**WNC Bus shelter advertising and maintenance soft market test-20231201\_103210-Meeting Recording**

December 1, 2023, 10:32AM

22m 5s

 **Simon Bowers** 0:04
I welcome everybody.
It's good.
Good to see you this morning and I'm quite surprised. It's everyone's.
Faces are often of those kind of event.
People that sit behind a a a black screen, don't they?
But I I think you probably all know each other.
It's a fairly fairly intimate industry, so we're not really giving him any secrets about who's on the call, as it were.
Umm so I'm some about.
I'm the Council's director for assets and Environment and my team is taking the lead on this new bus shelter contract.
Alan Craig's many of you will know.
He's at transport facilities and CCTV manager and Sarah Days is from our procurement team.
Umm.
So with no further ado, let us if I could make it work, move into the presentation.

 **Sarah Deyes** 0:53
OK.

 **Simon Bowers** 0:57
That hopefully you can all see that.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 1:02
Help) Yep.

 **Fiona Davies** 1:02
Yeah.

 **Karen Rankin** 1:02
Yes, we can.

 **Simon Bowers** 1:03
See some notes.
That's good.
OK, we're recording this session as we've just discussed.
Yeah.
Please keep me what's falling up unless we get a problem.
Too worried about that, to be honest.
And we will circulate the slide deck.
I will apologize in advance.
It's a bit wordy.
It's not my favorite kind of presentation with Nice pictures and things, but nonetheless it does the job I think.
So we were formed back in 2021, comprising the former Northampton Borough S Northants and Daventry district councils, and just over half essentially, of Northampton County Council.
That's got some advantages.
It's brought a whole other stuff together, part of which is bus shelters.
Umm, there is a very old Bush shelter maintaining it about an advertising contract that was let by the then Northampton Borough Council and that covers most, but not all, shelters in Northampton Town.
We are looking to let a new contract which will cover both those shelters or the sites of those shelters and we perhaps touch on that, the former Northamptonshire County Council, highway shelters and various other shelters like Daventry Bus Station and a few that were directly on my Northampton Borough and so on.
They're all just arrived in the specification, so at the moment got a bit of a mixed bag.
Clearly we wanna make a better job of it.
I'll say up front, as I said in the spec, the highway shelters in particular received a pretty minimal maintenance regime in during, during their time under highways.
It was saying never have a budget for that service.
So we've been thinking about how to do this Best and we wanna talk to you.
Today is about how we're gonna run the new contract.
We want your feedback and appreciate you may not wanna say that in front of each other when very happy to have that privately if you prefer and that will help us inform this specification and indeed the entire sort of structure of the contract to make sure that we put out gives you the best chance of giving us the best offer you can.
So there are some objectives specified in the contract or in the draft specification, and then will be in the ITT as well, which not surprisingly we want good shelter, good quality bus shelters where they're needed.
We wanna optimize the income from appetising opportunities.
Again, that won't shock you.
I'm sure we wanna support design quality in the urban environment.
We wanna preserve and restore a few really good quality or historically interesting existing shelters, umm.
And we want to item 4.
Ideally, we'd like design approaches which support the character and distinctiveness of West Northamptonshire now.
I appreciate that may come in some tension with certain other things like efficiency, but what we'll see how that plays out ideally would like to support biodiversity with things like the buzz, buzz stop, green roofs that I'm sure you're all familiar with and obviously supporting net 0 carbon in the manufacture, construction, solution, maintenance, etcetera of the structures and ideally of course would also like to get some money out of it and we'll see how that shapes up.
Umm, now we recognise that you guys do this every day, all day.
It's your day job and you go to this, and that's partly why we are going down this route rather than some other route for providing shelters.
So we want to make it as advantageous for both parties as we can.
We want to take advantage of your skills, knowledge and experience.
We want to minimize unnecessary risk to both parties and where there is a risk to be clear about how that's allocated.
So you don't have to price in sort of uncertainty, which we didn't intend.
We need in My Portfolio holder has been really clear with me on this to have the ability to install new shelters, to change existing shelters or indeed to remove shelters.
I think that would be pretty minor in support of plans to improve bus services or open new or things like that.
Umm, but we recognise that we can't expect you guys to take the risk of us to saying I wanna shelter here, here and here.
And you said, well, that's all very well, but that's gonna cost a lot of money and they don't cover their wash their face in terms of advertising and come and so on.
So we need to have a structure where we can do that but without exposing you to unacceptable or unreasonable risks.
So what we began to thought think about is a mechanism which transparently allows for the financial effects of such changes.
Umm, So what we would ask for is the capital price of providing each type of shelter in your little schedule.
However, many that may end up being the annual cost of maintaining each of such shelter and the advertising income you would attribute to each shelter.
Now the first two I'm assuming and again welcome comments on this will effectively be location independent.
If it's a little shelter with three sides and whatever else, it's gonna cost the same to install and same to maintain wherever it is.
OK, there may be minor differences for they're probably not significant.
On the other hand, advertising income, I'm assuming is massively related to location, so that there are lots of eyeballs around.
Uh, that will be a valuable site if it's on some minor Rd somewhere in the back of beyond.
Very few people ever see it, and naturally it won't be worth very much, do you, in terms of advertising income?
So what we are suggesting this is the second main bullet point is that as part of your tender, you tell us how you would divide up West Northamptonshire in terms of advertising income from shelters and that might be you draw lines on a plan and you say this area is zone A and it's brilliant down to zone G which is rubbish or whatever it might happen to be or it might be you say we do it by Rd classification or frankly any other way that works for you.
And I'll only criterion for this.
Is it needs to be clear to us both if we say there's a new shelter going here, wherever here might be, we can see which advertising level or value is attributable to it. Umm.
So.
