

## **Management Team**

**12 July 2022**

### **Revenue and Benefits Software Module Enhancement**

#### **Citizen Access Form Designer**

##### **Outline**

Management Team are asked to consider and approve the purchase and implementation of the NEC Citizen Access Form Designer software for the Revenues & Benefits Service.

##### **What is it?**

The 'Citizen Access Forms Designer' has been developed by NEC (formerly known as Northgate) as a bolt on package to our Citizen Access self-service portal for revenue and benefits.

The current range of revenues and benefits forms developed in-house have no beneficial integration with mutual systems. Forms used by the Service are mainly online in a mishmash of formats, those that need to be downloaded, printed, completed, scanned and returned by customers, editable .pdf forms and traditional paper-based forms. These will all be replaced using the Form Designer product to provide a consistency in service while taking advantage of technological efficiencies.

Form Designer will enable replacements which integrate with our current Enterprise document management system and feed into the NEC back-office software. Forms can be generated and maintained in service, without reliance on IT Services as is currently the case.

##### **Why should we have it?**

- Enables in-service production and maintenance of forms
- Meets current customer expectation and demand
- Enhances website facilities and promotes growth in use
- Integrates with NEC back office system to improve speed and efficiency of administration
- Complementary to Generic Interface Module, streamlining customer contact process
- Improves speed of administration
- Greater accessibility of service
- Reduction in printing, postal and stationery costs, leading to reduced staffing costs

##### **How does it help?**

- Supports Digital Agenda, self-serve capacity, channel shift and growth in digital services uptake
- Improves service accessibility
- Standardises format - reader compatible
- Provides the opportunity to evaluate for corporate use, complementing the Enterprise document management
- Contributes to tangible medium term and ongoing financial savings
- Reduces environmental impact and carbon footprint through a reduction in stationery, printing and postal service

## **Cost**

NEC software supplied on licence - annual fee £8,000

## **Met by**

Costs to be initially met through transformation reserve for approximately 2 years. (MT will be aware that government admin grants for revenues and benefits work have been transferred into this reserve in order to support the ongoing transformation of this service).

The product will rapidly supply a growing reduction in service costs for stationery, printing and postage as well as contributing to growth in the wider use of the Council's website – creating higher volume traffic in digital customer transactions

At a product cost of just over £30 per day, the ongoing actual cost savings in paper, envelopes, printing and postage will quickly meet at least half.

However, greater value will come through efficiency gains from changes to the ways we currently handle post, emails and forms by automating and streamlining our processes.

Colleagues may recall approving appointment to a revenues & benefits vacant full time permanent administrative post (DF1120) in early March this year. I set out then that:

- *'with the escalation of digital initiatives and digital postroom across the Council it is feasible that in say 2 to 3 years time, we can review the need for the post. Therefore I would propose that we fill this permanent position on a 2 year fixed term basis to see where we are corporately in 2 years time.'*

The post was filled last month on a fixed term 2 year contract. I anticipate that once embedded over a 2 year period, the technology we are looking to purchase will allow a reduction in hours to be made at an ongoing cash equivalent of at least the cost of the product per annum. However, as it is complementary to other initiatives and by taking advantage of other opportunities that may arise, the saving we can generate may well be more significant.

## **Consultation**

The attached product evaluation document was shared with the Digital by Default Working Group. The following feedback was received:

- *The Forms Designer package represents an extremely positive step towards a more seamless digital experience for our residents. This may direct work to customer services in terms of supporting those residents who are unable to transact digitally and would of in the past had a paper form to do this themselves*

## **Recommendation**

Management Team are asked to consider and support the purchase of the NEC Citizen Access Form Designer software at the ongoing current cost of £8,000. Cost to be met from the Transformation Reserve for the first 2 years, after which permanent establishment savings will be sought.

If in agreement, I will liaise with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property to seek a decision.

**Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance & Transformation**