Leeds CITY COUNCIL

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Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

Member Management Committee

Date: 18th November 2008

Subject: Casework IT Solutions for Members an Appraisal of Options

Electoral Wards Affected:	Specific Implications For:
	Equality and Diversity ☐
	Community Cohesion ☐
☐ Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	Narrowing the Gap ☐

Executive Summary

This report details and appraises the options for delivering a casework IT system for Members. The report explores five options and summarises their benefits, the options are:

1. Improving the Status quo.
2. Microsoft SharePoint
3. Developing the Siebel System
4. Developing a Bespoke
5. Expanding File Plus

Members are asked to consider whether they believe any of the options should be recommended for further development, through a full statement of requirements to determine the costs of developing, implementing and maintaining the system.

1.0   Purpose Of This Report

1.1   This report has been produced at the request of, and in consultation with, the Members IT Reference Group to outline and appraise the "options" for procuring, developing and adapting an IT system to support elected Members with their "casework."

2.0   Background Information

2.1   These options have been investigated following a survey that was conducted with elected Members. Elected Members were asked 6 questions (see appendix A) about whether they thought an IT system would help them with their casework, and also what facilities they would like a system to have should they want one.

2.2   Members' responses to this survey confirmed there was interest in a casework system, and that their main requirements were that such a system should provide Members with reminders of overdue responses and allow Members to file documents electronically.

2.3   Members are asked to consider these options.

3.0   Main Issues

The Criteria for Assessment

3.1   At the outset of this project both the Members IT Reference Group and officers discussed how the various options for a "casework system" could be assessed. A number of methods have been established and they form the basis for this report. The paragraphs below explain and outline these methods.

3.2   Firstly, the initial meeting of the Members IT Reference Group (07/04/08) agreed the principles which underpin this assessment. The group agreed that any new "casework system" should be measured against the following four bench marks:

- Appropriateness
- Affordability
- Future Proof
- "Fit for Purpose"

Officers have understood these bench marks in the following way:

- Appropriateness - Is the technology used a good fit with existing and proposed systems?
- Affordability - What will the system cost? What benefits will be delivered? Can these benefits be costed?
- Future Proof - Can we predict how long the solution will be relevant for, what developments or projects are planned for the future and whether they will affect the solution effectiveness?
- "Fit for Purpose" - Will the system do the things Members would like?

3.3   In addition to these bench marks, following a visit to Nottingham City Council to view a "bespoke" casework IT system[1] and after discussion with the Members IT

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[1] A full briefing on which is in appendix 2 to this report and is and discussed in section 3.6 of this report.

Reference Group (21 July 2008) officers produced a draft Statement of Requirement for this project.

This draft statement of requirements included the following information:

Must Have Criteria:

- Enable Members to set reminder dates for pieces of casework.
- Provide alert to Members of overdue responses.
- Notify Members when cases need to be resolved.
- Ensure that only individual councillors can view their own case work.
- The system must be user friendly.

Would Like Criteria

- File casework electronically.
- Track casework electronically.
- Hold electronic records of casework.
- Allow Members to retrieve, group and search for cases electronically.
- Monitor the status of a piece of casework.
- To be available "on line".

Members were clear that they did not want:

- The information stored to be accessible to others.
- The information to be used "corporately."
- A single point of contact for case work in departments.
- A system which requires all Members to be involved.
- A system which prescribes how casework must be done or limits the freedom of Members.
- A system that is monitored or their case work output scrutinised.
- The system to be centrally controlled.

Members do not mind if:

- A system requires them to complete a standard form – which requires details of the case which has "required" fields.
- A system needs to be developed for the purpose[2]

3.4   In addition to this initial draft statement of requirements, at the meeting of the Members IT reference group (21 07 2008), and following a discussion of the IT system developed for Members in Nottingham, Members noted the following problems with the Nottingham system:

- That it required a single officer contact within a department.
- That it resulted in an increase in staffing in "group offices."
- That it required significant resources to develop and maintain.
- That information stored was used to monitor Members work.
- That the system required wholesale "buy in" from all Members.
- That the system had led to issues with councillors casework information being shared.

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[2] Members are clear that this does not mean they are committed to procuring a system, only that if costs were not too high and benefits were clear they would be prepared to develop a bespoke system.

3.5   The benchmarks, the draft statement of requirement and the problems identified by Members in section 2.4 have formed the basis for the evaluation of the options in section 3 of this report.

The Options

3.6   Following initial meetings and a survey of Members views a list of options for developing a casework system were investigated and discussed with the Members IT Reference Group. A number of these options have "fallen away" and a number are further developed below. The options which have not been developed further and the reasons for this are discussed below:

- The "Nottingham System"

This is a bespoke casework system developed for Councillors on Nottingham City Council (a full report which provides information on this system is appended to this report as Appendix B). Following discussion with officers in Nottingham and a visit to Nottingham City Council it was decided not to explore the option of adapting and developing this system because ICT officers felt that although the system "is adequate for the needs of Nottingham with the complexity of the Leeds council, (they) would not recommend it without major changes."

