

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

6 NOVEMBER 2013

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES

PROCUREMENT & IMPLEMENTATION OF MODERN.GOV

1. Purpose of Report.

The purpose of this report is to advise the Democratic Services Committee of the procurement and implementation of the Modern.Gov system during the 2013/14 financial year.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

The implementation of the Modern.gov system will enhance the ability to deliver on all corporate priorities.

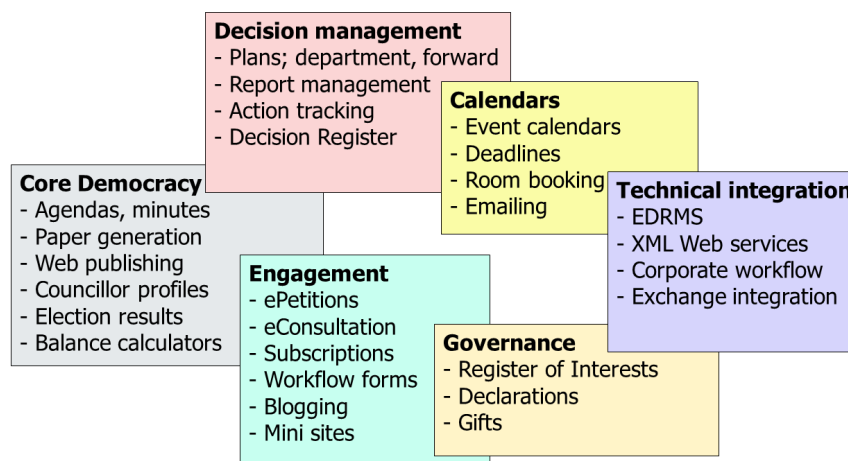
3. Background.

- 3.1 The Democratic Services Team's functions include the co-ordination for the approval, production and distribution of committee reports and meeting documents, delegated powers, production and publication of webpages, decision records and monitoring reports, all of which provide the legal governance arrangements of the Authority. These services are carried out using a variety of software platforms and are very labour intensive with little or no automation to assist in the efficient and effective completion of tasks. Additional work has to be undertaken to format data between software systems which increases the possibility of duplication and errors occurring.
- 3.2 A simple example of the needless complication of tasks caused by a lack of modern systems is the Cabinet Decision Record. At Cabinet meetings the minutes and resolutions are recorded by hand and then as minutes in Microsoft(MS) Word format. These resolutions are transferred into a separate decision record document to be circulated by email. The decisions are then transferred into an excel spreadsheet as the master record of decisions. At regular intervals these decision records are exported back into MS word and collated into a table to be circulated to the directorates and departments for updating. Completed returns (up to 10 differing versions) are collated into a single document and formatted ready for inclusion in a report to Cabinet describing the progress of the Cabinet decisions that have been taken.
- 3.3 It was determined that a software package was required that would support the full range of service provision not only for Democratic Services but for the whole Authority. It was anticipated that the system would provide a central database which would support a wide range of functions including Forward Plans, Members information, decisions monitoring and records (including minutes), call-ins and reports that could be accessed by users.

- 3.4 The proposal and business case for the procurement of a committee administration system was presented to and subsequently approved by the Corporate Management Board.
- 3.5 Market research was undertaken with several companies which provided committee administration software. One of the requirements of such a system would be for the provision of a dual website which would mirror the format and functionality of the English webpages and automatically translate key words and phrases into the Welsh language.
- 3.6 It was identified that there was:
- A single company that was working with another Welsh local authority to develop Welsh translation functionality and,
 - one other company that has implemented a system which was operational in a number of Welsh organisations that had a proven Welsh language module.
- 3.7 With the requirement to procure and implement a suitable system within the 2013/4 financial year a report was submitted to Cabinet on 17 September 2013 to approve a waiver of the Contract Procedure Rules from obtaining tenders for the provision of a Committee Administration System.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 There are several types of system available but the Modern.gov is used by a over of 165 councils and organisations in England and Wales including:
- Anglesey County Council
 - Conwy County Borough Council
 - Denbighshire County Council
 - Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
 - National Assembly for Wales
 - Pembrokeshire County Council
 - City and County of Swansea
- 4.2 The facilities offered by Modern.gov cover the full spectrum of democratic activities and include:



4.2.1 Agenda Minutes and Reports

The system has an integrated and configurable workflow feature that would assist in the report approval process by automatically notifying each person when they need to work (write, review sign-off etc.) on reports. Interdepartmental working is achieved by providing different departments of the authority access to modern.gov and to the workflow system which allows users to “construct” sequences of actions on different people or bodies to deliver a series of outcomes towards an end goal (e.g. making a decision). For example, a typical decision may consist of the following tasks or actions:

- Write report
- Review report
- Sign-off report
- Decision at meeting
- Implement decision

4.2.2 Modern.gov can be used to manage the processes and can prompt the various assigned people when they can start their task (i.e. report review cannot start until report writing is complete) and allows the assigned person to access the item in question (e.g. the draft report) and record their progress.

4.2.3 All approved reports for any meeting can be automatically compiled into an agenda. The reports and minutes would automatically be reformatted into a single document with consecutive page numbering and be sent to a printer, to a pre-determined email distribution list as well as being published to the web and all at the press of a button. The system integrates with the Outlook calendar with meeting dates and links appearing in attendees Outlook calendars automatically.

