



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resource Committee
Subject:	A Corporate IT Middleware Solution
Date:	19 February 2010
Reporting Officer:	Julie Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Head of ISB, extn 4200

Relevant Background Information

ISB is currently working with front line council services in order to publish electronic forms on the council website. The first batch of forms will be completed in early 2010 allowing electronic applications and payments for licences as required by European legislation. When this work is completed, other online services will be targeted.

Information entered by citizens on line is currently emailed to business support staff in departments who then key the information from the form into the supporting information system. In order to make this process more efficient, the information entered onto the electronic form could instead be automatically fed into the computer system.

The technology that enables this in a cost effective manner is called middleware and is special software that enables the transmission of information between computer systems and electronic forms.

Key Issues

It is important that the middleware we purchase can work with all of the council's systems currently in use and also those procured in the future without the requirement for any further system enhancement and associated spend on integration.

It must also be a scalable solution so that there is no unreasonable limit on the amount of on-line transactions supported by the middleware.

The nature of the middleware should be that knowledge and skills pertaining to its functionality are transferable to Council staff so that the product can be used in any future projects without having to draw upon resources or skills from the supplier.

Resource Implications

<u>Financial</u>

Estimates indicate that middleware can cost around £50,000 for the initial purchase and annual support costs of £10,000. There is provision in the capital budget for the initial purchase and ISB have budgeted for the annual support costs out of revenue. This project would therefore cost £90,000 over 5 years. This investment will generate savings in reducing the cost to the council arising from interactions with the public and will therefore lead to more efficient administration of relevant council services.
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<u>Human Resources</u>

It is important that those services requiring electronic forms work closely with ISB and Corporate Communications in order to design the form in the correct way and also to ensure that efficient processes are put in place to take advantage of electronic transactions.

Recommendations

Committee is asked:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to approve that ISB tenders for the supply of a cost effective corporate middleware solution;• that subject to costs remaining within the limits outlined, authority be delegated to award the contract; and• that savings are captured as part of the planned council efficiency programme. |
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Key to Abbreviations

ISB Information Services Belfast

Documents Attached

n/a
