Leisuretime services will be frozen for future use by the Council should it become necessary.

The "shadow" contractor, Carlisle Leisure Limited, included contributions to its own Repairs and Renewals Fund to enable it to replace equipment as necessary during the course of the contract in its tender price submission.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

N/A.

6. CORPORATE COMMENTS

N/A.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive recommend to the City Council:-

- (1) That the replacement of the Synchro System, Theatar, with the new Venuemaster, be approved at a cost of up to £19,800 and funded by the release of £19,800 from the Repairs and Renewals Fund, and the 10 year plan be amended to bring forward to year 2002/03.
- (2) That, under Contract Standing Order 4 (2)(b), the Director of Leisure and Community Development be approved to accept one tender, that of Synchro Systems, for the supply and delivery of the Venuemaster Box Office ticketing system.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The replacement and upgrade are needed now in order for the service to be supported by Synchro Systems. There is sufficient finance for the upgrade already in the ten-year plan.
- 9.2 The Director is seeking to accept the one tender, that of Synchro Systems, at £19,800. The reasons for this are:-
 - Synchro is willing to treat this as an upgrade and as such the licence and software is priced at a greatly reduced level than that of a new system. Comparable system on the market would cost in the region of £50k.
 - The current system contains crucial key data which requires to be transferred on to the proposed system. This will form part of the procurement. Again this is easier and less costly than transferring on to a new supplier system.
 - The proposed system and the operation are known to the current users and will not require the length of training and familiarisation a new system brings.
 - The Windows based system fits with the current Sands network and operation.