Agenda item number: **11**
Date of issue:

Meeting: Programme Board

Date: November 2015

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Service :   Communications

Status: New

Subject: Procurement of Committee Management Software

1   Purpose of report

1.1   To seek approval to procure Committee Management Software (CMS).

1.2   To outline and consider the future benefits of Committee Management Software in enabling committees to work completely electronically and to deliver efficiencies.

2   Recommendations

2.1   To approve the procurement of Committee Management Software that broadly meets the requirements set out at paragraphs 3.15 and the functionality at 3.20. The demand and relative benefits of the functionality will be developed through engagement of stakeholders in developing the business case.

2.2   There will be additional costs for integration with 'My Account' and this is being investigated and defined as the business case is refined.

2.3   To note that certain options have an additional facility to provide a Tablet App at an additional cost which could assist with electronic committees in the future. If this is the preferred option following further analysis then this would be Phase 2 of the roll out and a new Project Mandate will be available at that time.

3   Background

3.1   The Council has a new website which meets the needs of its customers and is modern and easy to find what you are looking for. However as a result of limited engagement in its development the same is not true of the Committee papers available on the IDOX portal and from comments received, the democracy pages are difficult to navigate and meeting information is deeply

stored. There are no interactive links between documents and there is no dedicated search facility or method of measuring public interest.

3.2   To enable the Council to modernise and streamline democracy pages on website and its back office processes, reduce duplication, double and treble-keying and potentially make savings in staff time, a Committee Management Software system is recommended.

3.3   Currently the Council's Committee processes are manually managed. Documents are stored in individual Committee folders within one network drive. Each Committee folder contains multiple folders named according to each document in the process by year eg. agenda, minutes, reports, notices etc.

3.4   All of these documents are stored indefinitely and historic minutes and reports are referred to periodically when researching previous Member decisions and how we got there as well as for obituary/award purposes of previous Member roles. There is no competent search facility in looking for past information on the Council's ICT network nor on the IDOX web pages. Therefore any such searches are manual and time-consuming involving mostly guess work as to where to look.

3.5   To produce a Committee agenda for a Policy Committee involves up to 25 individual tasks for Committee Admin staff and up to 12 hours in time. This time could be reduced considerably by procuring software with in-house style templates already set up and no formatting needed as well as a reduction in copying and pasting between documents. This does not include photocopying and postal admin as these services will not change with the introduction of a CMS but there could be savings in the future should electronic committees be introduced.

3.6   There are Committee admin staff in all of the four service areas who deal with the Committee process by following a set of written procedures. However over time and changes in staff, this has meant that there has been some personalisation of the standard documents. The introduction of a CMS would create Council-branded templates that are followed by all staff and help to ensure a consistent standard of documents are produced which are consistent across the Council.

3.7   Report writers could benefit from using the package to write reports, this would also mean there is consistency in using the same template as well as offer version control, clear instruction as to when the report is final and an evidenced audit trail.

3.8   There are other functions available which will save officer time in keying in information once such as Member attendance at a Committee. For example some software packages can automatically update the Member's personal page with their attendance once it is recorded in the minutes. This is currently an on-going task by Committee admin in filling in a spreadsheet after each

Committee meeting showing Member attendance and once a month, the percentages of attendance for each Member are checked and the document is uploaded to the website. Also after the Annual Meeting, once the Committee Memberships have been entered, the Members' individual pages will automatically be updated too. This will save double keying and entering information on 28 individual Member webpages.

3.9 The current arrangements for publishing Committee documents to the IDOX web portal is time-consuming as each document has to be manually converted to a pdf format before being uploaded to the IDOX. It would be desirable in efficiency terms automatically publish a whole agenda, made up of different format reports and documents, to the website by the push of one button. Also the current web facility does not allow for searching documents on particular matters of interest nor does it allow us to assess level of interest in the site as there is currently no mechanism for recording 'hits'.

3.10 There are benefits to the public in the Council having a CMS as the documents will be displayed on the website in a more public-friendly layout with a comprehensive introductory page containing options for clicking a Calendar of Meetings or on a Committee name to find the report/decision they are looking for as well as there being a dedicated search facility.

3.11 There is the option for single sign-on to the CMS through 'My Account' at a potential additional cost and this will need to be costed up as a separate piece of bespoke development should the Council's existing system not be compatible. Officers are liaising with prospective suppliers on this but it will be subject to the technical details of the Council's systems currently in place before costings can be received.

3.12 Also available within this type of software are Member pages, Member Interests and there is the ability to carry out political balance calculations, an option for publishing election results and facilitating consultation. Document storage is configured in a range of ways including within systems within a dedicated cloud. Some options offer separate storage for Committee documentation outside of the corporate document management system.

3.13 Each company offers migration from the existing system to the CMS depending on the Council's file structure and naming conventions being set out in committee, year and meeting date. This is the case but there may need to be some renaming within some folders and files and transfer of files into the relevant folders to make each meeting folder a complete meeting's group of documents. This would make the transition more efficient and the task would not be too time-consuming as it would be spread over all the Committee administrators if it was needed.

