

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview & Scrutiny – June 2022

Digital Platform

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

A briefing on this project has been requested by the Committee, as part of its monitoring role and to give members more information about this modernisation initiative. The digital platform project is a key foundation to improve customer access to services, support channel shift, making efficiency savings through improved processes and helping to reduce and manage demand.

2. Project Background:

As part of the Council's wider modernisation agenda, a review of existing business applications was undertaken and there was an opportunity to rationalise systems through the identification and implementation of a digital platform. The Council did not have an incumbent Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform. The front line customer facing team rely on access to a number of back office solutions and bespoke developed applications. There is no single customer record, and this leads to a lack of data integrity and significant duplication. This situation also leads to inefficient customer handling. The experience received by the customer is inconsistent, as their first point of contact may not necessarily be the corporate customer services function.

It is recognised that the Council needs the right technology to make it easy for our businesses and customers to transact with us and for our people to have access to the right tools and technology. It is acknowledged that a CRM type digital solution is required to modernise and significantly improve the customer experience through:

- Drive increased channel shift through more online services
- Improve user experience (UX) for residents and staff
- Increase first contact resolution
- Improve customer data
- Increase process automation to reduce back office administration
- Efficient work item management
- Achieve cash and non-cash savings through application rationalisation

This project includes in its remit six key objectives:

1. Preventing and managing demand
2. The application of the right technology to make it easy for our businesses and customers to transact with us and for our people to have access to the right tools and technology

3. Rationalisation of systems with the potential for cashable savings
4. Technology alignment, internal and external where appropriate
5. Maximise ROI on existing platforms; unlock unused functionality
6. Ensuring customers can continue to contact the Council in ways that suit them e.g. face to face, telephone, email, web/online and social media

This investment in new technology will be essential to deliver these objectives, enabling us to change the way that we work and deliver our services. Technology will reduce or eliminate manual interventions and enable the genuine integration of processes as well as increasing customer's ability to self-serve with the Council 24/7.

Developing a 'single view of the customer' is crucial to the development of multi-skilled advisors who are able to deal with a broad range of enquiries at first point of contact, but also to enable genuine self-service and the incentive for customers to shift channel.

It will enable us to introduce customer friendly processes where the customer only has to tell us once about key events, e.g. a house move, and we will be able to update multiple service areas. The implementation of a digital platform will allow the Council to deliver services to its customers; residents, businesses and partners from a single integrated platform.

The 'As Is' business process mapping undertaken in 2019 has identified processes and procedures that have numerous unnecessary steps and administration in them that could be significantly reduced through greater automation, which would realise cash and non-cash savings e.g.:



The concept of the platform approach is to provide common core capabilities that can in future be built on, to either replace or provide new online digital services. Deploying a single digital platform to deliver all services in a unified system allows for a more coherent, planned approach. It presents the opportunity to significantly improve the customer experience while reducing the total cost of ownership to the organisation through system consolidation, replacement and decommissioning.

3. 2021 Procurement:

In partnership with Stroud District Council who were also looking to procure a digital platform, we jointly undertook a procurement exercise in 2021 with the support of a specialist independent consultant. Our consultant worked with Council officers and the Council's Head of ICT to define our specification of our system requirements.

The specification considered six key functional components:

1. General requirements; *infrastructure, compliancy, maintenance, security*
2. CRM Features; *Computer Telephony integration, single customer record, social media, communication, dashboards*
3. Workflow; *scripting, timescales, process, caseload management*
4. Mobile Working/Self-service forms; *customer portal, device friendly, in field updates, slot booking*
5. Reporting; *performance management, FOI, bespoke queries*
6. Integration; *Civica (payments, housing, revenues), IDOX (regulatory services, elections), GIS, AI/Chatbots, RPA, open APIs*

Our main requirement is to have platform that is Low-code - 'A Low-code development platform (LCDP) is software that provides a development environment used to create application software through graphical user interfaces and configuration instead of traditional hand-coded computer programming.' Source: Wikipedia

These intuitive tools allow users with no formal knowledge of coding or software development to create applications for many purposes like mobile/business apps, robotic automated processes, and solutions based on the application of artificial intelligence. These platforms have become increasingly popular as a fast and easy alternative to traditional software development.

