

caseSTUDY

Test Valley Borough Council

An independent review of the efficiency gains achievable with Gandlake's Citizen's Account, undertaken by RSe Consulting.

Gandlake's Citizen's Account improves customer satisfaction and also provides efficiency savings (cashable & non-cashable) of at least £34,000 per annum for Test Valley Borough Council

This case study was developed by independent consultants, RSe, with the assistance of Test Valley Borough Council, to identify the efficiency gains that could be reaped from Gandlake's Citizen's Account.

“We’re really excited about Citizen’s Account and, based on our calculations, we’re convinced it is going to deliver significant business transformation and improvements to customer services.”

Carol Moore, Head of Revenues, Test Valley Borough Council

Summary of findings

1. Implementing Citizen's Account is a win-win:

Citizen's Account improves customer satisfaction and also provides efficiency savings (cashable & non-cashable) of at least £34,000 per annum for Test Valley Borough Council

2. Most of these benefits are easy to realise:

Most of the savings are easy to realise – particularly those stemming from e-billing (reduced postage and packaging costs)

3. Efficiency gains calculated in this case study are just the tip of the iceberg:

Once the platform has been installed, more and more types of transactions can be added to Citizen's Account. This, along with higher take-up of e-billing and more queries being resolved at the first point of contact, provides the basis for realising further efficiency gains

4. Citizen's Account increases self-service by citizens:

Citizen's Account is available 24/7; this may eventually lead to less overall interactions via the traditional telephone and face-to-face channels as customers self-serve and, hence, further efficiency gains in the future

Background to the product

Gandlake's Citizen's Account is a fully managed and hosted solution developed specifically to enable local authorities to bill citizens and accept payments online. It is currently live at sixteen local authorities with another ten in the pipeline.

It is an authority-wide application that consolidates and presents transaction and account-based information via a secure customer portal, all within a simple extension of your own website.

Citizen's Account offers the following functionality:

1. Integrated e-statements, e-billing and e-payments
2. Integration with multiple council back office systems
3. Secure password authentication for citizens to access their accounts
4. Single log-in for all accounts

It is straightforward and quick to implement and, once deployed for a single application, its infrastructure is able to accept account information for many others.

Test Valley...

Test Valley Borough Council has been a Gandlake customer for five years; first implementing the LaserServe output management solution in 2002 and then installing the hosted Citizen's Account package in 2005.

Citizen's Account is going to help Test Valley Borough Council to reach its strategic target of offering first-class customer services to all citizens, irrespective of the channel through which they contact the council.

Before & after

Test Valley Borough Council has found that Citizen's Account provides the means for a step change in the way that customer services staff deal with enquiries about council tax and NNDR. The following table summarises the processes prior to the implementation of Citizen's Account and how these have been improved:

Before Citizen's Account...	After Citizen's Account...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizens could only receive their council tax bills in the post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizens can be billed electronically
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All queries regarding council tax and NNDR were taken via costly traditional channels (i.e. face-to-face or telephone) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizens can self-serve by looking at their council tax account online
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The majority of queries were fielded by the back office team rather than customer services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Now, rather than signposting citizens to the council tax team, customer services will be able to answer simple queries (e.g. checking account information for council tax and requesting a change in payment dates). Where they cannot answer queries, citizens are signposted more efficiently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The council had to purchase licenses and fund training for customer services staff on council tax and NNDR back office systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Customer services staff now have access to Citizen's Account and hence do not require training or licensing on the back-office systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizens and businesses were limited by the council's opening hours as to when they could access information about their council tax and NNDR accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Through having access to their accounts 24/7, citizens and businesses will be able to resolve queries, request information and interrogate accounts at a time convenient to themselves

