

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

7th MAY 2024

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS: COUNCILLOR FIONA BAKER

Report Title	Procurement and Implementation of WNC Education Services Case Management System
Report Author	Tony Challinor Assistant Director Commissioning and Partnerships Tony.Challinor@westnorthants.gov.uk

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	16/04/2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	16/04/2024
Executive Director of People Services	Stuart Lackenby	16/04/2024
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	16/04/2024

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The Councils current contract with Capita One for its Case Management System (CMS) for Education Services ends on 31 March 2026. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from cabinet to proceed with the procurement of a new contract and the implementation of an Education Services CMS for the Council in readiness for the existing contracts end date.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Council requires an effective and efficient technology solution for case management across Education Services (as described in 5.4), to enable the service to deliver against the council's statutory duties, ensuring children are given the best start in life and vulnerable children are supported and protected.

- 2.2. The current system in use is Capita One Education which was initially procured by Northamptonshire County Council before Local Government Reform and the formation of WNC. A report to cabinet in September 2023 provided approval to extend the current contract to 31 March 2026 to enable the service to have sufficient time to set out the current and future requirements for the system.
- 2.3. The Council has contracted with Capita as a single provider for this CMS for a significant period, therefore a comprehensive procurement exercise is required to ensure that the Council is able to implement a system which enables both best practice and value for money.
- 2.4. Due to the scale and significance of this system, it is intended that procurement of a replacement solution is commenced during Q1 of 2024/25 to ensure adequate time is available to engage the market, undertake the procurement process, and support system redesign and implementation in readiness for 1 April 2026.
- 2.5. This report outlines the approach and estimated costs associated with procuring and implementing a new CMS contract for a four-year period with an ability to extend for a further three years.
- 2.6. The cost of the proposed contract is estimated to be £2.1m over seven years, based on an annual system cost of £300k per year. A further one-off cost of £950k over a two-year period is also requested to support the redesign and implementation of system to support service transformation and efficiency.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - a) Agrees to proceed with the procurement of a Case Management System for Education Services in WNC, at an estimated contract cost, including licences, hosting, and annual fees, of up to £300k per annum for up to seven years (totalling £2.1m).
 - b) Agrees to an additional estimated one-off funding of £950k to implement the Case Management System for Education Services, over a period of two years.
 - c) Delegates authority to the Executive Director of People Services, in liaison with the Executive Director of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, to take forward these recommendations to procure and implement the Case Management System and to utilise the most appropriate funding source for the implementation costs.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 Procuring and implementing a new Case Management System will ensure The Council is able to meet the statutory obligations for delivering Children's Education Services with a system that is fit for purpose and reflects the needs of the Council and families across West Northamptonshire.
- 4.2 The proposal will enable the Council to conduct a procurement exercise, in compliance with procurement and contract procedure rules, and implement a Case Management System that is

available on the market from a supplier that has proven experience and knowledge of the Education Services delivered by local authorities.

- 4.3 The redesign of the system will support the services wider programme of transformation enabling efficiencies to be generated alongside more effective use of data.

5. Report Background

5.1 During August 2020 Northamptonshire County Council awarded a contract to Capita Business Services (Capita) for the provision of an Education Services Case Management System (Capita One Education SaaS). The term of the contract ran to March 2021 with extension options until available through to March 2024.

5.2 In December 2020, the contract was varied to support local government reform with North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) as lead authority. The contract was also extended to March 2024. At this time work also commenced to split the databases into NNC and WNC instances and moved to a Cloud-hosted solution in line with the Council's Digital, Technology, and Innovation (DTI) strategy.

5.3 Ahead of the contract end date in March 2024, Cabinet approval in September 2023, enabled a further extension to Capita to continue system provision until 31 March 2026.

5.4 Engagement has commenced with Education Services, Procurement, Legal and DTI to address the needs of the service to ensure a suitable CMS continues to be in place after March 2026. Currently the CMS supports the delivery of statutory and non-statutory duties of the following staff and teams:

- School Admissions and Place Planning
 - Appeals
- Education Health & Care Team
- SEND Support Service
- Sensory Impairment Service
- Virtual School
- School Attendance Support Service
 - Attendance
 - Attainment
 - Penalty Notices
 - Exclusions
 - Elective Home Education
 - Children Missing in Education
 - Children in Entertainment & Employment
 - Education for Children Out of School (e.g., those with medical conditions that prevent school attendance)
- Educational Psychology Service
- Early Education & Childcare Advisory Services
- Family Information Services/Directory
- Free School Meals
- Home to School Transport

- Governors & Clerks

5.5 Processes are currently being mapped to understand the use of the system across the service, which will be used to better understand service requirements and as a baseline for future service improvements.