Having gone through that thought process, we said, well, if that allows us to deal with if you effectively changes around the edges where we might say to you ohh we need 10 new shelters down this new route that we're putting in some wonderful new bus service or something like that, we could actually say well, we got all the prices we could actually say we would pay for all the new shelters that go in.
And that way you would obviously not need to allow for that capital cost in your accounting.
Umm.
And you could then give us a better position on the revenue side, whether that better position takes us into a position of you paying us money.
Hopefully from our point of view, but you would do the sums on that, but certainly better than it would be if you had to fund the capital as well.
Now maybe that wouldn't work again.
Reasons for this meeting is to give you a chance to feedback to us and tell us what you think about that.
Umm, so key questions arising from this section, would it make commercial sense for you if we covered the capital cost of all new shelters?
I think one thing I probably is add to that it reflected in the draft spec that currently we have a lot of adshell shelters in Northampton and we don't know at the moment whether Adshell wants to take them all away at the end of its contract or whether it wants to strike a deal with us to keep them contractually.
It's obliged to remove them all, but I suspect it may think that's actually not terribly attractive because how much is the value of a second hand bus shelter?
You got to remove from Northampton and take somewhere else.
Perhaps not that great.
I don't know.
So we're, we're at the moment we are having discussion with adshell, but we are uncertain.
So there is potentially a need for us to instruct quite a lot of shelter replacement anyway, which Bobby is easy for.
If we pay for because that way that's not burdening you.
Umm my second question is well, how easy would it be to characterize the different parts of West Northamptonshire in terms of advertising income would would you look at it and say well actually that's, you know, we take it in the in the round and we're not that bothered, we'll just class the whole of Western powers, a single price zone.
Or would you say to yourselves, well, actually, the Council's not going instruct us to bus shelters on roads where no one goes, because that would make sense for the Council.
So we we're not too worried about the risk.
Umm, it would just be helpful to understand your perspective on that.
Whether you essentially would like to be able to specify different levels of income attributable different locations, or whether you prefer just to say, actually it's all gonna wash out, we're not too bothered and the risk isn't a big factor for us.
What I wouldn't want you to do is to say, oh, let's Steve is 1's own and then price at great risk in that you're gonna be asked to put shelters in places that are valuable.
So it is very important for us that it works for you.
The third question is how much effort would it be for you to provide the other financial information we're proposing is included in the tenders now?
My assumption is you've got quite sophisticated models in the background where you do this kind of thing yourselves, but maybe I'm wrong.
Maybe you just look at an area and say we think if we think it feels like this or that ohm, if if I'm right and you do this kind of analysis yourselves in the background then providing it presumably isn't very difficult, but that's what we need to know because again, we don't want to get to a situation where we ask that information pretenders and you guys say, you know, we're just not interested in doing that.
It's too much like hard work.
Umm.
And overall, does the proposed solution make sense to you and would you recommend any changes to maximise the value you can offer to us whilst bearing in mind our objectives and has been clearly set out what we want to achieve?
It's a question of how best we do that.
And let me move on to character and green ambitions, questions about the buzz stop shelters.
Umm or or shelters, providing carbon reducing qualities, are there any issues in doing that very practically?
At the moment I think you spotted the spec.
It says buzz shop still shelters.
Basically insert details here is there is there some kind of spec out there you can point us to that we can include it in our spec that will save us the trouble of having to be invented.
I'm we have two former tram stop shelters of some historical interest.
Umm, proposing to wrap those into the contract and require you to to restore and maintain them.
Idea to do that?
Or is that just a huge burden that causes you a problem?
Umm.
And would you be able to respond meaningfully to the objective, incorporate design approaches which support the character and distinctiveness of West Northamptonshire, because if actually you all come back and say no, we can't, we got a standard set of shelves and that's it.
Then we might say, well, we'll drop that equally keen to have it in because you know we do care about the way our place feels and feels different to other places.
Umm.
Some practical questions?
Preferred length of mobilisation before start date.
Preferred length of contract bearing in mind this is a concession contract, so we'd have to justify anything over five years.
Umm and yeah, I'm not sure.
We absolutely need a contract value.
We had a bit of discussion with Sarah on this.
Uh, but, but if you are able to advise on the average cost of maintaining, then we can perhaps use that to put some kind of number.
We'll probably put it through the highest value Procurement route anyway, just to be on the safe side.
In terms of the advertising content, obviously advertising is how you guys make your money and we don't want to be unduly restrictive.
And what we certainly don't want is there to be ambiguity, Gray areas, or for us to be involved in making decisions.
I've said it to others, but that way lies misery.
I'm conscious of some delicate one things Blackpool that ended up being sued for not allowing something or other and we don't wanna be involved in the merits of a particular put set of appetising.
The only involvement we might need to have is whether we think the advertisements complied with the policy.
UM, so we provided the draft policy.
We're gonna add some text because there are a few bits I think a little bit unclear to the specification to try and be more crisp on some of the points in the policy.
Umm, but ESSENTIALS.
What I want to achieve is a is a situation where you guys can know up front umm this advertising campaign.
Yes, it complies.
Therefore, I'm happy I go ahead.
I don't to worry or no, it clearly doesn't comply.
Therefore, I won't do it.
Rather than being lots of debate and discussion, so the question is there does the policy give you sufficient clarity, and does the proposed appeal mechanism work?
Because obviously you don't want us.
I should you don't want us to have complete.
So can't flash to say?
Well, we think that doesn't follow the policy when manifestly it does.
So we need to appeal mechanism and we've suggested one.
And and then just generally would welcome any comments or questions you may have on the proposed arrangements.
So I've taken that an affair speed.
I appreciate and very happy to go back over anything, answer any questions or generally take comments.
I will stop there.
All right.

