
KETTERING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REVENUES AND BENEFITS PROCESSING SOFTWARE
SOFT MARKET TEST EXERCISE

Terms of Reference and Instructions for Participants

Instructions

Please read the document and if you feel that your organisation is able to contribute to this Soft Market Testing exercise please complete the questionnaire attached to the end of this document and return it via email to RobertThompson@kettering.gov.uk by 14:00 on 19th December 2016.

Please note that this is not a call for competition.

The following are pertinent to this soft market testing:

- An understanding of what Kettering Borough Council (the “Council”) is aiming to deliver;
- An ability to innovate and add value;
- Whether the market has experience of being involved in and delivering similar projects; and
- The overall value added in helping to scope the project.

For the avoidance of doubt, this notice is for the purpose of conducting a soft market testing exercise, and will not formally begin the procurement or constitute any commitment by the Council to undertake any procurement exercise.

Soft Market Testing (SMT)

The Council is at an early stage in the development of its proposals but prior to formulating any formal procurement opportunity, seeks input from the market as to what might be the most potentially attractive way of packaging and scoping a future procurement opportunity.

This exercise will also provide an opportunity for the Council to obtain insight into how potential providers might approach the delivery of the service in question. It also gives useful early insight into the likely level of interest in a proposed project from that market.

Participants and any potential future bidders will not be prejudiced by any response or failure to respond to the soft market testing or attend the face-to-face interviews. Participants must also note that a response to this SMT does not guarantee an invitation to participate in this or any future procurement that the Council may conduct, nor that the Council will procure any such supply and services or accept any proposals offered.

The Council has developed a questionnaire (attached at the end of this document) that they would like interested parties to complete. The Participants may then be invited to meet with the project team to discuss in more detail the options on any responses the Council feel need further clarification.

As stated above the outcome of the SMT exercise will inform an options appraisal with recommendations.

Further detailed reports will be prepared as appropriate in accordance with the Council's tendering and approval procedures, and in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Confidentiality and Freedom of Information

The Council do ask that if Participants in the SMT exercise are giving the Council confidential information they sign our Non-Disclosure Agreement (the "NDA").

The purpose of the NDA is to protect both the Council and your confidential information. This is available on request if required.

Please be aware that we are subject to the disclosure requirements under the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) and that potentially any information we hold is liable to disclosure under that Act. For this reason, we would strongly advise that any information you consider to be confidential is labelled as such. In the event that a request is subsequently made for disclosure under the FoIA that request will be dealt with in accordance with the legislation and giving full regard to the NDA.

Background

The Council is looking for a full software solution to provide housing benefits administration, council tax administration, business rates administration and all associated modules

The Council is keen to explore all options and solutions available.

The Council at present are not fully aware of what currently exists in the market as options to them, even though the business requirements are known, the responses to this SMT will enable the Council to re-evaluate our current situation and determine the specification and implications for the relevant service provision.

The Council wants to ensure that they will be using the latest technology and would like advice on what is possible. The Council is open to any suggestions on how equipment could be best used.

Following discussions and input from the market the Council will consider its options with a view of procuring the most appropriate specification to suite its needs.

The current situation at the Council

The Council currently has a contract in place with Capita which is due to expire in March 2017. The existing system provides the following:

Housing benefit Administration - main features

- Assessment of all types of claims, including rent rebate and private tenants covering all rent schemes
- Assessment of Local Council tax Support
- Assessment of Discretionary Housing payments
- Awards of all the above types of benefits
- Calculation of overpayments
- Invoicing and recovery of overpayments
- Compliance with subsidy regulations and automated subsidy reporting
- Creation and logging of correspondence
- Facility to merge and combine correspondence between Council tax and benefits

Council Tax administration includes the following functionality

- Annual debit raise and daily billing
- Property maintenance
- Moves and occupational adjustments
- Award and cancellation of discounts, reductions and exemptions
- Cash posting
- Direct Debit
- Recovery and enforcement
- Management reporting tools

Business Rates administration includes:

- Annual debit raise and daily billing
- Property maintenance
- Valuation Office amendments and reconciliation
- Moves and occupational adjustments
- Award and cancellation of reliefs and exemptions
- Cash posting
- Direct Debit
- Recovery and enforcement
- Management reporting

