

OFFICER DECISION RECORD 2 FORM

This form should be used to record Officer Decisions which have a financial impact (income/expenditure) between £25k - £100k.

Decision Reference No: CR/419/11/20

BOX 1.

DIRECTORATE: Corporate Resources

DATE: 20/08/20

Contact Name: Dulcie Aulton

Tel. No.: 01302 552860

Subject Matter: Artificial Intelligence Over Telephony for Waste and Recycling processes

BOX 2

DECISION TAKEN:

To draw down the allocated budget from the Council Wide Systems capital funding that was previously approved for this development. The budget is now required to progress the project, the overall allocation is £80,000.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, we made the decision to only deliver critical services to enable us to respond to the increased need for help and support from residents across the Authority. This included the closure of the council's one-stop shop and the removal in telephone contact to report and apply for non-critical services, moving to the availability of online reporting only. This has resulted in a significant peak in customers accessing council services online.

As an Authority, we now have 73% of council services online and more customers are choosing to access services online. Currently customer contact is; Telephone 51%, Online 48% and Face-to-Face 1%. Telephone is still the preferred method of contact, when we experience peaks in customer contact via the telephone, we see an increase in customers accessing services online. However once the telephone contact returns to normal levels a core of customers return to the telephone as their preferred method of contact.

Customer-facing AI can populate answers to customer's FAQ's, respond to queries in real time escalating to Officers only where necessary. AI can report customer enquiries and help customers complete application forms, guiding them through the process. eliminating the time spent collecting and processing data. On average automation technology can increase wait times by 50% with accuracy levels of over 90%.

This technology is to initially use AI for Waste & Recycling telephone calls, as these are high volumes, resolved at first point of contact, are the less complex enquiries and have a small number of reasons for contact. It is also an area where AI based help is likely to be accepted by customers.

Two of the Council wide deliverables in the Digital Recovery and Renewal Strategy are - Implement the use of telephony artificial intelligence where relevant across the Council and implement more web chat including the use of artificial intelligence.

The savings attached to this project have been approved as part of the council wide savings and are to be realised in 20/21.

BOX 3

REASON FOR DECISION AND ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

Doncaster Council requires a solution that will deliver AI (Artificial Intelligence) across a number of different channels including Voice over Telephony; the council currently has an Amazon Alexa integration that was developed in-house.

Initially we will require Telephony using a specific service area, which is Waste and Recycling. However, depending on the success of this first integration the council expects the provided solution should be capable of both AI through Telephony and through the web using channels such as a Chatbot through Web Chat and other such channels. Also it should be capable of integrating other services areas.

The council has a website that allows residents to self-serve this can be found at <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/>, the initial service we wish to have delivered on AI Telephony is Waste and Recycling the processes and information for this service can be found on the website at <https://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/bins-recycling-waste>.

In line with the new Digital Recovery and Renewal Strategy the council has procured a supplier to develop AI over Telephony for Waste and Recycling. We need to draw down the budget to progress the project.

1. Do nothing and continue for enquiries to be dealt with by officers.
The council is already pursuing AI and has developed AI through Alexa for Waste Recycling. To not develop AI would not allow the council to achieve efficiencies and create additional capacity within service areas. It would impact of service levels and drive users to more expensive channels of communication such as telephoning and face to face. Therefore this option is discounted.
2. Develop Telephony AI within the council using existing technical development resources.
Digital Council has some skills available to develop AI and have already created an integration with Alexa. However the team does not have the resources available to carry out this piece of work. To go with this option could well mean prolonged development period. Therefore this option is discounted.
3. Procure an existing solution that the council can continue to develop.
To go out to the open market to procure a cost effective existing solution that is compatible with Doncaster Councils infrastructure and existing AI Alexa solution. The solution would also have to be able to integrate with the Councils website and existing service systems.

To procure a solution would bring in expertise and capacity the council does not currently have and would allow for a quicker return on investment creating a solution for residents that would meet their needs, providing 24/7 on demand access to some core services. This is the option that has been chosen.

**BOX 4
BACKGROUND PAPERS**

YES/NO (If YES please list and submit copies with this form)

NO


**BOX 5
INFORMATION NOT FOR PUBLICATION:**

Document can be published with signatures redacted.

Name: Sarah Corbett Signature: S. Corbett Date 24/8/2020

Signature of FOI Lead Officer for service area where ODR originates

**BOX 6
AUTHORISATION:**

Name: Julie Grant Signature:  Date: 25/08/20

Assistant Director of Customers, Digital & ICT

Does this decision require authorisation by the Chief Financial Officer or other Officer?

YES

If yes please authorise below:

Name: Robert Isaac **Signature:** FM – FP&C **Date:** 27/08/20

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer & Assistant Director – Finance

Consultation with Relevant Member(s)

Name: _____ **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Designation _____

(e.g. Mayor, Cabinet Member or Committee Chair/Vice-Chair)

Declaration of Interest YES/NO

If YES please give details below:

PLEASE NOTE THIS FORM WILL BE PUBLISHED ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE IN FULL UNLESS IT CONTAINS EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Once completed a PDF copy of this form along with any relevant background papers should be forwarded to Governance Services at Democratic.Services@doncaster.gov.uk who will arrange publication.

It is the responsibility of the decision taker to clearly identify any information that is confidential or exempt and should be redacted before publication.