

Casework Tracking Software for Members and Officers (Digital Services, Stephen Bowen)

Synopsis of report:

Casework is an integral element of a Member's role in serving the residents, visitors, and businesses of Runnymede.

This paper sets out the need for change to improve the process and systems used for requesting and tracking casework across the Council.

Recommendations:

The Corporate Management Committee are asked to:

1. **Note the background and drivers for exploring options for a new Member Casework System.**
2. **Consider the options outlined within this report for introducing a system for requesting and tracking casework across the Council.**
3. **Approve the recommended next steps to:**
 - a) **Establish an Officer/Member task and finish group to take forward the requirements and build of a case management system.**
 - b) **Note the proposed project approach and timelines as outlined in Option C.**
 - c) **Note the growth of £5000 to support the implementation of Option C will be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.**

1. Background

- 1.1. The Local Government Association defines case work as dealing with the people in our community, understanding the issues and concerns they face, and being equipped with the skills, confidence, and ability to take action in response to their queries, is an important and valued role for any councillor.
- 1.2. The problems and issues local people raise with Members are often referred to as 'casework'. Casework can sometimes lead on to policy development or issue campaigning but can be distinguished from these by casework usually deals with the resolution of an individual problem.
- 1.3. Casework can fall into a number of requests outlined below:

Direct query – a neighbour asks if you could find out what progress has been made in processing her application for a renovation grant.

Indirect query – a daughter, ringing up on behalf of her frail, elderly parent, asks if her mother is entitled to claim council tax support.

Complaint – a local housing tenant e-mails you to complain about the repeated vandalism to her council property.

Service request – a shopkeeper asks if you could arrange for an extra trade waste collection at his premises.

Community issue – a group of parents lobby you to prompt the council to remove a burnt-out vehicle from a nearby park.

- 1.4. It is recognised by Councillors and Officers that there is currently no corporate system, policy, or process in place for requesting, tracking, and progressing casework across the organisation.
- 1.5. Casework is usually initiated through an email or discussion with a member of the leadership team; however, it is recognised that Councillors do also email Officers direct with case work.
- 1.6. Feedback has been that because of the lack of process and system it is difficult to track requests and get an overview of those completed and not completed across the Council.
- 1.7. Some Councils have begun to explore the use of technology-based solutions to help Members by implementing casework systems.
- 1.8. This paper sets out the options available to take forward a review of the Council’s case work processes and requirements for a new system.
- 1.9. The report was requested by Cllr R. King and Cllr D. Whyte under Standing Order 27.4, who state that Runnymede does not have a clear policy and process for handling Member casework.
- 1.10. Cllrs R. King and D. Whyte added that other authorities had a clear casework software where Members can track casework and its resolution, and officers can also see casefiles on Member queries and link these to residents’ details. Clear deadlines are set for responding and actioning Member requests, making it clear to Members the status of their residents’ casework.

2. Option A – Improve the status quo

- 2.1. Members currently have access to several IT software applications to assist them in their roles, many of which are included in the Council’s Microsoft Licenses.
- 2.2. There is considerable opportunity to utilise these programs more effectively and creatively to achieve their full potential and in doing so would close some of the gap in improving the process for requesting and monitoring case work across the organisation.
- 2.3. This option would look to provide additional training and guidance on the following Microsoft Applications.
 - **Outlook Calendar** – setting up meetings and adding deadlines to calendar
 - **OneNote** – keeping a digital notebook of all casework being undertaken
 - **Outlook Task List** – create to-do lists with deadlines and reminders
 - **Excel Spreadsheets** – create a casework log for tracking and reporting
 - **Microsoft Word** - create correspondence templates for case work responses

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Maximise Microsoft tools to improve the process for requesting and tracking case work requests.	- Limitations in Microsoft Office tools.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No additional cost – all software will be available within the current E3 licenses. - Quick turn around on improving the current status quo. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not provide opportunity to have a single view of all case work requests, their status and SLA triggers to progress. - Requires additional Member training on each individual Microsoft Application which will take time and resources. - Information overload for some Members trying to learn lots of different Applications to fulfil the duties of their role.
Cost	Timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimal cost for training materials - Additional Officer time and effort required to identify solutions to improve current process and build training materials. - Out of hours training may result in overtime costs within Digital Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 – 8 weeks to scope adjustments and develop guidance and training materials.

3. **Option B – Purchase a new system**

- 3.1. Runnymede could procure and implement a new dedicated system which has been tailor built for requesting and tracking case work.
- 3.2. This option would require a detailed requirements gathering exercise and potentially soft market testing prior to building the final business case.
- 3.3. A procurement exercise would be required to purchase the new system and the implementation will require dedicated resources from Digital Services and Democratic Services.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to procure a tailor-made system which has been designed to manage Member Case Work. - System is embedded in other Council's and continually improved as part of systems development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A growth item will be required for both capital and revenue. - Potential that a “off the shelf” system does not meet our bespoke requirements. - Procurement process adds additional time to project. - A stand-alone system will be disjointed and may not link to our Customer Relationship Management system.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional unnecessary support and maintenance costs. - A project of this scale would require a full procurement exercise and implementation all of which would need to be resourced and scheduled into the Council's Digital Transformation.
Cost	Timeline
<p>A new case work management system could cost in the region of between £35,000 - £60,000+</p> <p>There will also be significant internal resources required for the project.</p>	<p>Requirements gathering 6 weeks</p> <p>Procurement 8 weeks</p> <p>Implementation 12 weeks</p> <p>Estimated total duration 26 weeks (6.5 months)</p>

