

Assurance Team Report Card

Brandon Primary School Project, Durham County Council

1. The Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) is an international multi-stakeholder programme designed to increase the accountability of public sector organisations and construction companies for their construction projects. It will do this by disclosing information at all stages of the construction project cycle, from the initial identification of the project to the final completion. The Brandon Primary School Project, Durham County Council is one of the chosen projects that form part of the UK Pilot.
2. The Assurance Team appointed by the UK Multi-Stakeholder Group for this pilot study comprises four senior construction industry specialists, working together to obtain and assess information and provide reports.
3. The Brandon Primary School Project is being procured by Durham County Council (the Council) to replace old school buildings serving the village of Brandon, County Durham. In order to achieve economies of scale, the plan was to combine the project with a similar one at Esh Winning, another village nearby.
4. At the date of this report, the projects were undergoing design development with a view to inviting tenders for a main contract for detailed design and construction of the school in the autumn of 2010. The overall plan for Brandon was to complete construction works in February 2012 and to complete both the demolition of the old buildings and the landscaping of the school grounds by October of that year.
5. The focus of this study has therefore been on the award of contracts for design and project supervision, on the early stages of design development and on planning for the main contract.
6. There were some instances when the Council's personnel did not provide the further information which we requested in order to verify some of the statements made. However, in our opinion sufficient contextual information was available to enable us to complete this report in a proportionate manner.
7. We noted that the Council was undergoing the aftermath of a significant re-organisation at the time of this study, with changes of key personnel, vacancies and office relocation.
8. The contract for a lead designer was awarded to Red Box Design Group (Red Box) following a competitive tendering process involving companies who had previously qualified to bid for such works under a framework arrangement administered by the Council. That contract was originally intended to include project management as part of its scope;



- however the council also required pre-construction contract management services due to a lack of internal project management resource and decided to change the scope of services in order to contract separately with a project management organisation. This was to ensure a robust and consistent project management approach.
9. The Council also decided to add cost management services to the scope of the project management contract, which was awarded by negotiation with Turner & Townsend. Turner & Townsend was one of the firms on a framework arrangement for such services administered by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), which is an independent office of H.M. Treasury. The Council decided that the OGC framework arrangement provided a better alignment with the required services than any of the similar arrangements administered by the Council.
 10. We saw no evidence of contemporary cost reporting, as the plan was only to start this at the commencement of the construction phase. Emerging issues were resulting in charges in excess of agreed schedules for lump sum instalments, in respect of both claims and charges agreed to be made on the basis of time spent. However, so far such expenditure was contained within both the budget and the overall forecast fee levels. The overall estimated project cost was being maintained within the Council's budget, subject to the Council's formal approval of engineering economies and the removal of swimming pool refurbishments from the project's scope.
 11. The processes whereby the design and project and cost management services were procured and managed were, in our opinion, satisfactory from the perspective of transparency. The design and management of the project were progressing towards achieving the Council's objectives in ways which in our opinion were consistent with normal construction industry practice.
 12. The full report is available from <http://www.constructiontransparency.org/CountriesSupporters/Countries/UnitedKingdom/> and www.ice.org.uk/CoSTUK.

Material Project Information

Stage of project cycle	List of MPI to be disclosed	Project name: Brandon Primary School Procuring Entity: Durham County Council
Project identification	Project purpose	Replacement Primary School
	Location	Brandon Primary School, Carr Avenue, Brandon, County Durham, DH7 8NL
	Intended Beneficiaries	Local Community
	Specification	New Build 390 place school with 26 place nursery
Tender process (main contract for works)	List of tenderers	OJEU Restricted Procedure – Notice to be placed June/July 2010
	Tender evaluation report	Not yet applicable
Contract award (main contract for works)	Name of main contractor	Not yet known
	Contract price	Not yet known
	Contract scope of work	Not yet known
	Contract programme	Not yet known
Contract Execution (main contract for works)	Individual changes to the contract which affect the price with reasons	Not yet applicable
	Individual changes to the contract which affect the programme, with reasons	Not yet applicable
	Details of any re-award of main contract	Not yet applicable
Post contract completion details (main contract for works)	Actual contract price	Not yet applicable
	Total payments made	Not yet applicable
	Actual contract scope of work	Not yet applicable
	Actual contract programme	Not yet applicable
Documents to be disclosed		Disclosure status
Feasibility study		Yes
Financing agreement		Not applicable
Project evaluation reports (on completion and on-going)		Yes