

Warwick District Council

ICT Steering Group – Self-serve Council Tax forms (OPENChannel)



Digital services so good that people prefer to use them



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ICT Steering Group – Business Case Template

Revision History

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1 Business Problem Analysis

This section seeks to describe the issue to be addressed by the project. It consists of two parts, Business Problem and Business Opportunity. When completing this section is advisable to only complete one section depending on whether you are trying to resolve an existing problem or are looking at a new opportunity. For example, a new income generation scheme would be a business opportunity rather than a business problem.

1.1 Business Problem

Outline the business opportunity which has been identified, including:

Administering and collecting council tax is a very high volume transaction based operation. Our customers interact with us via a number of channels – postal mail, email, website, telephone and personal visit. Whilst a good number of these interactions may only be enquiry based or require simple action and can be resolved at first point of contact, be it through phone call, at a one stop shop or through interrogation of the website, the larger majority of interactions will ultimately present themselves as work items to be actioned by the back office.

For the past number of years the number of these transactions has been steadily increasing resulting in a considerable strain upon the ability of the section to contain backlogs which have ranged from 3 weeks at best to at worst 10 weeks. The reasons for the backlog and increased workload are myriad and were detailed in the Employment Committee report of the 27th January 2015 but briefly they are as follows;

- Increasing number of properties which in turn leads to increased number of bills, queries and recovery action
- Large increase in number of rental properties leading to greater numbers moving around the area at a greater frequency
- Booming student population adds to administration difficulties in annual reviews and eligibility for exemptions
- Local council tax reduction scheme changes has meant there have been more people paying Council tax for the first time leading to increased recovery activity
- In 2009 there were 14 full time employees administering Council Tax which had reduced to 11 in 2014.

In the past 9 months we have seen a staggering increase of 30% in the amount of work coming through the various channels.

2 Preferred Solution

This section provides details of the Service Area's preferred solution, its benefits, costs, feasibility, risks and issues.

2.1 Implement Civica OPENChannel self-service module

2.1.1 Description

Provide a summarised description of the preferred solution. This will include the general approach to be taken and a summary of the core elements of the solution (e.g. people, process, organisation, technology).

2.1.2 Benefits, Goals and Measurement Criteria

Describe the tangible and intangible benefits to the Service Area upon implementation of the solution. One of the obvious benefits described will be that the business problem / opportunity outlined above will be addressed.

NB: The benefits listed below are examples only and the boxes should be modified to describe the project's actual benefits. All quantifiable benefits listed must be supported by current performance figures.

3. Preferred Solution

To purchase from Civica a suite of on-line fully automated council tax forms for OpenRevenues (OPENChannel) which integrate into the Revenues and Benefits system to provide, where appropriate, real time updates of customers' accounts. The initial scope would be to purchase three forms for moving property (1. Moving into the District, 2. Move out of the District, 3. Move within the District) and also a single person application form.

Whilst we have good use of on-line web forms none of them are fully integrated into the back office system, each completed web form is presented to the officer as a workflow document via the Document Management system – the officer then needs to re-key the data to make changes to accounts.

The purpose of Civica's e-forms is to enable citizen self-service but more importantly to automate the update from the resultant form submission into the back office and save resource. Upon submission of the form OPENRevenues accepts the data, and immediately performs the account/s update/s with no manual intervention. This level of automation is only possible where mechanisms are in place to safeguard the integrity of the data. The module therefore has a range of high level system defined validation plus individual process validation parameters that can be set as appropriate.

Implementation of OPENChannel would help achieve the following objectives;

- channel shift to the cheapest channels,
- increase self service and
- implement fully integrated process into the back office system.

Complete the following table:

Category	Benefit	Value
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces the need to increase staffing resource to meet increased workloads in medium term• If take up of the service is extensive it could ultimately reduce manual processing resource• Achieves channel shift to cheapest channel	

Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully integrated process into the back office system Enhanced quality of service 	
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved customer satisfaction through self-service and fulfilment Reduces delays for customers using the functionality which in turn will help prevent backlogs and delays for those using more traditional channels 	
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased staff satisfaction Not continually working under backlog situation 	

NB: The benefits listed above are examples only and the boxes should be modified to describe the projects actual benefits. All quantifiable benefits listed must be supported by current performance figures.

