



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Officer Delegated Decision

6 October 2025

Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive
and Section 151 Officer

NEC Revenues and Benefits: Citizens Access – Discretionary Housing Payment (CA DHP) – Victoria Form replacement

To request authorisation to purchase the NEC Revenues and Benefits Citizens Access module to replace the existing online forms provided by Victoria Form.

Contact

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service)

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Decision made by:	Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Decision:	To request authorisation to purchase the NEC Revenues and Benefits Citizens Access module to replace the existing online forms provided by Victoria Form.
Public or Exempt:	Public
Reasons for exemption:	N/A
Conflicts of interest:	No
Policy compliant:	Yes
Details of delegation:	The Council's Contract Procedure Rules allow for contracts with a total value of up to £200,000 to be approved by the Director.

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance

- 1.1 The additional cost incurred is £5,700 per year, however, it is clear there are efficiencies which can be gained by introducing the NEC CA-DHP module and using the CA DHP form as the application process for this support. These efficiencies will be built into future budgets for the service area.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Procurement

- 1.2 Consultation with Procurement has taken place and advice has resulted in this ODD.
- 1.3 Advised by Department that the cost is £12,200 for one year only (1 January to 31 December 2026).
- 1.4 On this basis, single quote is permissible under the councils CPRs. Further use of form will be added into main NEC contract when re-procured.

Completed by: Helen Baldwin (Procurement Lead)

Legal and Governance

- 1.5 A Change of Contract Notice (CCN) has been approved and signed. The delivery of the module, its output and effectiveness will be reviewed every six months.

Completed by: James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager)

2 The Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 The current provider of the Discretionary Council Tax Payment (DCTP) and Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) forms is 'Victoria Forms'.
- 2.2 Whilst the service provided has been adequate and has enabled customers to make their application online, there is no integration into the back office NEC Revenues and Benefits System Service. As a result, officers are required to enter all information from the online form into the back office system.

- 2.3 Additionally, the Victoria Form is a 'data capture' form only, it is not a smart form and will not provide any financial position of the applicant, such as an interactive breakdown of income and expenditure.

Features of the NEC CA-DHP Form

- 2.4 It is a pre-built online form which can be adapted for South Kesteven's DHP Policy eligibility criteria, along with being able to amend to ensure reflection of wording and terminology.
- 2.5 Full integration into the NEC Revenues and Benefits system, resulting in real time updates.
- 2.6 Link to CA Benefits and Revenues modules which are already in place, allowing the customer to see the progress of the DCTP/DHP in all three online modules.
- 2.7 Allows for applications for those in receipt of Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.
- 2.8 Full summary of income and expenditure information, which is provided by the customer and does not need to be re-entered into the back office system by an officer, thus eliminating any potential errors of 're-entering' information.
- 2.9 Email acknowledgement is automatically generated on submission.
- 2.10 The layout is simple and easy to use and is similar to that of the CA Benefits and Revenues modules – which currently received circa 80,000 transactions per year.
- 2.11 The form can be completed by the individual themselves, or an approved partner (on their behalf).
- 2.12 Smart form – the type of application can be chosen by the customer and the relevant questions will then be asked – for example, we may not require the applicant to answer questions about health, income or expenditure where the application is being made for rent deposit only. This reduces the number of unnecessary questions being asked.

Link to Citizens Access Benefits

- 2.13 CA-DHP submissions can be viewed and managed using the Citizens Access screen in NEC Benefits.
- 2.14 Actions available include:
- Viewing the PDF document and evidence
 - Direct link to view DHP Application details – to amend and re-submit within 30 minutes of original application
- 2.15 A PDF of the application can be exported and linked within the NEC Document Management system for evidence and audit purposes

Application and Financial data within NEC Benefits system

- 2.16 The data can be viewed in one screen, (one each for application data and another for financial data)
- 2.17 The financial data is broken down into the following categories with specific details for individual types and values):
 - Total household income
 - Total household expenditure
 - Total savings
 - Total debt

Administration of the CA-DHP module

- 2.18 The CA-DHP module can be full administered the South Kesteven System Administrator (currently, any changes to the existing form need to be undertaken by Victoria Form at an additional cost).
- 2.19 The administration activities include:
 - Amending the appearance of the online form – ensuring accessibility and inline with corporate requirements
 - Maintaining questions and expense categories (inline with SKDC DCTP and DHP policy) – including additional prompts / information (as a result of any feedback)
 - Setting up approved partners
 - Monitoring of statistics at any frequency required for any selected period
- 2.20 data can be viewed in one screen, (one each for application data and another for financial data)

