

Open tenders discussion with VantageANS– telephone – 22 October 2014 – 16:15

CAA: Thomas Carr

Vantage ANS: Chris Kelly

VantageANS provides TANS at Peel Group airports (LJL, DSA and MME). VantageANS submitted a bid for the LTN contract; it entered the bidding for BHX but did not submit a formal bid. VantageANS did not bid for the Gatwick contract.

1.

VantageANS received notification of the bid through the OJEU notifications and also through word of mouth from other industry players.

2. 3.

On expressing interest in the LTN bid VantageANS received tendering matrix and requirements documents. CK considered that they understood the process, and the documentation provided was comprehensive. CK noted that there was sufficient information on the scope of the service requirement on which to bid. However there were limitations to what the airport could provide.

The main issue in formulating the bid arose from access to data and the data room. The data room was tightly controlled with limits on the number of attendees and ability to record information (just paper and pen). Much of what was provided in the data room was also only provided in hard copy this made it difficult to search and get a view of what information was provided. CK noted that for the VantageANS bid more than one visit was required. The ability to accurately assess the information in the data room did impact on their ability to price the contract.

CK noted that other than the data room issues information exchange was acceptable during the bidding process.

CK understood the process to be in two parts first being an assessment of technical capability ability to provide at LTN. VantageANS passed this stage and was taken forward although limited feedback was provided. Then there was a second stage commercial assessment of the bid.

VantageANS took part in a post tender review run by Cyrrus, however CK was unsure of the standing of this review.

4.

VantageANS faced a number of challenges in bidding:

1. It was VantageANS's first tender
2. Resource required to put the bid together were not insignificant for the company
3. The perception of risks early on was high due to lack of data. These could only be answered after the data room.
4. Uncertainty over ToaP (who would stay) and the transfer of NATS owned assets such as EFPS where the airport could not provide certainty over whether it would remain.

5. Issues on a TUPE basis given the difference in pay arrangement between VantageANS and NSL where NSL pay almost double what Vantage would for a Tower only ATCO (£40k vs. £75k).
6. There were risks to the bid over being able to give assurance over service delivery of the runway movement rate. This is heavily affected by the approach service and there was a lack of clarity on service provision from approach radar during the tender. This left some discomfort in bidding that there would be uncertainty on the runway movement rate opening up the risk of potential penalties in contract.

One feature of the bid that VantageANS had issues with was the Airport asking for some solutions to future service delivery requirements. Although they were content that these could be recommended it was felt that it was not possible to 'give away solutions' without the protection of a contract where they could be used by the airport regardless. VantageANS only offered these if they reached the preferred bidder stage.

CK noted that there had been learning taken from LTN in the BHX process the documentation received suggested a more streamline process. VantageANS reached the data room stage. However, a decision was taken not to develop the bid further. The full Service was seen as having too much risk in ToaP. This was both in the profile of controllers at BHX was considered more risky and the potential need to have to back fill for both with tower and radar, rather than just tower controllers as at LTN. VantageANS was confident that it could provide the service but less certainty over who would stay.

The BHX managed services was not seen as an option for VantageANS.

5.

LTN was VantageANS' first bid as such it was comprehensive but, cumbersome.

It was unclear to VantageANS what the feedback requirements were. They were told that the bid had passed on the technical specification and that they did not pass on price. However there was limited feedback other than that provided.

The bid was handled in house and cost in the region of £100k (c. 3 months work for main team of 3 + support).

[✂]

6.

CK noted that the legal challenge is interesting as there is then the potential legal requirement for open tender. It is however a commercial decision by an airport on how ATC is provided. This would show that there is a market to go at.

[✂]

Through the tenders VantageANS has had to provide a significant amount of information – somewhat 'laid bare' in commercial terms. However VantageANS consider it is an unknown market

at the moment and Airport operators are seeking greater assurance. This is the result of a lack of ATC knowledge in the airport and the limited choice to date in the market.

The requirements in bids to date suggest that there has been historic poor customer service and a lack of integration of the ANSP into airport delivery.

[X]