3.14   It may be helpful to understand how other authorities around the County and neighbouring authorities deal with Committee management and the following is a list of what is in place at each of those authorities :-

Authority Name	CMS in place	Any other
Blaby	Yes	
Charnwood		Manual process & looking into a CMS
Harborough	Yes	
Hinckley & Bosworth	Yes	
Leicester City	Yes	
Leicestershire County	Yes	
Melton		Manual process
North-West Leicestershire	Yes	
Oadby & Wigston	Yes	
Rutland	Yes	
South Kesteven	Yes	

3.15   Comparing 3 CMS companies
A sample viewing of 3 Council websites where each of the 3 CMS providers is used was undertaken to experience the ease by the customer of finding a Ward Councillor including interests and attendance at meetings as well as a Council agenda and how it links to its reports as well as searching for the 2014/15 approved budget. The results could be considered subjective but are as follows :-

Function	Council A Company 1	Council B Company 2	Council C Company 3	Melton
Find a Ward Councillor	3 clicks from homepage	6 clicks from homepage	3 clicks from homepage	6 clicks from homepage
Find and view the Councillor's interests	Link to online form on Cllr page	Link on Cllr page to pdf form	Not on Cllr page. Search 'interests' 1 click to Cllr pdf form	Not on Cllr page. Listed at 'more tasks' 4 clicks to Cllr pdf form
Find the Councillor's attendance record	Cllr page lists meeting attendance with percentages	Not on Cllr page. Could not find via search	Not on Cllr page. Could not find via search	Not on Cllr page. Search 'Cllr attendance' - latest 2 page spreadsheet appears
Find a Full Council	2 clicks to Interactive	2 clicks to Interactive	No interactive	7 clicks to pdf Calendar

Agenda from the Calendar of Meetings	Calendar of meetings. Click on meeting date for papers	Calendar of meetings. Click on meeting date	calendar. Search list of meetings and click on one needed	of Meetings. Not interactive.
Find a report for the Full Council meeting from Agenda	Reports linked from agenda.	No link from agenda to reports. Separate pdf documents.	Reports linked from agenda.	5 clicks from Calendar to list of agenda and reports
Search for 2014/15 approved budget	Immediate list of up to 3 star rated documents according to relevance of search	The search facility within the Committee software area did not work	Immediate list of related documents. First document being the approved budget	Immediate list of related documents from Homepage

The above demonstrates the ease by the customer of finding democracy related information on the website when using committee software as opposed to the Melton site and Council A shows the best results. It also shows that the most customer friendly software is Company 1.

3.16 Initial research has been carried out with some suppliers and the initial findings are as follows:-

Company 1
The market leader in Committee Management Software is Company 1 with over 250 customers (over 90% of which are local authorities) and most of Leicestershire using this package. The company also provides services to the Wales Assembly, NHS and other public bodies including the Police, Fire and Rescue, Transport and Waste. A key selling point is that over the past 15 years that it has been in existence, the company has never lost a single customer. Whereas many customers have moved across from competitor systems to Company 1 including Company 2 and Company 3. In fact, North West Leicestershire previously used Company 3 and moved to Company 1 in 2014.

There is a higher level of functionality and support offered with this software as well as a wide user network across local authorities. Its reputation is excellent across democracy officers and it provides the benchmark for Committee Management Software.

3.17 Company 2
Company 2 is the main competitor to Company 1 and has 58 local authority customers. Harborough uses this system.

It is understood from feedback by Company 1 customers that have moved from Company 2 to Company 1 that the functionality overall in terms of the detail of work within democratic services is much more limited compared to Company 1.

There is very little difference in the cost between Company 1 and Company 2. Due to the lower take up of Company 2 by other authorities, this also means the user network is considerably less for self-fixing and getting help with on the spot queries and issues.

3.18   <u>Company 3</u>
Company 3 has 15 local authority customers. As mentioned above, if we were to listen to our colleagues at other Leicestershire authorities, this software would not suit our needs as well as Company 1. This software is cheaper than Company 1 but there is a lower take up by other authorities and this may mean there is a lower level of colleague support and complete reliance on the company to problem-solve.

This is the only company that says it can provide the single sign on to 'My Account' at no extra cost.

3.19   <u>IDOX WAM for Committees</u>
The other option available is to develop the existing IDOX portal to suit Committees. This company does not specialise in Committee software and does not have an 'off the shelf' product. Therefore this would involve a user led design engagement with the company to specify what the user needs are from this type of software and whether the existing product can be adapted to do all that is needed and if so a timetable and costing for such development work. Currently the offering provided by the company to publish Committee documents is administratively awkward and not customer-friendly as the above internal review shows (paragraph 3.15).