 **Karen Rankin** 15:11
I just a very general question.
How many shelters are we talking about in total here?

 **Simon Bowers** 15:18
We should have told you that.
Shouldn't we, Alan?

 **Karen Rankin** 15:20
Be helpful.
Thank you.

 **Alan Craggs** 15:21
Yeah.

 **Simon Bowers** 15:25
There's certainly in hundreds, isn't it? But.

 **Alan Craggs** 15:25
The Yeah, the the the.
You know the original list from bus and rail when I when I started the process and asked the question in terms of everything that's defined as a stop was over 2000.
But this includes a poll in the ground, a flag.
So in terms of shelter content, there will be a definitive sort of Windle down to give an overall idea, but I think in all honesty, from the Council's point of view, there isn't a definitive answer in terms of its full knowledge, but there will be a given a general guideline of given of the number expected from highways that aren't currently in the under contract, and then the number of those that are currently maintained.

 **Karen Rankin** 16:03
Yeah.
Obviously we got to take maintenance of all those shelters into it, so we will need a pretty firm number on that, yeah.

 **Simon Bowers** 16:07
Absolutely.

 **Alan Craggs** 16:09
Yeah, that that will come as part of final.

 **Simon Bowers** 16:09
Yeah, I.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 16:10
No.

 **Alan Craggs** 16:11
They'll be a definitive response in in the spec.
Ultimately, I've gotta do a bit more legwork on that to get a final answer.

 **Simon Bowers** 16:17
To find your there is a spreadsheet and sorry, I'll come to you a second.
Nicholas. Umm.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 16:22
Yeah.

 **Simon Bowers** 16:24
That there is a spreadsheet which we represents like count save node.
There may be a few tweaks of that was significant and what we've said in the draft spec effectively is if we find another one, then having the pricing information will just add it in.
But they shouldn't be much variance now, but it's it's I think it's in the low hundreds, Alan.

 **Alan Craggs** 16:44
Yeah.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 16:47
OK.
Further, to sort of Karen's point, and it's obviously vitally important to know the exact number on the estate, do you know what the split the ratio of advertising and non advertising is?

