Third party software suppliers: Disproportionate burden assessment

Our site contains many online application forms and applications created and hosted through third party software.

Scope

This assessment relates to areas of our website which are built using third party software.

Our providers are:

Goss – Provide our website content management system and a number of bespoke applications which have been skinned to look like our website. These are the bin day checker, faceted search, my account bar and ModGov integration.

ModGov – Provide our democratic services management tool. This is skinned by Goss to provide our councillor information portal and meetings, minutes and agendas pages.

IEG4 – Provide most of our online forms and customer access portal for all service areas excluding benefits and council tax. Our IEG4 forms and customer portal are skinned to look like our website. Aurora – Provide our interactive maps and are embedded on to webpages.

ILAP – Provide our planning application management software which is skinned to look like our website.

NEC / Northgate – Provide a skinned front end of our planning application software. This is the planning application search, comment on a planning application, weekly lists and decisions made web pages.

Civica – Provide our online payment systems. They also provide a separate customer portal and application forms for our council tax and benefits customers.

Objective – Provide our planning policy consultation and document management software.

Digital Interactive – Provide our online forms to report a data breech and submit a subject access request, freedom of information request and complaints form.

All our software providers are sourced through an extensive procurement process. They are respected and highly regarded suppliers who have been providing services to local government organisations for a number of years.

Benefits

All these services are currently outsourced to third party providers. The alternative would be to bring them back in-house.

The benefit of bringing them back in house would be that the council have more control and access to the software and the ability to update the accessibility of these applications.

Burden

Our assessment of the burden of bringing the above listed applications and software back in house would be:

• All our contracts are jointly procured with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. If we were to terminate these contracts before their scheduled end date it could result in the council being negatively impacted. It would also have a negative impact on the council's reputation.

• Due to the number of contracts, we have with third party providers and the nature of the software they provide, to renegotiate contracts with them would be prohibitively expensive. We also believe this would be a poor use of taxpayer's money.

• To develop the applications and systems listed above in house we would require at least 8 FTE positions within the council. The council does not have the resources to achieve this.

• Our internal IT systems and support is also managed as part of a service contract with a third party supplier. To achieve this, we believe that we would also need to bring our IT support in house which would be another significant financial burden and require 5FTE.

• To handle the additional enquiries generated as a result of bringing these systems back in house would also require additional resources in each service area to manage contact with the customer which would be an additional cost.

Other factors

Also relevant to this decision is:

• Four of the suppliers listed above provide online applications that cover most of our top 10 most common contacts. The providers of these applications have extensive experience in providing this software and applications to many other local authorities. As a result, it is unlikely that we would be able to deliver a similar platform to the same standard and level of success.

• All our suppliers work across the public sector and are working hard to achieve WCAG 2.2 or higher. We believe that most of the applications listed meet most of the accessibility criteria and we are working with our suppliers to make the software fully compliant.

• Our customer service team undertake regular training to make sure that if a customer cannot access a part of our website, they are on hand to assist where necessary.

Assessment

If we were to end our contracts with suppliers, we would potentially face high legal costs and difficulties. This could result in significant financial loss and a discredited reputation for the council. We consider that the costs of creating our own in-house software and applications to replace the above listed platforms is a poor use of limited staff resources and time and would be a disproportionate burden on the council in terms of cost.

We believe that the software provided by the third-party suppliers will soon be fully accessible and we will continue to work with them to ensure this happens as soon as possible. As contract end dates for each piece of software near we will ensure that accessibility is paramount when negotiating with each supplier.

We will continue to work with our accessibility audit tool Sitemorse to continually assess our website and use it to prioritise our ongoing work to make our website accessible for all.

Published 31 March 2026