
Report to Protocol Agenda – “PublicReps System”

Background:

MemberReps/PublicReps are systems used in South Dublin, Fingal and Dun Laoghaire and other County Councils to deal with Public Representations from councillors and other elected representatives. The systems deals with written representations made by Councillors on behalf of individuals or community groups about operational issues e.g. housing maintenance, grass cutting, litter etc. The Councillor can see and manage all existing and outstanding queries with the Council. Initial work on Dublin City Council Public Representations System commenced last September at the request of a number of Councillors who had experience of systems in neighbouring councils. The Protocol Committee was briefed on the Project at that time.

Purpose:

The PublicReps system would be integrated with the Corporate CRM (Customer Relationship Management System). The aim is to give Councillors authorised replies in a timely manner and ensure consistency of responses across the organisation. The reply can be sent on to the original enquirer in headed paper format.

The system does not propose to replace any existing system or process such as Planning, TAG, FOI etc nor the existing Questions and Motions to Area, SPC or Council Meeting. The system would not deal with strategic or policy issues.

Resourcing:

South Dublin County Council deals with about 8,000 queries a year on the system for 40 Councillors and the local TDs and MEPs. It can be estimated that that when in full use a DCC system may deal with 12,000 queries per annum. Not all of this is new demand as officials are already dealing with an array of queries in an ad hoc manner. The proposed system would become the standard way for councillors who are looking for written responses to such queries to deal with officials. It is estimated that about 80 staff would have regular contact with the system largely in the Housing, CRES and Environment and Transportation Departments

An in-house working group was established late last year. It was estimated that the cost of the provision of the system would be in the region of €50,000 + VAT. Having determined the scope we came back to Protocol as requested to provide a sample user interface (front end) that would be easy to access and simple to use. This was demonstrated at the last Protocol meeting. The next phase would involve more detailed development and testing of the system (back end). This work would take approximately three months.

However it became clear at the last meeting that a number of the councillors on Protocol had reservations about the introduction of such a system and others were relatively happy with the existing service from staff and were concerned that this system would disrupt these relationships. After the last Protocol Meeting the project was parked until clear direction was available to avoid the incurring of additional expenses.

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