CABINET	**DEMOCRATIC AND CUSTOMER**
28TH JUNE 2016	**SERVICES REPORT NO. DCS1604**

MEETINGS AND DECISIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report sets out a proposal for the Council to license a piece of software which will provide an end to end system for managing meetings. The system is primarily used to manage Member meetings but can also be utilised for a range of other applications, especially corporate groups and decision and report management. Systems like this are used in many other authorities to streamline and manage processes.

1.2 This report sets out the main features of the new system and the implications of introducing it in Rushmoor. An assessment has also been made of the benefits measured against the costs.

2. **BACKGROUND**

2.1 At certain times, Rushmoor has looked at the potential for providing a committee management solution that would help make the process of supporting meetings more efficient. Whilst several products have been examined, none of them has provided a suitable solution for Rushmoor. In recent weeks, Democratic and Customer Services and IT and Facilities have been given a demonstration of a system, which provides a solution specific for local authority style meetings administration and which interfaces with elections systems.

3. **PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW SYSTEM**

3.1 The new system works under three basic principles:

- All documentation is published to the web through automated and immediate webpage creation and publication

- Access to information is simplified through linking reports to agenda items with a tool to view the history of each item

- Work in progress is managed, which includes the Forward Plan, agenda and minutes preparation and progress chasing actions

3.2   In addition to the basic functionality, the system offers a range of other capabilities, including:

- A genuine paperless solution available to a number of platforms and the ability to handle a range of common formats

- It can create electronic document packs for the web and tablet devices

- It can pick up a range of other information including committee membership, attendance, member details, register of interests and meeting calendars

- The use of e-consultation, e-petitions and automated email notifications

- Full control of the Democratic Support team on publication arrangements (eg what goes on the internet and what goes on the intranet)

4.   BENEFITS OF THE SYSTEM

4.1   There are a range of benefits for all those who are involved in the Council's decision making process, in particular elected members, report authors and attendees of meetings, as well as Democratic Support staff. These benefits include:

- Entirely automated web publication – at present Democratic Support staff spend a considerable amount of time preparing documents for the web. This would be done automatically with the new system.

- Complete electronic document creation - agenda packs are co-ordinated through the system which can handle over 1000 pages. Agenda packs are created as pdf files and can include various sorts of annotation and page numbers, which can be determined locally. This can be done quickly if a report arrives at the last minute.

- Paperless meetings – the system provides the opportunity to develop paperless meetings through the provision of a comprehensive tablet/device app which is available for iPad, Android and Windows devices. Agenda packs are downloaded automatically and the system enables quick and easy navigation through various means and includes facilities to highlight, underline and use of free text drawing.

- Self-service Member facility – the system allows Members to update their profiles and information like the Register of Interests automatically.

- Simplified management of outside bodies and letter generation – the system allows an automated system for appointments, especially to outside bodies.

- Managing report preparation – the system allows authors to prepare documentation using defined templates with a system for review and sign-off internally. There will also be automated reminders and tracking.

4.2 IT has reviewed the system from both technical and implementation perspectives and is comfortable that the system is well specified and will work.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The estimated cost of the system for installation and the first year's licence is £15,000. This allows unlimited use of the software and everything to get the system live, which includes training and old data migration. The yearly cost from year 2 would be around £7,000.

5.2 Against this, there is a range of savings across the Council which would more than cover the licence cost. It is likely though that these would take some time to be realised. In years 1 – 3 there are potential savings as follows:

- Reduction in courier costs - £2,000
- Reduced printing need - £1,500

5.3 In the longer term, other users of the system have found that there has been a saving in time in the preparation, co-ordination and publication of reports and agenda. In addition, where authorities have gone entirely paper free there have been additional savings (for printing and deliveries), which in Rushmoor's case would amount to a total of £10,000. Members receive a £360 IT and communications allowance which could be utilised for the purchase of tablets or similar devices to take advantage of the system.

5.4 Were the Council to go ahead with the proposed software, a variation to the Capital Programme would be needed in year 1 and the revenue costs for years 2 onwards will need to be included in the budget from 2017/18, although the projected savings would be reflected in these costs.

6. PROCUREMENT

6.1 The market for this sort of software is narrow with a maximum of 2-3 suppliers able to offer systems focused on local authorities, although the specifications do vary. The market leader is a company called Modern.gov, which has many customers across the country, including a number close to Rushmoor. Procurement options are being examined and the suppliers are on national procurement frameworks.

7.   **CONCLUSIONS**

7.1   The Council has been monitoring the market for a meetings management system that would provide benefits and which would make Rushmoor's meetings administration more effective. For a number of years, there have been requests from some Members for the Council to introduce such a system so that they can go paperless and this is now practical and cost effective. It also provides a range of opportunities to make administration of both Member and internal meetings more co-ordinated.

8.   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1   The Cabinet is recommended to

(i)   introduce a meetings and decisions managements system, subject to the necessary procurement arrangements being completed; and

(ii)   agree a variation to the Capital Programme of £15,000 for the cost of the project in year 1 and the inclusion of the revenue costs in the budget from year 2 onwards to be agreed by the Head of Democratic and Customer Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and the Head of Financial Services.

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Background papers:
None