Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	**Computer Based Administrative and Clerical Skills Testing Tender**
Date:	17 February 2012
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance & Resources
Contact Officer:	Paul Gribben, Head of ISB

	Purpose of Paper
1.1	To seek permission to procure computer-based administrative and clerical skills testing software.

	Relevant Background Information
2.1	In March 2003 the Policy and Resources Committee approved the introduction of computer-based administrative and clerical skills testing as part of the recruitment and selection process as certain prescriptive qualifications i.e. RSA Stage 11 Word Processing/ Typing had an adverse impact on male applicants wishing to apply for such posts.
2.2	An evaluation found positive improvements in terms of equality issues and high levels of customer satisfaction from council line management in terms of the standard of successful applicants appointed. Public survey results (with applicants) found the computer based approach to be perceived as a much fairer, systematic and objective way to recruit applicants and it was agreed that computer based testing should become an integral part of the Council's recruitment and selection processes for business support clerical posts.
2.3	The approach was endorsed by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Disability Action.

	Key Issues
3.1	• The current contract expires in August 2012. • The current call-off list for business support clerk posts expires in December 2012. • The current software (SkillCheck) is not compatible with the council's upgrade to Windows 7. • The system will provide the most efficient means of processing applications.

	Resource Implications
4.1	Financial Initial market research suggests that a 3 year contract based on the minimum supply of 2,500 tests p.a. (approx 227 – 277 applicants p.a.) would cost between £30k - £54K before customised configuration.
4.2	Human Resources A project team from HR and ISB have already been agreed to implement the project.
4.3	Asset and other Implications Web based system so no additional hardware requirements.

	Equality Implications
5.1	Computer-based administrative and clerical skills' testing was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2003 to address long-standing gender imbalance issues within the council at this particular level. This approach was endorsed by the Equality Commission for NI and Disability Action and it has proved very successful in terms of increasing the number of male applicants and appointees to this grade.

	Recommendations
6.1	That the council goes out to tender for a computer-based administrative and clerical skills testing software with a contract for 3 years with the option to extend for a further 2 years.

	Decision Tracking
	Paul Gribben, Head of ISB October 2012