

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Customer and Digital) (Introduced by Executive Member (Resources))	Executive Cabinet	Thursday, 13 th July, 2023

Content Management System

Is this report confidential?	Partly (Appendix 1, 2 and 3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
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Is this decision key?	Yes
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards
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Purpose of the Report

- To agree the future for Chorley Council's Content Management System (CMS).

Recommendations to Executive Cabinet

- Executive Cabinet to agree:
 - A direct award to GOSS through a compliant procurement framework, only if favourable commercial terms can be agreed including transparency on future costs for a period of up to 5 years from July 2024, for a joint GOSS iCM platform with South Ribble Council.
 - In the absence of the above i.e., not obtaining favourable commercial terms directly with GOSS, the council will undertake a full market procurement exercise which will include open-source software currently being explored.
 - To approve the delegation of the outcome and final sign off for either recommendation (a) or (b) to the Leader of the Council and Executive Member (Resources).

Reasons for recommendations

- To ensure that the council maintains and develops its online presence and delivery of online services to residents.

Other options considered and rejected

- Other options to be considered are detailed within the report.

Corporate priorities

5. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background to the report

6. GOSS is the CMS system that is used to manage and modify content on several council owned websites. It is a low code solution that reduces the requirement for technical knowledge to make changes to the website content.
7. The following council owned websites are currently managed using GOSS:
 - a. Chorley Council website – chorley.gov.uk
 - b. Chorley Extra Care – chorleyextracare.com, tatton-gardens.com, primrose-gardens.com
 - c. Astley Park – astleypark.co.uk – Currently in build to allow Wordpress to be decommissioned
 - d. Check Out Chorley – checkoutchorley.com - Currently in build to allow Wordpress to be decommissioned.
8. The foundations of the Shared Service Customer and Digital Strategy are now in place.
 - a. There is an established structure in Customer Services
 - b. the Customer Access Charter has been agreed and implementation is underway
 - c. the Enghouse telephone system has been implemented.
9. These changes have laid the foundations for future enhancements to the customer experience. However, a large part of this will be to invest and improve council's online presence. Changes outlined, will enable more services to be accessible online, improve the responsiveness of service delivery, provide better customer interface through an integrated eforms package and view of customer contact through a new customer relationship management system, and simplify the logging in process for online users.
10. These enhancements will be included in any future agreement with GOSS or other supplier.
11. Irrespective of the technology agreed, online capability and AI are set to make the biggest changes to the customer experience and efficiencies over the coming years. This presents significant opportunity and consequently this is a major project for 2023/24 and beyond.

Commercial information

12. The current contract with GOSS is a shared contract with South Ribble Council, using separate instances to manage each councils' different websites.

13. Discussions with GOSS have highlighted that the council should expect a significant cost increase upon contract renewal in July 2023.
14. A one year contract extension until July 2024 with GOSS has been agreed via Executive Member Decision to allow the council to quickly move to the next stages of development, and to enable time to fully evaluate the market without the added pressure of services terminating when the existing contract ends in July 2023.
15. The cost of GOSS in the current contract from July 2020 –July 2023 is listed in Appendix One. Within G-Cloud 13, GOSS have standardised pricing which means there are no like for like product modules to compare against for some pricing lines.
16. GOSS have suggested that more attractive pricing would be available if the councils had a shared iCM administrator and production environment. The cost of both a shared platform for 2, 4 and 5 years and separate platforms for 2 and 4 years are available in Appendix Two.
17. A shared platform will allow websites to remain independent with their separate individual branding and design. The iCM administrator platform that officers use to manage and edit the websites would become a shared platform.
18. The professional pricing tier recommended in the new quote includes the CMS, GOSS Forms, and MyAccount: Self Service and Assisted-Service.

GOSS considerations

19. The next steps of the GOSS implementation will commit the council to long term increases in costs. Not only are these expected to rise further, but the technology will then become fully established within the council and with customers. It will then be extremely difficult to change direction and migrate to alternative technologies when this happens. This strategy, the reliance on established technologies, is now synonymous with most software suppliers operating in the public sector and more so since COVID19.
20. Further transparency is required from GOSS to future costs and developments that will arise mid contract which they hold a monopoly on especially as it is not always possible to future proof against all developments from the onset.
21. It is recommended that a direct award to GOSS through a compliant procurement framework, only if favourable terms can be agreed. An example of favourable terms is available in Appendix Three.

Alternative options

22. Some market comparison of alternative CMS systems has been undertaken. The top 5 CMS systems used by local authorities and the number of authorities using those systems is indicated in the table below:

CRM System Provider	Number of local authorities using	Open Source	CRM included	Online forms included
Jadu	62	No	Yes	Yes
Drupal	60	Yes	No	Yes

Umbraco	58	Yes	No	Yes
GOSS iCM	32	No	Yes	Yes
Wordpress	14	Yes	No	Yes

23. Three of the top five council CMS systems are based on open-source software. This appears to be a local authority response to invest in alternative systems to proprietary ones. The open-source platform is based on sharing developments and on councils contributing collectively to future developments to try and manage costs.
24. Using an open source CMS provider would require a separate procurement of a CRM system.
25. The council's strategy is to work where possible with out of the box solutions to reduce the reliance of managing systems in house.
26. Moving the websites to a new provider would incur significant officer resource and reliance from ICT.
27. However, given the considerable increase in costs from the incumbent supplier, should favourable commercial terms not be agreed, the council will seek to explore the market for a new CMS preferably one design on the merits of being open source.

Climate Change and Air Quality

28. The work noted in this report has an overall positive impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.
29. The provision of improved digital services enables residents to access services online reducing the impact on the environment.

Equality and diversity

30. A full impact assessment would be completed at the necessary stage once the future CMS system provider has been identified.

Risk

31. There are several risks relating to this decision:
 - a. Potential for annual increases in costs from out of the box suppliers
 - b. Full costs for out of the box suppliers are not transparent
 - c. Large administrative overhead to move to a new supplier
 - d. Reliance of in-house resource if moving to an open source supplier.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

32. There is no current budget provision for any increase in costs. Should the additional costs be incurred, this would be a pressure to be addressed in 2024/25 budget setting. Based upon current costs this would be a to be £30k-40k increase.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

33. The council needs to be mindful of its best value duties. Recognising that there is a likely cost increase in 12 months on any new contract proposal enables an informed decision on the correct strategy for this contract.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report

Appendices

Appendix One – Current contract pricing from July 2020 –July 2023

Appendix Two - The costs of both a shared platform and separate platforms for 2, 4 and 5 years

Appendix Three - An example of favourable terms with GOSS

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This decision will come into force and may be implemented five working days after its publication date, subject to being called in in accordance with the Council's Constitution.