CABINET

THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ASSETS AND FINANCE

CUSTOMER PORTAL

EXEMPT INFORMATION

Not exempt

PURPOSE

To seek approval to commence the procurement process to establish a contract for the provision of a Customer Portal and to release the contingency funding already requested via the Council's budget process.

To give delegated authority to award the contract to the Director of Transformation and Corporate Performance in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance.

The establishment of the contract for a Customer Portal supports the strategic priority of Delivering Quality Services in Tamworth

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the capital contingency of £115k identified as part of the budget process is released.

- That approval is given to commence the procurement process to establish a contract for the provision of a Customer Portal for a period of three years with the option to extend for a further two years.

- That delegated authority to award the contract is given to the Director of Transformation and Corporate Performance in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2014 we have been mapping the journey the customer takes when interacting with the Council. By utilising the Council's Demand Management Model we know how many customers are making a request for service/information, their preferred and used access channels and why the customer is contacting us.

Our chosen transformation methodology has enabled and embedded processes that have reduced the demand placed on the Council as well as continuing to improve performance and process efficiency.

To continue this journey, and as part of the Council's commitment to improve service to customers, a Customer Portal is now required to enable the Council to take the next step in delivering digital customer service.

The translation of demand onto digital platforms is being driven by the requirements of customers. The pace of change in digital customer service delivery is rapid; whereby

customers are used to receiving their services, sometimes completely online.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Option 1 - Continue to deliver services as they are, without progression or increasing the Council's digital presence.

Benefits:
- No additional capital or on-going revenue investment is required
- Continued use of telephone and face to face channels of service delivery

Risks:
- Dissatisfaction from customers
- No provision of 24/7 services
- A move away from the ethos of DQS
- Does not support the Council's agile working arrangements
- The current process does not allow the council to take advantage of more modern and efficient ways to deal with customers
- Technology will be needed to support customer service delivery from 2019.
- Inefficient, silo'd processes
- Failure to meet the customer's needs
- Disparate customer service delivery across the council via different service areas
- No joined up cohesive customer service digital delivery in place

Option 2 – A purpose built product, built by our own technical staff.

This option would mitigate the need for procurement. However, after careful consideration it is deemed that we do not have the capacity or expertise in house to provide a full solution.

Benefits:
- The potential for little or no capital investment required
- On-going revenue costs would be minimal
- The potential for all Council requirements to be met
- A 'grow our own' ethos resulting in a skilled workforce and a product to sell on to other local authorities

Risks:

The council do not have capacity to free up the resources needed to build the solution and:-
- Maintain normal service delivery
- Support the numerous organisational back office systems
- Integrate to back office systems without additional technology
- The need for more than one officer to build so that there is no single point of failure
- The costs are unknown and could be significant as additional resources would likely be required.
- The technical ability to continually update and meet the customers' changing needs are unknown
- The amount of time needed to build something from scratch could make this option cost prohibitive and ultimately end up costing the Council more

Option 3 – procure individual components/solutions/systems

The components needed to provide a self-service portal and those that have been tendered for mainly consist of (this is not an exhaustive list) –

- Essential & Desirable Specification for a, CRM lite, customer portal including customer account, online forms and key integrations giving us -
  - A system whereby customers can securely sign in and authenticate who they are.
  - A system that can present and store selected information from numerous back office systems
  - An e-forms package
  - Payment making facilities (including self-service direct debit)
  - The ability to track information, requests and to store documents.
  - Scheduling capability
  - A Customer Relationship Management System

Benefits

- A number of bespoke systems may offer a more tailored/specialised system.

Risks

- With this option we are inherently increasing risk due to the introduction of a number of different systems
- There is an increased risk for the integration with back office systems to fail.
- The risk for conflict with each system and our ICT infrastructure is increased.
- It is likely to be more costly (purchase/maintenance/development).
- More skills, and resource will be required to manage and develop each system
- Increased stakeholder/contract management resource and therefore overall more costly.

An estimate of the costs for this option could be –

Approx £15k eform package + integration costs (unknown) + maintenance costs (1.5K)
Approx £50k CRM costs + integrations (unknown) + maintenance costs (£5k)
Approx £10K Paye/Automated Direct Debit and other costs + integration costs (unknown) + Maintenance costs (1K)
Customer Account/portal approx. £50K plus integration costs, approx. £4k per back office system (approx. 8 x £4k) = £82k

Approx total if procured separately = £160k plus other integration costs*.

* NB – these are estimates based on observed pricing and soft market testing/research of these different systems.

Option 4 – Procure a proven system that meets the essential technical and customer service specifications.

There are several proven technological solutions available that will deliver most, if not all of the Council's requirements to deliver a digital and automated customer service.

Benefits:
- A proven solution already in operation within other Councils, delivering the same or similar services
- Supports the Governments Digital by Default Strategy.
- Provision of digital customer service 24/7 via any device
- The potential for all of the Council's digital requirements to be met
- The ability to streamline processes and provide a 'tell us once' service

- An integrated solution that will pull information from existing back office systems within the Council (e.g. the Council Tax system)
- Meeting the increasing needs of the Council's customers to interact with the council via a variety of access channels
- Support the agile ethos ' Any place, anytime, anywhere'.
- Many of the providers have demonstrated additional products such as automated direct debits as part of their overall solution
- On-going revenue and the capital costs for the procurement of the system are fixed.

Risks:

- Cost of integration to the Council's back office systems is unknown
- Legacy system providers maybe unwilling to work with our chosen supplier
- Most providers have stated that there is little or no technical knowledge required to deliver their solution, however there could be a risk that this is not the case. This would have resource implications for ICT.