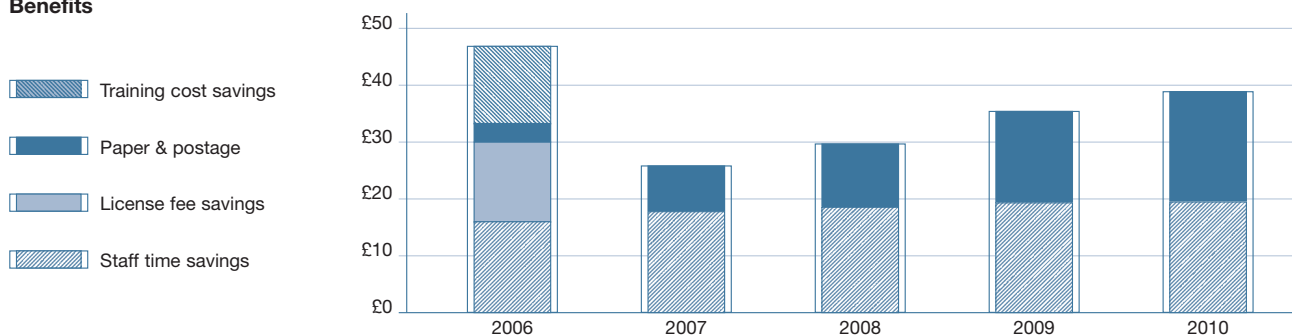
The savings from reduced postage and packaging and not having to train staff on different back office systems are sure-fire wins. Resolving more queries at the first point of contact will yield efficiency savings over five years, but may require significant change management.

Calculating costs, benefits and efficiencies

The following table lays out the key facts and assumptions that lie at the heart of this case study:

Population	Properties	No. of council tax bills sent	Take-up of e-billing
112,000	47,000	83,000	2% in year one rising to 10% in year five

Benefits



These benefits have been calculated in the following way:

1. Staff time savings:

- 150 out of 600 telephone calls per week in council tax & NNDR (25%) will be able to be taken by the customer services team rather than by the back office, council tax team. If each phone call takes, on average, two minutes, this leads to yearly back office staff time savings of £3,500 (based on a back office salary of £25,000, including on costs)
- The 350 face-to-face council tax queries that previously took five minutes due to the customer services team having to signpost citizens to the back office, have been reduced by up to three minutes per query. Based on a customer services team of 20 FTE's, earning £23,000 per annum, this leads to a staff time saving of 0.8 hours per week, per FTE. Overall, this works out at £14,000 per year (just over half a FTE)

2. Savings in postage and packaging:

£2 is saved for every paper bill that is replaced by e-billing. Based on the figures in the assumptions table, above, this leads to an average saving of nearly £10,000 per year, over five years

3. Reduced training costs:

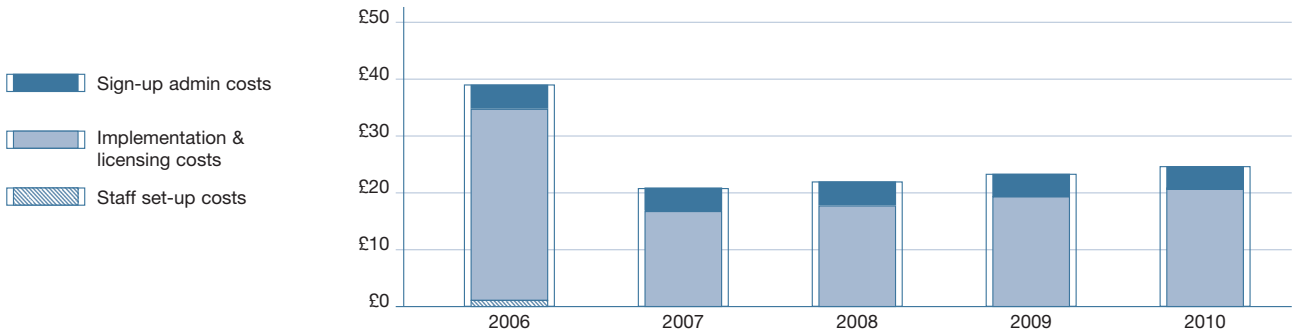
A one-off saving of £12,000 is made from not having to train 29 customer services staff on council tax and NNDR systems. This is based on training taking two days for each member of staff, in groups of eight, at £1,500 per day

4. No need to purchase back office licenses for customer services staff:

Citizen's Account provides customer services staff with all the information they need to answer the majority of simple queries relating to council tax and NNDR. This means there is no need to purchase back office licenses for the 29-strong customer services team (£500 per license), providing a further £14,500 one-off saving in Year 1.