4.2.4 Plans and Programs

Modern.gov has a sophisticated suite of planning tools that not only meet the requirements of the Forward Work Program but also offer considerable assistance in managing the business plans of any committee, department or directorate. There are also tools to track and monitor plans and programs.

4.2.5 Members

The software would include a comprehensive member's database that would enhance the current level of information provided to the intranet/internet. It would also provide a level of automation that would significantly reduce the time currently taken to collate, format, re-format and provide this information. For example if an elected member changed their address the system would update all web pages, contact details, address labels and any other use if this data recorded on the system. Currently this would require a significant number of separate and similar documents and webpages to be updated across the whole of the Democratic and Corporate areas.

4.3 Additional Facilities

The modern.gov system also enhances our current services with the following facilities which can be used at our discretion:

4.3.1 Subscribe to updates

Members of the public, officers and members are able to subscribe to a list of topics, committees and wards that they are interested in. Overnight modern.gov compares all of the subscribers interests with the new items published that day and

sends each subscriber a personalised email with details of the items they may be interested in.

4.3.2 Online Consultations

Modern.gov enables online questionnaires to be created very quickly via a web browser. These can then be published on the websites (associated with a plan item if required), allowing the public to express their views on the matter. All items submitted by the public are held in the modern.gov database, so that they can be reviewed and analysed. This facility could also be adapted to enable the public to suggest topics for scrutiny consideration which is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

4.3.3 Online Petitions

The system provides highly configurable solution which allows the public, officers and members to submit an ePetition which is published to the website after an officer approval process. The petition can then be signed by website visitors and the current results displayed. Paper petition results can be included in e-Petitions or displayed on their own.

4.3.4 Members

The facilities for members and the authority could be enhanced with information held within the database including, Election results, Call-in history, "find my Councillor" by postcode, and "My own webpage" for councillors

4.4 Stellent Replacement

4.4.1 The Democratic Services Team currently uses the Stellent content management system which is being replaced by Umbraco. The Democratic Services team has ownership of over 40,000 documents in the stellent system which need to be transferred into a new system. The Modern.gov database is planned to be used to hold the archived electronic reports and provide an appropriate search facility to replace the existing Stellent system. It would also enable the single use of the Modern.gov web facility rather than using a variety of software to upload documents to the intranet/internet and member zone.

4.5 Support required from Departments and Directorates

4.5.1 The Modern.gov system should be considered a corporate asset as indicated by the authority wide license. Directorates would be required to identify those members of staff that would require access to the system to; support the report writing and approval process, update decision records, undertake delegated powers, update work programs and the various elements of functionality that were available.

4.5.2 Once individuals had been identified and the appropriate level of access was assigned to those designated staff they would be able to utilise the relevant functionality provided by the system.

4.5.3 Many of the documents such as the report templates will require amendment to include fields recognised by Modern.gov. The overall look can remain the same and mirror the corporate styles but the correct document templates must be used for the system to work effectively.

4.5.4 The Legal & Regulatory Department would provide the ownership and administration of the system respectively. Although initial training would be delivered by Modern.Gov subsequent training would be delivered by the Democratic Services team.

4.6 Timescales for implementation

4.6.1 To achieve the procurement and introduction of the Modern.gov system during this financial year, it is anticipated that the scheduled for implementation will be as follows:

Oct 13	-	preparation for procurement of the system
Nov - Dec 13	-	Technical installation and configuration (up to 8 weeks)
Jan 14	-	Training and implementation of core democratic functionality
Feb – Mar	-	Development, configuration and training of corporate functionality
31 Mar 14	-	Committee Administration operational

4.6.2 It is planned to maximise the use of the Modern.gov system to ensure that all appropriate functionality is utilised in order to provide maximum value for money. The wider functionality of the Modern.gov system will be developed in the 2014/15 financial year.

4.6.3 The Modern.gov functionality is continually being upgraded and all upgrades will be provided at no extra cost.

5. **Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.**

5.1 There is no intention to change the Policy Framework and procedure rules. However during the configuration and installation of the system a process review will be undertaken to ensure that the Modern.gov processes are as effective as possible which may subsequently impact the procedure rules.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 The procurement of the Modern.gov system which incorporates a Welsh language facility will assist in the use and promotion of the Welsh language. The Welsh language is a key part of the Council's equality agenda, and the Council is keen to continue to demonstrate its commitment to sustaining and fostering the Welsh language within the County Borough.

7. **Financial Implications.**

7.1 It has been planned that a currently vacant post of Democratic Services Officer – Committees will fund the implementation of the Modern.gov system. This has already been identified within the Medium Term Financial Planning process. The procurement, implementation and maintenance of the Modern.gov system will be met from the existing Legal & Regulatory Services budgets

8. **Recommendation.**

8.1 That Democratic Services Committee notes the plans for the procurement and implementation of the modern.gov committee administration system

P A Jolley
ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES
28 October 2013

Contact Officer: G P Jones
Head of Democratic Services

Telephone: (01656) 643385

E-mail: Gary.Jones@Bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Level 2 Civic Offices Angel Street Bridgend

Background documents: None