5.6 The current system is also supplemented using spreadsheets across the services above which create data quality challenges, duplication, and poor reporting capabilities.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 The following options have been considered, with Option 2 identified as the preferred option:

6.1.1 Option 1: Do Nothing – Not recommended.

This option would see the service undertaking no activity in relation of procurement of a replacement system for Education Services. Scope for improvements and efficiencies would be minimal. At the end of the current Capita contracting period (March 2026) there would be an option to extend the existing system contract for a minimum term of 3 years, this is a significant risk to the Council as this option could result in legal challenges from other suppliers.

6.1.2 Option 2: Conduct a procurement exercise for the Education Service Case Management System and implement a new solution – Recommended.

This option requires a competitive procurement process to be undertaken for the WNC Education Services Case Management System. The process would look at the current marketplace for these systems and then go through a process to ensure a solution that meets the requirements of DTI, and the service is found. The redesign and implementation would provide the opportunity to optimise the use of a system within the Services and to embed a new system ownership culture. This solution is supported by both Legal and Procurement.

6.1.3 Option 3: Use of an existing system – Not Recommended

This Option explores the use of systems within WNC to meet the needs of Education Services. There are no other systems currently in use in the Council that meets the requirements of Education Services.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 It is proposed that the new contract is awarded for four years with the ability to extend for a period of two years and an option to extend for a further one year at the end of the contract period (total contract period could be seven years).

7.1.2 The ongoing costs of the new system will be funded within the existing base budget of £300,000 currently held by the DTI Application Support Team.

- 7.1.3 However, to support the redesign and implementation of the system, one-off funding of £243,126 in 2024/25 and £707,503 in 2025/2026 is required.
- 7.1.4 This funding will be drawn from the Council’s risk reserve, however, if possible, alternative funding mechanisms such as capitalisation will be explored. The S151 Officer will ensure the most appropriate funding source is utilised.
- 7.1.5 Implementation will be delivered through a combination of internal and external capacity which is needed to ensure the new system meets the requirements of the expansive number of services that it will use. This resource will also support the data migration requirements.

	2024/25	2025/26
<u>One off implementation cost</u>		
Provider implementation costs	125,000	175,000
WNC implementation costs	118,126	532,503
Total	243,126	707,503

- 7.1.6 Estimated costs are similar systems projects within the Council and other Local Authorities. They have been reviewed by services involved in the project to provide assurance that these are fair estimates based on available and relevant information.
- 7.1.7 Similar redesign and implementation of Education CMS systems in other authorities have generated significant efficiencies through the removal of duplicate payments, system reporting and duplication of data entry.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 The current system contract was awarded under the KCS Managed Services Framework for Businesses Solutions (Y20023). Whilst this enables an extension beyond the 31 March 2026, any further extension would be for a minimum term of three years.
- 7.2.2 The estimated value of the contract means that any procurement will be subject to the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council’s Contract Procedure rules. The Council’s intention is to procure a Case Management System from an existing framework.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1

Risk	Proposed Mitigation
Project timelines and completion dates not meeting contract end date of 31st March 2026 - requiring an extension to the existing contract.	Timeline to be fully planned out, with Education Services, DTI, Procurement, Legal and other enabling services both internally and externally are fully committed to delivering the new system. Additionally, lessons learnt from similar projects (NCT Case Management System and ARISE) have been considered with amends to project approach made.
Internal staff are unavailable due to their existing and emerging workload or priorities for example EHC Waiting Lists, Ofsted Inspections, or other current systems projects.	Stakeholders to provide regular updates and assurance that project resources are fully committed to the delivery of the Project. Measures taken ensure similar procurements with the same internal resource will not run at a similar time (staggered with ARISE and NCT CMS). Consideration of school holidays in timescales.

7.4 Consultation and Communications

7.4.1 In developing the proposals, the Council has consulted with Education Services colleagues as the primary users of the current CMS. There has also been engagement with the Digital, Technology and Innovation Service and Business Intelligence Service. A communications plan is being developed to ensure all stakeholders will be kept informed and engaged at key stages of project implementation.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 This decision has not been considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 Once a solution has been selected specific impacts can be assessed. However, one of the potential benefits of a CMS is a retention if not reduction in levels of staff travel, post and associated printing that occurs within the services, potentially leading to a positive impact in this area.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 Helping to ensure children and young people are fully engaged with their Education can lead to positive effects on communities. Timely interventions that are informed and enabled through data collated in an effective CMS will prevent escalating issues for families and a negative impact on local communities.

8. Background Papers

8.1 None