Calculating costs, benefits and efficiencies continued

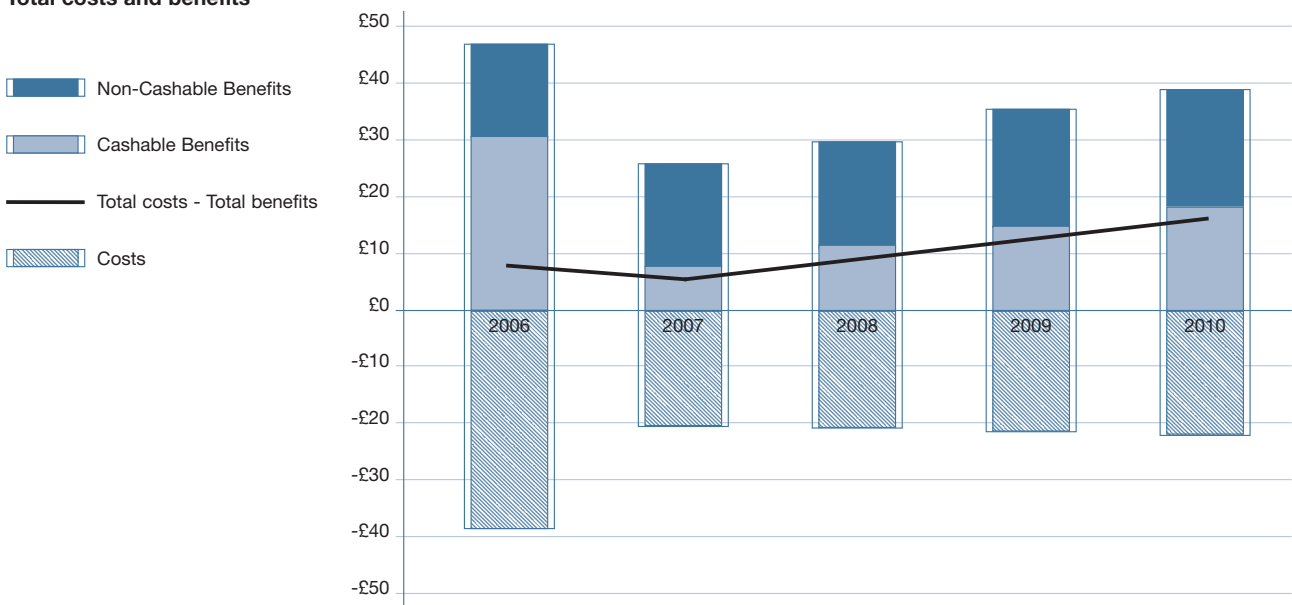
Costs



These costs have been calculated in the following way:

- 1. Software:** There is a one-off implementation cost of £16,000 and a yearly license fee of £17,000
- 2. Take-up:** We have assumed a 2% take-up of e-billing in year one rising to 10% in year five. There is also a £1.50 administrative charge for every citizen signed-up
- 3. Staff time set-up:** It takes only five FTE days to set up the Citizen's Account. On a salary of £25,000 this works out at nearly £600

Total costs and benefits



As the above graph shows, Citizen's Account has the potential to yield yearly average benefits (cashable and non-cashable) of £34,000, and even more if take-up exceeds 10% over 5 years.

Moving beyond council tax & NNDR

Council tax and NNDR are just two of the possible 34 business areas that have the potential to be transformed by Citizen's Account. Benefits, planning and sundry debtors all have high volumes of customer interaction and are extremely suitable for Citizen's Account. The potential efficiency savings from Citizen's Account are much greater the higher the number of areas covered by the platform and the higher the take-up of e-billing.

Further information

For further information on how Citizen's Account could help your council to transform the customer experience please go to www.gandlake.com, email: enquiries@gandlake.com or telephone: 01635 524404.

“We chose Gandlake because of their excellent generic product and first-class attention to detail. It is an ongoing partnership - council tax and NNDR are only the start; we intend to roll out Citizen's Account to Benefits and Sundry Debtors within a year. We expect to realise further efficiencies in these areas.”

Carol Moore, Head of Revenues, Test Valley Borough Council

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