- Off the Shelf Products

A number of "off the shelf" products were considered but in the absence of a full statement of requirements, it is difficult to assess the relevant merits of each. Typically, costs range between £15K and £40K. It may be that an "off the shelf" product is still an option once a detailed statement of requirements has been produced.

3.7   The following options have been considered and are appraised below based on current criteria:

1   Improving the status quo
2   Microsoft SharePoint
3   Developing the Siebel System
4   Developing a bespoke system
5   Expanding File Plus

3.8   **Option 1 – Improve the Status Quo**

Members currently have a number of IT software solutions to assist them in their work. This includes the Lotus Notes email and Microsoft Office systems. There is considerable opportunity to utilise these programs more effectively and creatively to achieve their full potential. Notably the Lotus Notes program could be used to greater effect by Members by allowing them to set reminder dates for pieces of casework, and to file their work electronically.

Pros

Effectively answers the two main issues highlighted by Members, i.e. reminders and electronic filing.
Cost effective and efficient.
Could provide opportunities to roll out other IT training to Members.

Cons

Would not deliver a "bespoke" casework system.
Would not allow Members to track and monitor work.
Would not allow for electronic filing of non email work.
Would require "buy in" to a training programme and be dependent on improving Member IT knowledge.

3.9 **Option 2 – Microsoft SharePoint**

There are a range of options available through our relationship with Microsoft that could be utilised depending on the details and scale of the requirement, the starting point for which would be SharePoint. In addition to being a collaboration tool, it is also a Document Management solution. SharePoint is going to be a core product for Leeds moving forward and over time will become the primary interface for many services. The vast majority of the requirements can be met by the out of the box functionality of SharePoint. If the requirements are particularly complex (in terms of workflow or business process management) then SharePoint plus Biztalk (which is a further standard product) could be used.

Being web-based it could be accessible from any web browser and avoid client installations of software, but provide seamless integration with MS Office and Outlook for functions such as preparing letters and responses to citizens. This solution has been adopted by a number of customers to deal with similar requirements. Developing SharePoint would also allow different interfaces to be presented to different groups of users.

Demonstration of functionality could be arranged via Leeds Learning Network where the technology is already in use.

Pros:

Ability to provide detailed specifications so that system meets all key requirements by easily modifying and designing the solution to fit the need, and then reuse this development in other parts of the organisation.
No formal procurement process would be required.
Uses standard technologies which will become part of the LCC Applications.
Infrastructure, hence any solution developed using this technology would "fit" with other key Corporate programmes of work e.g. the Intelligent Organisation agenda.
Integration with other standard desktop applications (Office applications, Outlook for email, calendaring etc) would be standard.
Dovetails with deliverables of the "Collaboration" project which means that user testing, training etc could be incorporated and uses standard tools.
Flexibility - Members can pick and choose which elements of the service offering best meets their individual needs.
Enhanced support from within Group Support Offices as the main functionality of the technical solution will be using tools which will be standard on user desktops.
Can be introduced to compliment existing tools and systems

Cons:

There may be a relatively long lead time for development. A idea of what will be deliverable in Phase 1 of the project will be available by the end of October. This will also identify the links between the project and key business programmes (such as

City Centre Accommodation and City Card), and also with the broader ICT Applications Infrastructure and Technology roadmaps.
Does not identically meet the requirements of Members.
May require training and development work.

3.10   **Option 3 - Siebel**

Siebel is currently used as a corporate case management solution for both Compliments and Complaints and the Anti-Social Behaviour unit. Its core usage is for contact management which allows a full view of the customer contact by providing a track of all customer contact against an individual.

It is difficult to provide costings for development until a full statement of requirements has been produced. Part of the project would be a full business analysis to establish whether an existing development, e.g. Compliments and Complaints, could be used as a basis.

Siebel can be configured for Members' needs and it would provide the functionality that a dedicated Case Management system would provide:

- Recording details of cases.
- Recording of actions within cases.
- Email attachments can be assigned.
- Allocate the number of people that can have access to the case.
- Reports can be prepared within "Discoverer."
- Standard letters can be stored and retrieved from MS Word.
- Key dates can be stored in the system.

Pros:

Recent changes to the licensing agreement with Oracle now allow service users to use the system with no additional software cost.
Siebel is a core ICT application and as such has the necessary resource backing.
It is already being used as a Case management system (Compliments and Complaints and Anti-social behaviour).
No formal procurement process would be required.
Security and confidentiality can be built in to the system (but may require development to achieve this).