4. **Option C – Develop our own system – recommended option**

- 4.1. The Council implemented its new digital platform in August 2021. The new platform includes our website, online forms, and customer relationship management system.
- 4.2. Digital Services recommend that we build the new case work system within our digital platform. This will provide Members with a bespoke form for requesting case work and a case management system to be able to track the request and liaise with Officers for updates.
- 4.3. The system will have the capability to send responses to customers and set service level agreement triggers for when a response is due and not provided.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No additional license and support and maintenance costs. - Opportunity to build a bespoke system that meets Members requirements. - Integrated system with our CRM so we have a single view of case work across the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full requirements need to be defined following the build of the system. - The build will be from scratch and requires resources from Digital Services to facilitate the requirements gathering and the technical build, test and launch of the system.
Cost	Timeline
<p>Minimal cost for solution build.</p> <p>£5,000 project budget to address integration and project consultancy from Digital Platform Provider (Jadu).</p>	<p>Requirements gathering 6 weeks – Commence November 22</p> <p>Implementation 8 weeks – Commence January 23</p>

Note the growth of £5,000 to support the implementation of Option C will be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.

Estimated total duration
14 weeks – 3.5 months

4.4. Digital Services will follow its standard service design process, this includes seven stages to design and build the new system.

4.5. A full breakdown of the proposed project approach is outlined below.

4.6. **Discovery Stage**

- Agree terms of reference and main points of contact for the project
- Agree outcomes for the project
- Retrieval of data for all case work enquiries received
- Any customer feedback is shared
- High level current process is documented
- Survey produced and sent to all Councillors for input into current and new process

4.7. **Research Stage**

- Data for received case work enquiries is analysed
- Customer feedback captured
- Current process documented and reviewed
- Review of Councillor survey results
- Benchmarking other Council's approach
- Workshop to discuss and review analysis

4.8. **Design**

- Workshop to define future process and policy for case work
- Document agreed new process for managing case work
- Document policy for managing case work

4.9. **Build**

- Build of the solution within the Council's test environment
- Present test solution to task and finish group
- Begin the process of testing the system

4.10. **Test**

- Carry out testing of the system
- Update change request log with issues and improvements
- Regular communication and meetings to discuss items
- Agree upon any changes that are to be made to the system
- Re-test of any changes
- Sign off of system

4.11. **Deploy**

- Test system exported to Live environment
- Go live support including video demo's, written guides, and training

4.12. **Review**

- Workshop
- Review service data since deployment of build
- Gather feedback from the group:
 - What has gone well?
 - What hasn't gone so well?
 - What can be improved?
 - Determine if phase 2 of the project required?

5. **Policy framework implications**

- 5.1. Service reviews and process improvement is one of the corner stones of the Council's new Organisational Development Strategy. The review of our case work process and systems will be supported through a review of the end-to-end processes which will feed into the requirements for our new ways of working and system.
- 5.2. Maximising the use of existing technology is key to unlocking capability and change at pace. The recommended option of building the Member Case work system within our Digital Platform reaffirms the Council's commitment to developing greater value from technology across the organisation.

6. **Resource Implications**

- 6.1. Option C is the most cost effective and quickest solution which would meet the initial requirements of a Member case work management solution.
- 6.2. There will be a small project budget required of £5000 which will be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24. This project budget will cover any integration and consultancy work required to implement the new system.

7. **Legal implications**

- 7.1. This paper sets out several options to address the need to introduce improved processes and systems for Member Casework.
- 7.2. Option B (procure and implement a new solution) will require a compliant procurement route for the new system.
- 7.3. The project team will ensure that the Council procures the solution in line with the Public Contracts Regulations if this option is chosen.

8. **Equality implications**

- 8.1. The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - b) to advance equality of opportunity;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristic
- 8.2. At this stage of the project an Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken. This will be addressed prior to the implementation of the system throughout the project initiation stage.

9. Privacy Impact Assessment

- 9.1. A Privacy Impact Screening assessment has not been completed for the implementation of a Member Case Management system.
- 9.2. A Data Protection Impact Assessment will need to be completed by the project team through the duration of the system implementation. The process of completing the assessment will commence as the project team go through requirements gathering.

10. Environmental Impact Assessment

- 10.1. The implementation of a case work management system would improve communication and transparency of work case work requests to Officers.
- 10.2. The implementation of a system will result in a reduction of physical printing or correspondence and will provide Councillors the opportunity to make case work requests digitally. As a result, this will reduce the need for printing and sending correspondence to customers and Officers.

11. Actions and next steps

Corporate Management Committee is asked to:

- 11.1. Approve Option C as the recommended option to design and build a new case work management system.
- 11.2. Nominate Councillors from each political party to establish a Task and Finish group to take forward the design and build of the new case work system.
- 11.3. Note that the growth item of £5000 to support project costs for the implementation and integration of the new case work system will be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.
- 11.4. Note the recommended project approach and timelines as outlined in Option C.

(To resolve)

Background Papers

None