The outcome from the procurement exercise was that CBC and SDC selected Netcall as our preferred supplier and we have both entered into contracts with them.

<https://www.netcall.com/platform/low-code/>. Netcall is widely used across the public sector with 1 in 4 councils using their products.

7. How benefits realisation will be assessed:

Benefits realisation will be tracked through several metrics:

- User experience
- Channel shift and increased in self-service transactions
- Cash savings through decommission existing systems
- Non-cash savings
- Increased automation of processes and procedures

We plan to report back to O&S with twelve months with progress achieved against our benefit realisation metrics.

8. Member Involvement:

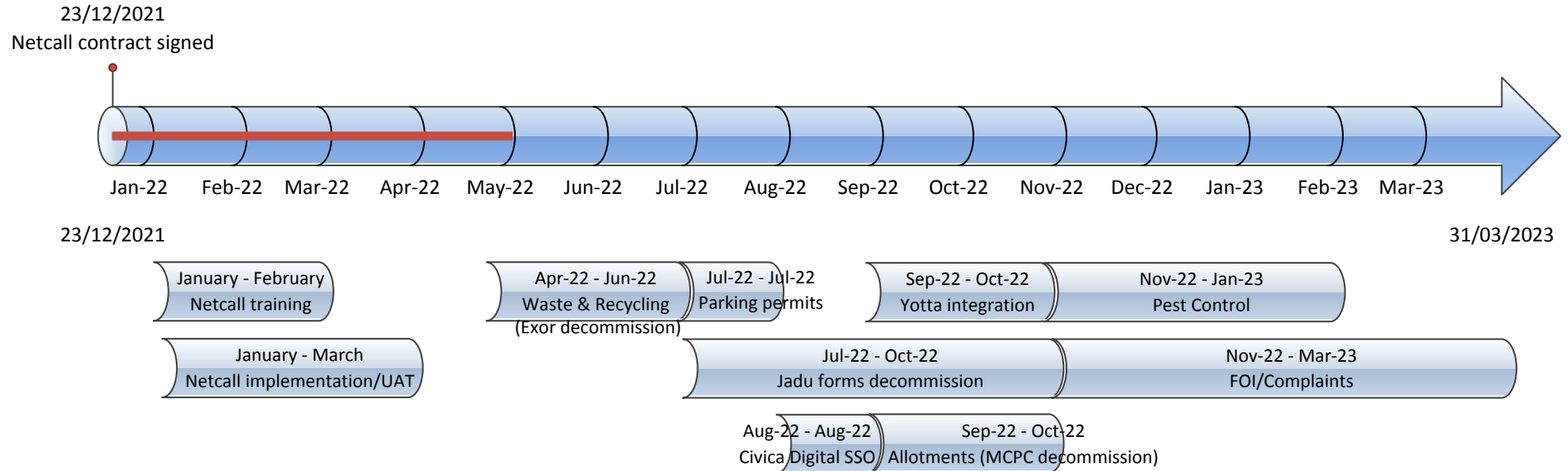
The Cabinet Member for Customer & Regulatory Services is keen that members have input into the development and rollout of the digital platform and this will be considered as part of the Member ICT working group.

9. Resident Involvement:

We are keen to explore ways residents can be used to help the development and testing of new forms and online tools through user testing. This helps ensure that online tools are intuitive for the end user.

10. Year 1 Roadmap:

Year 1 is focused on system set up, decommissioning of EXOR (waste and recycling system), integration into UBICO's new in cab technology system, replace incumbent online forms through the decommissioning of JADU and start to move existing services to the platform such as pest control, FOI, complaints, parking permits etc.



Appendix 1 - provides a more detailed breakdown