 **Simon Bowers** 16:49
At least, yeah, yeah, absolutely.
They're all marked, so yes, we do.
Just opening it now.
There were cluster of Digitals and Alan.
All the adshell ones with advertising on.

 **Alan Craggs** 17:20
Most of the highway shelters have got a a panel for advertising, and then the ones from the are currently under contract are mostly advertising as well.
And there's of cut.
There's there's a limited number of digital against Amarok.

 **Simon Bowers** 17:35
Yeah, there's currently 15 digital one.
The look of it, umm, was a total number is 244.
That was right.
Low hundreds.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 18:15
Suppose while you're you're still searching for the numbers.

 **Simon Bowers** 18:18
But it's it's 244.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 18:20
OK, but the split, do you have any idea?

 **Simon Bowers** 18:24
Based on what Alan just said, he doesn't appear to be on the spreadsheet, which slightly surprising anyway.
It it sounds like something 80% would be with some format vertising on currently.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 18:35
OK.
Umm, I guess a broad question is how have you had any kind of discussions with your planning department?
Because obviously that's a vital part of the equation.
And are they being insulted thus far, or is that not happened yet?

 **Simon Bowers** 18:54
Yeah, we've talked to them and we've provided some guidance in the draft spec effectively.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 18:56
OK.

 **Simon Bowers** 19:00
What that says is, as far as we are concerned, everything that currently carries advertising is consented.
Umm, but it appears that if we need to add advertising to a new site that requires explicit consent.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 19:16
Like.
I get that.
Umm.
And does that also have you spoken to them regarding upgrading from paper to digital?
If you've gone that far, if if some of us feel that a certain site would require digital or would deserve digital, that will need additional application submissions.

 **Simon Bowers** 19:38
Our our understanding but welcome discussion on this is that the distinction in the law is between the luminated and non illuminated.
I think any digital sign by definition is illuminated, but if you've got an illuminated site and you want to upgrade it, I don't think that requires consent, but we will confirm that that's a helpful question to provide clarity on.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 20:01
I mean that would be great if it doesn't, but I believe it will do because I've done this and Karen's aware of this.
She she knows that it's been paper and digital, and I suspect we will have to reapply if we want to upgrade to digital.

 **Karen Rankin** 20:09
Yeah.

 **Simon Bowers** 20:13
OK, we will.

 **Karen Rankin** 20:14
It is within the gift though of your your planners to allow it, but yeah, clarification will be helpful.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 20:16
Yeah.

 **Simon Bowers** 20:21
OK.
That's great.
We'll certainly take that one away.
Thank you.
That's fine.
I mean, as I said, I appreciate you.
There are things you may not want to ask or say in front of each other.
That's just the nature of the business.
Umm.
If anyone wants to talk to us further, we're very happy to set up a session to talk through this stuff.
UM, equally.
If you wanna give us a written response, we're we're happily do that.
And have the dialogue that way.
I assume there's some sort of a duty to document that, but what?
As we keep a record then it's so we're not.
We're not acting in properly.
Then we can do that.

 **Sarah Deyes** 21:07
Yeah, I'm absolutely.
I think if you if you want to request that if you can reply to to the the email address that Procurement email address that you originally applied to to attend and then we can coordinate that.

 **Simon Bowers** 21:28
OK.
I certainly don't want to shut this off unnecessarily quickly, but if there's nothing else anyone wants to ask or raise while we are together, I suggest we leave it there and we'll look forward to individual discussions with you.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 21:43
Nothing for me.
Thank you.

 **Karen Rankin** 21:45
No, thank you very much.
You know, it was.
It was good to see your thought process and we look forward to further engagement with you.

 **Simon Bowers** 21:53
That's great.
Thank you.

 **Sarah Deyes** 21:54
Thank you.

 **Fiona Davies** 21:56
And you, Gary, much everybody.

 **Simon Bowers** 21:56
Which case?

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 21:58
Thank you.

 **Simon Bowers** 21:58
Cheers then.

 **Godfrey, Nigel** 21:58
Thank you.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 21:59
Cheers.

 **Simon Bowers** 21:59
Thank you.

 **Cox, Alistair** 21:59
Thank you. Aye.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** 21:59
Bye bye.

 **Fiona Davies** 22:02
I i.e.

 **FOXON, Nicholas** left the meeting

 **Cox, Alistair** left the meeting

 **Godfrey, Nigel** left the meeting

 **Brown, Alice-Ann** left the meeting

 **Karen Rankin** left the meeting

 **Alan Craggs** stopped transcription