2.1.3 Digital Benefits

Description	Value
How many citizens will the project benefit? <i>Potentially everybody that has a liability for Council tax although they would have to choose to use this channel ahead of other more traditional methods of interaction and have access to the internet.</i>	61,000
How many transactions does the business process deal with? <i>Generally accepted that the number of transactions averages out to 1 per Council tax property therefore 61,000.</i>	61,000
What is the average current duration of the process from service request to completion? <i>The service has suffered with backlogs for 2-3 years therefore currently most service requests can take anything from 3-10 weeks however some service requests can be actioned immediately if using the telephone or frontline services</i>	

2.1.4 Costs and Funding Plan

Capital Costs	Amount
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial software purchase 	36,050
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HB LIAB auto processing & Webspeed licences 	7,150
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New hardware 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary additional resources(Training and project management 	5,180
Total	£48,380
Revenue Costs	Amount
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Software licence costs 	1,430
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support costs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent additional resources to maintain/operate system/process 	7,210
Total	8,640

For both the capital and revenue amounts identified above, please indicate how the funding will be made available.

Funding Source	Amount	Notes
New Digital Agenda Fund subject to approval from Exec		

2.1.5 Risks

Summarise the most apparent risks associated with the adoption of this solution.

Description	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Mitigating Actions
Implementation is a lengthy process and to be a success and part solution to the problem highlighted we are reliant on customers using this channel to contact us.	3	3	Will require extensive communications campaign to encourage customers to use the functionality. Customer service team have a key role in directing customers down this route
Ongoing maintenance costs of £10K will take time to be recovered if at all.	3	3	As above

To complete this section thoroughly, it may be necessary to undertake a formal Risk Assessment. To reduce the likelihood and impact of each risk occurring, clear 'mitigating actions' should be defined.

2.1.6 Issues

Summarise the highest priority issues associated with the adoption of this solution

No.	Issue - Description
1.	Lengthy resource intensive implementation from Systems Team may not release benefits of project
2.	Buy in of staff given it could be seen as a threat to their role

2.1.7 Assumptions

List the major assumptions associated with the adoption of this option.

No.	Assumption - Description
1.	That Customers will use the functionality and reduce the back office transactions
2.	Minimal ICT resource required as Systems team will be largely responsible for implementation

3 Implementation Approach

This section not only requires the service area to understand its business objectives, but to clearly understand the scope of the activity. In doing so, consideration should be given to the 'digital design principles'. Special consideration should be given to whether all the customer transactions for a specific process should be in scope. For example, if a process deals with 10,000 transactions annually, of which 8,000 are identified as easy to deal with, then perhaps this is sufficient for the scope of the project.

3.1 Outline Project Scope

- Implementation of suite of front end e-form templates
- Extensive testing and phased implementation of the various processes enabled from the e-forms
- Training out to staff to include frontline as they will be important in enabling channel shift
- Monitoring and reporting of success of the various processes in terms of not requiring back office intervention

3.2 Service Area Resources

Please use this section to describe how the service area is going to produce the necessary capacity to deliver the project. Specific consideration should be given to:

- Given the size of the project Civica will provide project management and training although there will be project management from the WDC side and extensive testing from the Systems team (David Leech, Steve Marshall, Roland Hopkins & Jo Wilday).
- It is expected that customer service team (Caroline Walton) will have involvement given their role in enabling channel shift through contact with the customers.
- Training will be required for all Frontline and Revenues staff.

3.3 ICT Services Resources

This section should be used to describe the resource to be provided by ICT Services. To do so, the service area sponsor will need to meet with the ICT Services Applications Support Manager to agree the project scope and likely method of approach.

- Revenues have a capable and effective systems team who will be prominent in the implementation and it is envisaged that ICT involvement will be relatively minimal especially during testing phase.