Generic

- Online portals with customer authentication
- Online facilities for customers that allow customers to submit information pertinent to all above systems and interact with their accounts remotely
- Batch program scheduling and reporting
- Front end user reporting tools
- Integration with all government systems where appropriate
- Appropriate methods of automation
- Integration with Northgate DIPS system
- Integration between Council tax and Housing Benefit
- Compliance with all relevant legislation including but not limited to:

Housing Benefit Regulations 2006;
Housing Benefit (State Pension Credit) Regulations 2006;
Council Tax - England;
Universal Credit Regulations 2013;
Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2013;

Valuation Tribunal for England (Council Tax and Rating Appeals) (Procedure) Regulations 2009;
Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006;
Council Tax Benefit (State Pension Credit) Regulations 2006;
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations 2001;
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Consequential Provisions) Regulations 2006;
Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001;
Rent Officers (Housing Benefit Functions) Order 1997;
Rent Officers (Housing Benefit Functions) (Scotland) Order 1997;
Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc.) Regulations 2012;
Local government finance act 1988.

System Information

- System leased not owned
- Benefit Caseload 7500
- 28000 dormant accounts

- Total number of Council Tax properties = 43739, including 53 unbanded
- 14055 Single Person's Discounts
- 522 exemptions
- 135227 dormant accounts

- Total number of Business Rate accounts = 18097
- Total number of Business Rate properties = 5308
- Number of Business Rate accounts with a live link = 2598
- Number of properties taken out of rating = 2710

- 66 NNDR users

- 121 Housing Benefit and Council tax users

Questionnaire

The Council would like your organisation to consider the questions below and submit a written response via email to RobertThompson@kettering.gov.uk by 14:00 on 19th December 2016. Your responses should be brief and to the point. There is no maximum word count imposed, please do not use brochures or marketing material as an answer to any question.

System specifications

1.	What is the name of your product?
2.	Please detail the main functionality of your solution?
3.	How does your solution meet the objectives outlined within this brief?
4.	Please detail any additional core/ non-core functionality you think is pertinent to note, that your solution provides as standard?
5.	Does your solution have a library of existing elements? Please confirm those that come as standard to the product and those for which an additional cost is payable
6.	On what basis are legislation driven changes implemented? Are these included within the core price or chargeable extras?
7.	Please specify which methods for accessing your system are supported. To what extent is your product web based?
8.	Can you solution enable a single sign on?
9.	Please detail how your solution manages user access and how it provides a full audit trail of all transactions?
10.	Does your solution have the capability to integrate with any other applications?
11.	Do any other Local Authorities use your system currently? If yes, please list by name and detail for what the core functionality it is used (Please also confirm if you would be happy for us to contact them)?
12.	Please provide an example pricing matrix for the Cost & Licence model of your product?
13.	What other charges could be applied to the Council? For example will there be any additional charges for helpdesk support, development and design etc?
14.	Please detail the support offered and which elements are included in the core price and which are chargeable extras?
15.	What are the costs and options for hosting your system? (E.g. self-hosted by the LA, hosted by you as the supplier, hosted by a 3rd party)?
16.	What third party products or licenses are required to support any function within your solution?
17.	Please indicate the cost of converting from our current system to your system, based on the system information above and to include the retention of all historical records on the current system?
18.	Do you have any apps that have been developed and being used by other customers or are there any apps that are currently in development?
19.	Please provide detail of any planned developments to your solution over the next three years. This should include any planned changes to functionality and any technical changes which will impact on the ability of your system to manage any of the current features?
20.	What standards do you meet for security generally?
21.	Can emails/messages be sent through your solution?
22.	Can your solution generate alerts/reminders to delegates and managers, how do these work and are they automatically generated and configurable?
23.	Please explain and provide screen shots of the real time information that can be provided by your solution. Please explain how they are displayed e.g. dashboards, reports etc?
24.	Please describe the reporting capabilities of your system and any limitations?
25.	Please describe how your solution integrates with ATLAS/RTI/PDP and other DWP and DCLG funded initiatives?
26.	Please describe how your solution facilitates online access by customers and online claiming of benefits and discounts?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Full name, address and website:

Organisation name	Kettering Borough Council
Address	Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road
Town/city	Kettering, Northants
Postcode	NN15 7QX
Country	UK
Website	www.kettering.gov.uk

Main contact for correspondence about this questionnaire:

Name	Rob Thompson
Position	Benefits Manager
Telephone number	Direct Dial: 01536 532449
Mobile phone number	N/A
Fax number	Fax: 01536 410795
email address	RobertThompson@kettering.gov.uk