An estimate of the total cost is approx. £92k initial costs plus other integration costs.
This is made up approx £60k purchase and initial implementation costs with a further £4k per integration costs for each back office system (it is likely that there are approx. 6-8 systems to integrate into), plus the integration costs of the back office system supplier (which is unknown at this stage)**.

** an estimate based on the procurement activity undertaken by the Staffordshire Connects partnership

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Savings

The most obvious savings will include a reduction in staff dealing with both customer enquiries and processing information on behalf of the Council. Following approval of a two-year temporary Customer Services staffing structure which commenced in April this year, a policy change saving of £67k from 2019/20 has been built into base budgets.
Optimisation of a self-service portal and the resultant savings is dependent upon take-up by our customers.

In addition, the Council will save –

- CRM costs £62k from 2019 (saving already included in MTFS)
- Make better use of customer intelligence to shape services
- Postage costs
- The costs associated with developing our mobile app could will be eliminated (portal could replace a mobile app)
- Define a single view of the customer across all back office systems
- Produce efficiencies by reducing data duplication, service silos, and
  save staff time by reducing unnecessary contacts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Soft market testing has been undertaken working with numerous colleagues across Staffordshire whereby solution providers have demonstrated their customer portal systems. Each of these providers has proven purpose built systems that will enable the council to deliver service digitally.

Tamworth Borough Council working with partners across Staffordshire were involved in a process to procure a customer portal lead by Lichfield District Council. A specification, with the emphasis on delivering a corporate Customer Self Service portal in readiness for the introduction of the chargeable green waste service was written jointly by several partners and tendered under the Braintree framework agreement. After a successful tender evaluation, Jadu were awarded the contract and are now working with LDC to deliver their portal.

Because the above tender was designed with the emphasis on meeting the requirements of the Joint Waste Management Service, and excluded integration with some of our back office systems, we have taken the decision to re-tender in order to ensure that our essential requirements are met, and that the integrations required with our existing technology is detailed. Although, we can opt to award the contract to Jadu and reserve the right to do so following should this this tender process be unsuccessful.

A customer portal is a single sign-on online self-service portal for the council to unlock the savings associated with channel shift and improve the service to our customers. The portal will provide a common interface through which authenticated customers can access personalised services and information (integrating with any number of back office systems) and a platform to create a seamless online experience whereby customers can access their personal account 24 hours a day, from any device.

A customer portal does not replace a Council's website, it works seamlessly with it; the website provides static content, directing customers to the online portal when customers want to transact with the council.

Customers can also link directly into the portal, where search engines have been used to locate a specific service. **Over one million UK customers have signed up to a Self-service alone, one new council purchased Self-service portal every two weeks.

Customers can manage their own accounts with the Council, and update their records. They can receive notifications from the Council and submit information to support applications and reports. Portals are designed so that customers can easily access services whilst staying online.

The Portal will -

Customer Experience

Once a customer is signed into the portal they will automatically receive a better online experience. Forms will automatically pre-populate fields from the information in their customer profile and customers can access their account 24/7 including seeking information about their accounts and making reports (via any device) which equates to a significant volume in customer demand.

Customers will also be able to –
- Log in and authenticate themselves which will vary dependent upon enquiry.
- Use email verification, social media logins or we can choose what information is captured in the account registration form.
- Lookup their property information for easy access and the pre-population of forms
- Utilise and complete interactive online e-forms, (these forms provide a first class online experience) that are intelligent enough to personalise the navigation, assisting people through relevant questions based on what they say. Onscreen validation pops ups, and even video and audio can be added to help.
- Receive personalised and unique to tracking of service requests generated via scheduled emails or SMS communications keeping the customer informed of progress throughout.
- Provide feedback
- Have a single place to transact with the council.
- Have access to historical and active forms, interactions, communications normally sent via post and pickup any actions the council have passed back e.g. more information or evidence that is required.
- Receive online translation services into multiple languages e.g. English to

Welsh.
- Personalise their home screen
- Receive a personalised service, based on their 'home' location allowing them to receive notification alerts.

Example of alerts can include:
- Where's my nearest (Map geo-location information)
- Accounts (promotion or high-level 'MyAccount' balances)
- Bins (Information about your next bin collections)
- Leisure (promotion of leisure/castle/shows)
- Campaigns e.g. only display 'the winter warming campaign' to those that are over 60.

Transactions are automated, join services end-to-end, and all transactions are also available to the councils Customer Service Officers providing a true multichannel customer services platform.

Link to the Customer Relationship/Record Management System (CRM)

The Council's current CRM which was purchased in conjunction with the Staffordshire Connects Partnership's expires in September 2019. This is the main tool used to log and record customer interactions with the Council. The Partnership will work towards decommissioning this technology whilst each local authority involved seeks to find a replacement. The natural progression with this technology is a Customer Portal, which will enable self-service delivery to customers.

Project objectives

A draft project initiation document is being developed, and whilst the table below is not a definitive list of the objectives, the project will seek to improve transparency and 24/7 access to the councils services from any device.

1. To deliver and actively develop a Corporate Customer Portal	
Benefits	Measures
- Open for business 24/7 - Saves time for TBC and customers - Allows a secure and efficient way to get information which bypasses queues and waiting on return calls or emails - Allows customers to access their own records, accounts, to initiate enquiries, check status of issue without the need for the customer to email, telephone or contact the Council directly - Offers customer password protection security - Up to date and current information - Improves customer experience - Development of customer knowledge base	'Sign up' Numbers - Efficiency savings - No of integrations - No of 'Tell Us' comments - No of systems for CS to access reduced - Reduced number of multiple logins - Achievement of project plan - Satisfaction - Open and transparent - Less chase up calls - No. of self-serve processes - Reduction in no. of calls - Postage Reduction

** Nick Murthwaite, Firmstep self-portal 2017

REPORT AUTHOR

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