3.20   The main features of a CMS to help with meeting management at Melton are as below :-

- Comprehensive database of agendas, minutes, decisions, and reports
- Creates electronic document packs as PDF files, including running page numbering, headers, restricted notices and watermarks
- Decision lists and action tracking
- Members' website
- Register of Interests
- Meetings database
- Election Results
- Webcast integration and e-petitions
- Document library
- Outside Bodies
- Consultation
- Supplementary agendas feature
- Automatic report format conversion, both PDF and HTML links are

available automatically for all documents published
- Comprehensive security allowing for all common types of information to be published fully secured, safeguarding sensitive documents
- Selective Intranet / Internet publishing
- Free-text searching via web on all content including scanned material
- Web-based submission of agenda items, reports and plan items by officers in other departments, motions and substitutions by members
- Room and location database
- Working-draft export feature to enable off-system working
- Automated management of paper copy counts and label printing
- Automatically generated web-based timetable of meetings
- Management of internal meetings eg. Task Groups

3.21 <u>Electronic Committees</u>
Each company also offers a form of 'App' which would involve all Councillors moving over to ipads or other electronic devices for meeting papers. This would enable the Council to be completely electronic in all its meetings and arrangements including Full Council, Committees, Sub Committees, Working Groups, Task Groups. The app would allow for completely paperless committee meetings, where Councillors read agendas on their tablet, make their own annotations and manage document packs for any number of Committees etc without paper copies. This way of working could produce significant savings in photocopying time, paper and postage.

3.22 Paperless Committees needs Member buy-in and although it is an aspiration at this stage, it is a module that could be added at a later date and it is suggested that this initiative be phase 2 and a separate Project Mandate will be supplied at that time.

4 Legal, financial and IT implications

<u>Legal</u>

4.1 There is a need for a facility for Members to log in to the CMS to access exempt papers. However there will be no change to the current arrangements in exclusion of the press and public under the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) where confidential or exempt matters are to be considered.

4.2
Any CMS can be tailored to suit the requirements that are already in place regarding meeting the access to information legislative requirements.

<u>Information Technology (IT)</u>

4.3 Steria advise that from their experience of a Committee Management Software used at other Councils that they support, is that once installed, there is little intervention needed by Steria as the support received from the CMS company is comprehensive. Steria's set up costs are included in the table below.

4.4   The CMS will integrate with the Council's website to have seamless transition between webpages and Committee pages with the same look and feel as the existing. Templates will be developed for agendas, minutes, reports etc to give a consistent appearance to decision-making documents.

Financial

4.5   The costs associated with the different options of Committee Management Software are set out in the table below. Steria's hosting cost is £1,000 per annum and the cost of single sign-on to 'My Account' is awaited for Company 1 and Company 2.

Software name	Capital set up cost £	Profess-ional Support per annum £	Steria support per annum £	Total over 3 years £
Company 1 *	15,000	7,010 (year 2 onwards)	1,000	**32,020**
Company 2 *	0	9,500 (year 1 onwards)	1,000	**31,500**
Company 3 **	6,600	3,000 (year 1 onwards)	1,000	**18,600**
IDOX development ***	-	-	-	**-**

* cost to be advised for single sign on to My Account.
** capital cost includes single sign on to My Account
*** see paragraph 4.7

4.6   It is considered that although Company 1 is slightly more expensive than Company 2, due to its extensive functionality, having a proven track record, being the market leader and offering a high level of support, that this be the benchmark cost for the time being until a more detailed business case is developed. Therefore it is recommended that the highest figure of £15,000 as a capital cost be allocated in the Capital Programme to fund Committee Management Software.

4.7   With regard to IDOX, until the company has considered what is involved there are no costings yet available. Based on the other companies quotations for providing any bespoke development work, this could be at a cost of up to £900 per day to develop a product to meet our needs on top of Officer time and commitment in working with the company to develop such a product. A support package would also be needed.

4.8   There are modest potential savings in staff time in the introduction of a CMS and these could be achieved within six months of integration however they do not equate to a substantial percentage of an individual's full time salary. As the existing Committee support staff are spread over the four service areas of the Council, savings in time can mainly be identified per Committee/task and it would be up to each Service Area to consider how this saving in time could be utilised within their staffing structure.

4.9   The benefits in efficiencies outlined in the key issues above and the greater public access of decision-making information in introducing this type of software appear to make the financial investment worthwhile.

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5   Initial Assessment of risk

5.1   The risks associated with the integration of Committee Management Software are mainly around staff resistance to a new way of working.

5.2   A slow level of learning by staff could lead to minor disruption in service. To help mitigate this, each company offers training and helpdesk support.

5.3   There is a risk in accepting a cheaper option in it not meeting the same efficiencies and expectations as a higher specification product offered at a higher cost.

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6   Equalities and diversity and staffing implications

6.1   A digitally led committee package with more integrated features is generally seen as improving equality and social inclusion as it provides the opportunity for anyone to search and locate what they are looking for in less time than the current offering.

6.2   The search facility improves the openness and transparency of decision-making meetings and enables more local residents to access the decisions that affect their lives.

6.3   Helps those in remote areas, those who work shifts or are housebound to find out about democracy easily including decisions, their Ward Councillor, meeting arrangements etc in their own homes at a time to suit their personal commitments.

6.4   There will be a need to train the staff involved in working with the CMS.