

To receive an update report on Democratic Services Software and consider any actions and associated expenditure.

Report to:

Policy and Finance Committee

Date of Report:

20 August 2026

Officer Writing the Report:

Mayor's Secretary/ Receptionist

Purpose of the report:

To request members to approve a revised choice for Democratic Services software following the decision made at July's Policy and Finance Committee.

Pursuant Minute:

Policy and Finance Committee held on 7 July 2026, minute number 49/26/27

Officer's Recommendations

1. To approve the replacement of the previously approved Democratic Services software with the supplier's newly launched platform;
2. Approve the contract commence January 2027 to allow sufficient time for the administration team to configure the new system ahead of the launch in April 2027.

The recommendation does not propose a change of supplier. Rather, it seeks approval to adopt the supplier's newly launched platform, instead of the third-party software originally approved. This alternative offers enhanced functionality at a substantially lower cost.

Report Summary

At the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held in July, Members received a report setting out a range of proposed upgrades to the Town Council's audio-visual, telecommunications and software systems. As part of that review, the Committee approved a move to an alternative provider for the Council's democratic services software.

Following the Committee's decision in July 2026 to proceed with Decisions software, the supplier advised that it had subsequently launched its own democratic services platform and would no longer be reselling the third-party software originally approved. The Administration Department therefore reviewed the new platform and assessed its suitability for the Town Council.

The Administration Department received a demonstration and found that it provides all the core functionality currently delivered by Modern.gov, together with a range of enhanced features. These include Microsoft 365 integration, automated minute drafting, transcription, configurable templates, a dedicated Members' App and AI-assisted meeting administration tools designed to improve efficiency, consistency and compliance. Comprehensive training is included for both Officers and Members.

Costs were therefore requested and obtained. Cost details have been provided in **Appendix A**.

The costs outlined demonstrate a 50% saving in Year 1, with a further 10% multi-year discount applied in Years 2 and 3.

The quotation confirms the supplier will honour the amounts provided for a January 2027 implementation date, subject to receipt of a Purchase Order confirming the Town Council's commitment to proceed with the transition.

The software proposed is a council-focused meeting management system that supports the full meeting process from agenda preparation to approved minutes, helping to improve efficiency, compliance and document management through integration with Microsoft 365.

The software also includes integrated AI functionality to support officers throughout the meeting administration process. Features include automated minute drafting, configurable agenda and minute templates, transcription capabilities, and the ability to pre-program standard sections and recurring content, reducing administrative time and improving consistency.

A dedicated Members' App is included within the package, providing Members with easy access to agendas, reports and meeting papers.

Comprehensive training is available for both Officers and Members to support implementation and ongoing use of the system.

While the software offers significant benefits, successful implementation will require officer time to complete configuration, migration, testing and training. It is therefore recommended that procurement commence in January 2027 to allow sufficient time for implementation and ensure a smooth transition before the expiry of the current Modern.gov contract in April 2027.

It is therefore recommended that Members remain supportive of the previously agreed transitional overlap, with the contract to commence in January 2027. This will provide sufficient time for onboarding, configuration and implementation of the system ahead of a proposed go-live date, ensuring a smooth transition before the expiry of the current Modern.gov contract at the end of April 2027.

Quotes Provided

Only one quotation was sought. Extensive market research into alternative democratic services providers had previously been undertaken and Members had already approved the appointment of this supplier in principle. The quotation requested was therefore limited to the supplier's newly launched platform.

For comparison a table has been provided to show associated costs against the previously approved software:

Software	Total cost over three-year contract
	Includes one off set up, training and ongoing annual support costs
Previously agreed Software	£19,250
Proposed Software	£7,577.50

In addition to offering enhanced functionality, the quotation represents a significant financial saving. The total cost over the three-year contract period is £7,577.50 compared to £19,250 for the previously approved software, representing a saving of £11,672.50.

Budgets

Budget Codes:

6208 PF Subscriptions

Budget Availability:

£18,437

Committed Spend:

£2,857

Signature of Officer:

Mayor's Secretary/ Receptionist