

REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING
Cabinet	4 th November 2015

Report template revised June 2008



SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
Capita self-service functionality - Online customer access to council tax, business rates and housing benefit details	Corporate Support	Peter Haywood	6

1. SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

An Efficient and Effective Council

This report constitutes a request for approval to implement self-service functionality with the aim of channel shifting customers to online when they engage with the Revenues and Benefits Service. This channel shift will incorporate back office integration which, in many cases, will reduce double handing of accounts and claims to single or zero handling, whilst improving the customer's experience of dealing with the council as processes will be automated, which will result in a speedier turnaround for enquiries.

Implementation of these services will assist the council in delivering value for money in all aspects of the council's work, through changing processes and delivering exceptional customer service. These changes will also assist the council in meeting the challenge of Business Transformation, the 'We're Going Digital' vision of service provision within South Ribble and result in a more effective and efficient council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to approve the implementation of the Capita self-service functionality and the Capita creditors modules for use by Revenues and Benefits and to grant authority under Section 3.4 of the Financial Regulations to incur capital expenditure of £89,500 to be drawn from ICT Reserves.

To allow for the implementation of the Capita modules referred to above Cabinet is asked to approve a waiver of all relevant Contract Procedure Rules (including paragraph 11.3)

3. DETAILS AND REASONING

In many aspects of our individual lives we have already transformed the way that we access services as we may now receive e-bills instead of paper bills, we may register for car tax online or we may book a holiday via a website. All of these services are available online 24/7 to us. However, whilst the council has made significant progress in the levels of service that it provides in recent years, many of our customers feel that they have to contact us during working hours between Monday and Friday to access a service or report a change in circumstances.

3.1 Self Service

In 2014-15 Gateway dealt with 16,157 face to face enquiries and 50,619 telephone enquiries from customers in respect of Revenues and Benefits issues. Additionally, the service also received a large amount of correspondence from customers by email and post. This correspondence includes

benefit claim forms, notifications of change of address, notifications of changes to household composition and requests to change council tax payment methods.

When a customer contacts Gateway regarding a change in their circumstances the details of their call are recorded on the Customer Relationship Management System. These details are then forwarded to the Revenues and Benefits service to be input onto their Capita system. As a result, many enquiries are subjected to 'double handling', which is inefficient and time consuming.

Other customers choose to contact the service directly by email or post. However, in many cases the information provided by the customer may be incomplete or require further clarification before their enquiry can be dealt with. This results in an increase in the number of avoidable contacts that occur as well as resulting in inefficiencies as staff are then required to input information into the Capita system.

The implementation of a self-service solution for benefit claim forms, changes of address notifications, direct debit payment plans and discount applications will reduce the requirement for staff to input information into the Capita system, with this data essentially being input by the customer as they self-serve, although it may be subject to a validation check by staff. The time taken to issue a bill or calculate a benefit claim will be reduced as the customer will essentially input their information directly into the back office system.

3.2 Online Portal

If a council taxpayer, benefit claimant or landlord wishes to obtain information about their account they have to contact the council by post, email or telephone as there is only very limited information regarding council tax account balances available online.

By implementing the Capita Connect modules customers will be able to access their account or claim details online 24/7, whilst landlords will be able to view account details or correspondence in respect of benefit claims as well as accessing their payment schedules online, which will remove the need for the council to issue these by post.

3.3 E-billing

Many customers now choose to receive e-bills or statements instead of paper bills from many of their utility providers. However, the council currently issues paper council tax and business rates bills with no facility to issue online bills. The implementation of e-billing functionality will enable a taxpayer to register to receive an e-bill instead of a paper bill. The customer will be sent an email when a bill has been produced which will contain a link to log into an online secure area to view their bill.

3.4 Capita Creditors System

The Revenues and Benefits service currently use a third party Civica creditors system to issue payments. It is planned to implement the Capita creditors system which will sit within the current Revenues and Benefits system. The benefits of this are outlined below:

- The interface that currently exists between Capita and Civica will no longer be required
- Capita creditors is required to enable landlords to access their details online as detailed above
- Uncashed payments will be easier to account for and process
- Staff in the benefits team will be able to view the status of a payment from within the benefits system

3.5 Other Issues

The council already uses the Capita Revenues and Benefits system and by choosing to use their online functionality the council will not incur the time, expense and risk that would be associated

with purchasing a third party solution which would need to be integrated with Capita. There are a number of other councils that use the Capita system and which are already using Capita self-service and online solutions.

The council would undertake publicity and marketing exercises to raise the awareness of the online solutions and encourage customer use and channel shift. Once customers have chosen to use the Revenues and Benefits self-service options it is anticipated that the council will be in a position to promote other online services and content.

3.6 Waiver to Contract Procedure Rules

A waiver to the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules is requested in respect of this procurement as Capita are the only supplier who are able to supply all the modules that are being procured. Some individual modules, such as an online housing benefit claim form may be purchased from a third party supplier, but no suppliers other than Capita supply all the modules that are required. Furthermore, without implementing the Capita creditors module the council will be unable to use other functionality, such as the landlord portal.

The purchase price of the modules from Capita has been reduced significantly due to a number of products being purchased simultaneously. Purchasing all the modules from Capita will enable the Council to implement the new functionality and the Council’s Business Transformation agenda as quickly as possible and without the need to integrate the new third party modules with the Capita Revenues and Benefits system, which will remain in use.

4. WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these. The risk assessment which has been carried out forms part of the background papers to the report.

<p>FINANCIAL</p>	<p>The Year 1 cost of implementation of all products is £89,500, with annual software maintenance costs of £7,500 in subsequent years. Savings of £101,500 on the Capita purchase price have been achieved by purchasing a number of modules together from Capita, as opposed to purchasing these modules separately.</p> <p>The cost of implementation will cost £89,500 and funded from the ICT Reserve to facilitate implementation of the council’s ‘We’re Going Digital’ vision of Business Transformation.</p> <p>Indicative savings from year 2 onwards are £70,000 per year although additional software maintenance charges of £7,500 will be incurred, resulting in a net saving of £62,500 per year from year 2.</p> <p>It may be expected that channel shift could be below 20% in the first year which may reduce the level of savings initially achieved, but that channel shift could be above 20% at the end of the five year period, in which case the level of savings achieved would increase.</p>
-------------------------	---

LEGAL	<p>Assurance can be given that customers will be required to answer a number of questions to authenticate and gain access to their online account.</p> <p>In terms of the grant of a waiver to Contract Procedure rules (CPR) to enable the acquiring of the Capita modules it is considered that exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated here as required by paragraph 44 of those rules.</p> <p>The relevant paragraph states: “the nature of the market for the works to be carried out on the goods or services to be provided has been investigated and is demonstrated to be such that a departure from the rules is justified.”</p> <p>In this context attention is drawn to the contents of para 3.6 of this report. In particular it should be pointed out that Capita are the only supplier who are able to supply all of the modules that are being procured – they are the only company that can provide the complete package of what we need. It also should be borne in mind that the purchase price of the modules has been reduced significantly due to a number of the products being purchased simultaneously.</p>
--------------	--

RISK	There are a number of separate modules to be implemented which will require effective project management with the co-operation of a number of services within the council.
-------------	--

OTHER (see below)	
--------------------------	--

<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>
<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None