

APPENDIX B

Member Casework IT systems Notes following an Officers visit to Nottingham

1. Background

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Member Casework Group on June 2nd, Andy Keightley (ICT Business Relationship Manager) informed members that he had made contact with officers from Nottingham City Council who had designed and developed a casework IT system which it seemed was very similar to that which we were discussing in Leeds. Officers in Nottingham had invited a delegation to come and see the system in use, and to discuss how it worked, what it did, and how it had been developed. It was agreed at the meeting that members wanted officers only to go to Nottingham.
- 1.2 On Thursday June 26th officers visited Nottingham City Council and met with Liz Willet, the Team Leader for Members Services in Nottingham, and the officer who had been responsible for project managing the delivery of the casework system and who manages the program on a day to day basis.
- 1.3 At the meeting Liz Willet demonstrated the system and answered questions

2. “The Nottingham System”

- 2.1 The IT system developed in Nottingham was developed in-house specifically to meet the needs of their members. It is therefore very well suited to both their circumstances and needs.
- 2.2 The system looks and feels very user friendly, and is web based so it is therefore accessible from home or via any internet connection. Individual members only have access to their own cases and the information they have stored. The only other people who can access the information are the department’s named member officer contact and the officer from within their “group office” who administer the casework on their behalf.
- 2.3 In addition Liz Willet the Members Services Team leader has access to the cases open across all the councillors. This enables her to run reports on the timeliness of the departments and their responses, and to use casework information “corporately” to help identify problems and advise departments on solutions. It was unclear how this could be repeated in Leeds or indeed whether this would be appropriate.
- 2.4 However, some of these monitoring aspects are already possible with the officers “file plus” system and some of this information and these reports are already produced within group offices.
- 2.5 Officers in Nottingham are understandably cautious about selling the system on primarily because they are aware of the possible support costs this would involve for them. However, they were very open to the idea of sharing elements of the program with us in Leeds.
- 2.6 ICT officers who went to Nottingham made the following comments: “The system demonstrated was a bespoke database developed by Nottingham City

Council. After numerous teething difficulties, they were able to produce a package specifically tailored to their needs. There are remarkable similarities to Siebel in terms of structure and feel which can probably be reproduced by our Siebel developers. The system is adequate for the needs of Nottingham but with the complexity of the Leeds council, I would not recommend it without major changes. The lead user/manager also did not believe that the package was ready for export.

3. The Pros and Cons

3.1 As officers we felt there were some obvious positives in the Nottingham system which were:

- It was web based.
- It was user friendly
- It allowed councillors and officers to be able to track their casework more accurately.
- Implementing the system had meant establishing a sort of SLA between councillors and departments.
- Casework information such as departmental response times was reported into CLT. Also information collected was used to improve services and inform service choices.
- It could be used directly in surgeries (or via a PDA in the street to record data and log the casework directly), saving time and possible resources.

Some of the possible pitfalls were:

- It required a single officer contact within a department.
- It had required an increase in staffing in “group offices” to administer the program.
- It had required significant resources to develop.
- Information could be used to monitor councillors’ work.
- It required wholesale buy in from councillors.
- There were possible issues with councillors’ casework information being shared.

4. The questions this raises

4.1 At the June 2nd meeting it was agreed that an “Option Paper” should be produced outlining the costs and benefits of a casework IT system and also other low cost options. However, following the visit to Nottingham, officers felt they would like to further discuss with members the “Nottingham system” and the perceived benefits it may bring and problems this may cause. In addition, following this discussion colleagues from IT would need to produce a more detailed report on the problems, costs and issues surrounding developing a system.

5. The Way Forward

5.1 Members are asked to note the report, and furthermore to discuss the “Nottingham visit”. Members are also asked to authorise officers to write an Options Paper based on the outcomes of this discussion.