Cons:

There is a relatively long lead time for development (existing modification requirements mean that development work could not commence until Q4 2008/09 at the earliest).
Development costs could be substantial.
Controlling access to cases may not be tight enough to meet the requirement.
Fairly in-depth training is required for both Members and Officers.

3.11   **Option 4 - Bespoke Development**

A bespoke database, developed internally or commissioned via a 3rd party provider, would allow us as the customer to specify our requirements in detail, and receive a tailored product. There would be no limitations around existing contracts or stored information, and reports could be developed as required.

Pros:

Ability to provide detailed specifications so that the system meets all of the requirements
Choice of system allows maximum flexibility around the requirements.
Any development would be fully supported, either via ICT or a 3rd party supplier for enhancements and modifications
Security could be built in, allowing for storage of confidential information.
Workflow could be incorporated to take a record from enquiry to outcome (including flags).
There is also the possibility of linking to other corporate systems e.g. Siebel if required (although this may well involve further development of the other system(s) involved).

Cons:

Cost - This is likely to be a very expensive solution (estimates £30,000 - £50,000).
Difficulty in articulating precisely the Statement of Requirements and without one the costs outlined above could substantially increase.
Timescales - Such a development would probably take some time to complete.
Without exhaustive planning and development this solution is likely to be prescriptive in terms of the way that Members would need to work.
Enhancements and modifications would need to be structured - documented, costed, developed and delivered.
There is a substantial risk that a bespoke system would not be future proof and would therefore require significant resources to adapt the system in the future.
Training of Members would also have to be considered. Dedicated training sessions would need to be developed (including training for new Members, refresher training, training following each upgrade of the system etc.).
Although technical support could be agreed, a stand-alone system would have little user support (with respect to functionality etc.).

3.12   **Option 5 - File Plus**

The primary function of this system is file management. Whilst it is likely that it would cover the majority of what is needed, significant development would still be needed to bring it into line with current requirements in terms of data capture and special requirements. There is also the possibility of support costs to the 3rd party developers for any modifications.

Pros:

The system has the capability to be adapted as a rudimentary case management system.
The system is designed to accommodate simultaneous access to records from a number of users.
Oracle has inherent security built in, so storing of sensitive information should not be a problem.
Oracle databases hosted within LCC can be made available for home working.
System already in use with Group Support Offices therefore experienced user support on hand.

Cons:

The system is cumbersome and would probably need a fairly IT literate user.

It would require significant development work to bring it into line with the Statement of Requirement.

It was developed by a 3rd party so all modifications/developments would need to be identified, documented, costed and delivered.

Current structure allows officers within Group Offices to view records for all councillors in their Group. (Needs significant development to tailor access for individual-only views)-needs consideration also as to whether this would compromise current functionality of the system.

Support for the network version of this package has to be coordinated with the supplier.

4.0   Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1   None

5.0   Legal And Resource Implications

5.1   Options 2, 3 and 4 above will all have considerable resource and structural implications for Democratic Services and specifically the Group Offices.

5.2   No resources are currently available for this project and any funding would be subject to a successful bid and would have to be considered alongside all other priorities

6.0   Conclusions

6.1   Whichever option is chosen a full Statement of Requirements will need to be drawn up in order to ensure that the technical solution is appropriate and meets those requirements. A Statement of Requirements will need to indicate MoSCoW (Must have, Should have, Could have, Would like) elements. In addition any solution needs to fit with current working arrangements between Members and their Group Support Offices.

Table 1 below displays in brief summary form the merits of the five options discussed in this paper. They are measured against the bench mark criteria of appropriateness, affordability, "future proof" and "fit for purpose." Each criteria has been marked out of 4, with 4 being high and 1 low.

	Appropriateness	Affordability	Future Proof	"Fit for Purpose"	Total
Option One	4	4	3	2	13
Option Two	4	4	4	2	14
Option Three	3	2[3]	4	2	11
Option Four	3	1	1	4	9
Option Five	3	2	1	3	9

[3] Assessing the "affordability" of the options means considering what the system will cost opposed to what benefits the system will deliver. Although it is clear that option one is affordable because there are no resource implications, it is unclear whether the benefits that options 2,3 and 4 could deliver would be outweighed by their costs.

If Members were to adopt option one, it would be possible in addition for a full statement of requirements to be developed as well. It is also possible that "off the shelf" products discussed in 3.6 of this report may be an option following

7.0 Recommendations

7.1   Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

7.2   Members are furthermore, asked to consider the options appraised in section 3 and discuss the appraisal made at 3.7 in table 1. Members are asked to consider whether they believe any of the options should be recommended for further development, through a full statement of requirements to determine the costs of developing, implementing and maintaining the system.

Background Papers

None