Statistics

- 2.21 Currently, the Technical Support team complete a spreadsheet to capture the majority of statistic information – which is time consuming to complete and requires filters and detailed analysis when reporting the statistical information.
- 2.22 The CA-DHP module provides full statistical information which adheres to the mid-year and annual DHP government return. The information will also allow for additional analysis – this includes:
 - Date & time (to/from) of application
 - Transactions
 - All
 - Submitted successfully
 - Submitted unsuccessfully

- Saved and exited
- Exited and abandoned
- Page statistics – total visits, average time in page, visits per transaction and average page submissions,
 - Expenses
 - Household Income
 - Debts
 - Capital

Cost of the existing Victoria Form

- 2.23 The annual cost of the Victoria Form module is £6,500 per year.
- 2.24 This is for an online form, which has no integration into the back office NEC Benefits system, requiring officers to enter the information from the form into the system as well as completion of a spreadsheet to gather statistics information for manual analysis.
- 2.25 There are also additional manual interventions required to download the form, save it into the NEC Document Management system and complete a separate income and expenditure calculation sheet.

Cost of related administrative activities using Victoria Form

- 2.26 Currently, the existing activities relating to the Victoria Form take an average of 45 minutes per application, which will be automated with the NEC CA-DHP module.
- 2.27 In 2024/25, 610 DHP applications were received, resulting in 458 hours of manual administration – which converts to 12.5 weeks.
- 2.28 The Technical Support Officer is graded at SK12, which is £19.42 per hour, at 458 hours per year, this is an administrative cost of £8,894.36 (based on receipt of 610 applications).

Cost of the CA-DHP Module

- 2.29 **The annual cost of the NEC CA-DHP form is £12,200 per year**
- 2.30 The cost for this ODD is broken down as follows:

Description	Charge	Frequency of charge	Invoice profiling
Module: Citizen Access - Discretionary Housing Payment (CA-DHP)	£12,200	Annual	Annually in advance of

			commencement of the module term
CA Onboarding services – including consultancy	£550	One off	On signature of CCN Agreement
Total	£12,750		

Cost comparison

2.31 The table below shows the cost comparison of each of the form options:

Activity	Victoria Form	NEC CA-DHP
Module / Online Form	£6,500	£12,200
System Administrator changes to forms (based on 2 changes per year)	£1,000	£0
Administration of receipt of form	£8,894 (45 mins per form)	£2,136 (10 mins per form)
Analysis and data gathering for government returns and general statistical needs	£3,122 (1 month per year)	£719 (1 week per year)
TOTAL	£19,516	£15,055

Impact on the customer

- 2.32 The customer is able to see the progress of the application using the online portal, thus reducing the need to contact the team to request this information.
- 2.33 As a result of the NEC CA-DHP module integrating into the back office system, the administration tasks will be significantly reduced (35 minutes per application), which will give more time for the officers to review applications and make decisions much quicker, in turn, releasing payments earlier.

3 Available Options Considered

- 3.1 Option 1: Do nothing – this would result in the current Victoria Form solution coming to an end on 31 March 2026. A new application form would need to be created, potentially at a lesser quality of Victoria Form, and will also not have integration into the NEC Benefits software.
- 3.2 Option 2: Extend the Victoria Form contract for an agreed period (suggest no less than 3 years).

- 3.3 Option 3: Engage with NEC Revenues and Benefits to implement the NEC CA-DHP module for immediate implementation with an effective date of 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026 (to bring in line with the existing NEC Contract period).

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 Option 3 is the preferred option. Discussions currently in place with NEC regarding contract renewal for main software and all other modules for options of 2+1+1 or 3+1+1).

5 Reasons for the Decision (s)

- 5.1 These are set out in the report.

6 Consultation

- 6.1 There has been consultation with South Kesteven District Councils Technical Support Team regarding the potential implementation of the NEC CA-DHP product.
- 6.2 A review of the NEC CA-DHP module and performance has been undertaken, reviewing testimonials from other Local Authorities who have implemented the module – these have been positive and have not raised any concerns.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 None

Signed by: Richard Wyles

Dated: 13.10.25
