



Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust Board
29 October 2026

Agenda Item: 14

Report Title: Accounting Software Procurement

Report of: Niki Cornwell, Interim Finance Director

Purpose: This report seeks to inform APPCT Board of the procurement route taken to secure a new accounting software system for the Trust and its Trading Subsidiary.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 APPCT Board is asked to note the procurement approach taken
- 1.2 APPCT Board is asked to note that the Software system will support both APPCT & APTL (feedback from APTL will be provided under Exempt APTL Chair Update).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Our current Finance software system, is no longer fit for purpose and is prone to technical issues, directly impacting business continuity. Support services provided by the Supplier are inadequate. The product is being withdrawn from active support across the industry, making it necessary to find alternative solutions.
- 2.2 In February 2026, a working group was created to research options. Internal workshops captured current challenges with the system and processes, leading to clear project objectives and explicit tender requirements.
- 2.3 The objectives of the project are:
 - To streamline processes and ensure they work effectively with other systems, given the volume and complexity of operations. This includes being able to take advantage of newer technologies such as AI.
 - We want a system with strong useability for Finance and the wider business to ensure stakeholder engagement throughout the organisation. This includes being able to put in place appropriate controls, structures and delegations of authority.

- We want to improve business analytics and reporting to support a cultural shift in Finance away from focusing largely on transactional processing and coding towards greater business partnering and support.

Areas of concern for us currently are around improving management accounts reports which will involve an extensive review of the chart of accounts and improving cash management and forecasting.

- 2.4 Nine companies were approached to tender, including the provider of our current solution. Seven returned tender responses: four provided traditional 'off-the-shelf' solutions and three provided Business Central solutions part of the Microsoft offering.
- 2.5 The tender pack was issued on 27 July 2026 with the following evaluation criteria:
 - 75% - Quality of Proposal (Functional, Technical, Security, relevant experience/customers)
 - 25% - Price (including implementation approach, licencing, Support and Data Protection)

3. Procurement Process

- 3.1 Replacing the accounting system provides a great opportunity to streamline internal processes. Internal workshops involving Finance and Operational Teams captured current challenges with the system and processes; leading to explicit functional requirements as well as clarity on challenges that are more specific to Alexandra Palace's operating model.
- 3.2 Market research of traditional 'off the shelf' and Business Central providers included: attending the Charity Finance Group annual conference, initial meetings, demonstrations and written communications with suppliers to assess available options, timescales and indicative costs. Nine companies were contacted in advance of issuing the tender pack.
- 3.3 Tender questions were thoroughly reviewed to ensure that all 135 functional requirements we had determined were captured. Specific requirements to align with APPCT's approach to cyber security and data protection were agreed internally, taking advice from third parties. For an equal cost comparison, a set number of users and processing transactions were stated to provide a clear comparison across all proposals.
- 3.4 The timeline was provided to all suppliers, offering each a 30-minute meeting during the clarification period in addition to the written clarification responses. Suppliers' availability for in-person presentation sessions was sought during the evaluation process to ensure optimal availability within our prescribed dates.

Indicative timetable:	Pre-Qualification Stage	
	ITT circulation	27 th July 2026
	Tender Clarifications by	7 th August 2026
	AP clarification returned by	14 th August 2026
	Tender response deadline	1 st September 2026
	Supplier Presentations	14 th – 17 th September 2026
	Notification of Award	30 th October 2026
	Contracted and Implementation commencing	30 th November 2026
	Software Live from	July 2027

4. Tender Evaluation

- 4.1 The evaluation panel comprised the same individuals who created the tender pack: the Interim Finance Director, Financial Controller, Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A) Manager, IT Consultant and Project Manager.
- 4.2 Evaluation Scoring for all received tender submissions:

QP No.	Quality Assessment Area	Weighting (75% of total score)
1	Declarations	Pass/Fail
2	Functional Requirements	65
3	Technical & Operations; Data Management	30
4	References	5
Total		100

No.	Price Evaluation Assessment Area	Weighting (25% of total score)
1	Up Front Implementation approach and cost	20
2	Ongoing Fees – variable (licencing – see variables)	30
3	Ongoing Fees – fixed (Service & Support)	30
4	Development Fees	20
Total		100

BIDDER	QDP 75%		Commercial 25%		TOTAL
	Score	%	Score	%	
Company One	48.94	36.70	62.28	15.57	52.27%
Company Two	56.44	42.33	73.72	18.43	60.76%
Company Three	53.67	40.26	65.71	16.43	56.68%
Company Four	58.81	44.10	75.30	18.83	62.93%
Company Five	59.33	45.50	74.86	18.72	63.21%
Company Six	56.85	42.64	73.32	18.33	60.97%
Company Seven	52.61	39.46	66.35	16.59	56.04%

4.4 Winning Bid

Company Five scored highest overall. It was the second most expensive because the upfront system configuration requires more resourcing than an off-the-shelf solution. However, licencing fees are substantially lower in subsequent years where savings will be made. Business Central functionality better aligns with our future integration and Finance aspirations. Company Five brought a good solution-focused approach that was able to draw on experience from a range of sectors.

4.5 Unsuccessful Bids

Company Four was a key contender; however, the functionality of Business Central was deemed a more appropriate fit. The current supplier submitted the most expensive proposal, and the solution fell short of expectations. They had included a response for another client in their submission instead of Alexandra Palace, leading to questions about their handling of client data. Other tenders failed to score high enough due to weakness in the tender submission.

5. Other options considered

- 5.1 Do nothing – the current system, Exchequer, is a legacy system introduced in 2012 that is no longer being developed and it is likely that support for the system will be withdrawn in the next few years. It frequently has outages, which cause interruptions to services and risks to data integrity. Its very limited reporting functionality making transparency and accountability within the finances much more challenging than it should be. If we do not plan to change the system now it is likely we will be forced to within the next couple of years, with a timeline that may not work with our operational needs.

6. Risks

- 6.1 A material risk for Alexandra Palace is ensuring that appropriate resource are in place across all functions to make appropriate decisions on how the new system is configured, given year-end and a busy events schedule through to August 2027. This will be managed by aligning the implementation plan with operational availability. The go-live is scheduled after the Summer Series and before the August holiday period. This permits full embedding of new processes and additional training without the pressure of events.
- 6.2 A project risk register will be developed in conjunction with the project manager from the winning bidder.

7. Legal Implications

The Council's Director for Legal & Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments.

8. Financial Implications

The Council's Chief Financial Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report. The forecast implementation costs have been built into the 2026/27 budget assumptions.