

Business Case for the Adoption of Decisions in Local Government

Executive Summary

In local government, the structuring and management of meetings are critical yet challenging, given the limited time available to Clerks and Officers. The transition to Microsoft 365 has paved the way for leveraging innovative applications like Decisions, which seamlessly integrates with the Microsoft ecosystem. Decisions promises to transform meeting processes by enabling more efficient agenda creation, collaborative preparation, and minute taking, directly addressing the unique needs of Town and Parish councils. By adopting a more connected and efficient tool, councils can realise significant efficiencies, leading to time and cost savings. The return on investment (ROI) from implementing Decisions is typically observed within 6 to 9 monthsⁱ, underscoring its value proposition in enhancing productivity and decision-making effectiveness in local government settings.

Introduction

Local governments face unique challenges in managing their operations efficiently, with meeting coordination and decision-making processes being particularly time-consuming and resource intensive. This business case explores the adoption of Decisions as a transformative solution for Town and Parish councils, aiming to streamline their workflows and leverage the capabilities of Microsoft 365.

The Business Challenge

Local government officials often work under tight schedules, making the efficient management of meetings and the secure handling of documents imperative. Traditional methods have struggled to keep pace with the demands of modern governance, leading to inefficiencies and communication gaps.

Solution Overview

Decisions is a comprehensive meeting management solution that integrates with Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365, featuring tools for agenda management, minute taking, task tracking, and secure voting. Its seamless integration with Microsoft 365 ensures a unified workspace that minimizes application switching, enhancing productivity and decision-making across your organisation.

Integrated AI tools that are designed to perfect the entire meeting process, from planning through execution to post-meeting follow-ups. It enhances participation, streamlines agenda setting, and provides actionable meeting recaps, making it an invaluable tool for maximizing efficiency in meeting management.

ⁱ Based on Clerks Package, Training for 1 Officer over a 3-year term.

Benefits

- **Time and Cost Savings:** Streamlined meeting preparation and follow-ups through Decisions reduce operational costs and free up valuable time for local government officials.
- **Improved Collaboration:** The platform's integration with Microsoft 365 enhances collaboration, allowing council members and officers to work together more effectively. The ability to update and track staff and project activity in real time meaning live information is available within Decision's so queries and questions can be answered quickly, and tasks allocated immediately.
- **Security and Accessibility:** Decisions ensures data security while making information easily accessible to authorised personnel, supporting the secure and efficient handling of council business. All Decisions data is securely stored within your Microsoft 365 environment meeting your regulatory and compliance needs.
- **Enhanced Decision-Making:** By facilitating better-organised meetings and information management, Decisions supports more informed and timely decision-making.
- **Efficiency:** Users report a 30% reduction in meeting coordination timeⁱⁱ, thanks to intuitive tools for agenda setting and meeting book compilation. Built in messaging means that questions can be dealt with in real time removing the wait for emails to be answered.
- **Enhanced Meeting Productivity:** The platform includes features like presenter prompts, a smart time tracker and an APP for mobile devices, enhancing the productivity of meetings.
- **Seamless Integration:** Testimonials highlight Decisions' seamless integration with Microsoft 365, improving the accessibility and utility of familiar tools for meeting management.
- **AI-Driven Meeting Management:** improve meeting management, using automated agenda creation and real-time minute taking along with AI-generated summaries to capture meeting highlights.

Comparative Analysis: Traditional manual methods for managing meeting agendas and document packs are highly resource-intensive and prone to errors due to their lack of integration and reliance on manual updates. These processes can lead to overlooked updates or missed actions.

Challenges and Mitigations: One significant challenge in adopting Decisions is the requirement for councils to be Microsoft 365 tenantsⁱⁱⁱ. Councils not currently using Microsoft 365 may view the migration as a barrier due to the associated costs and changes to their IT infrastructure. Additionally, varying levels of digital literacy among staff can pose challenges, as less digitally savvy individuals might struggle with the transition to a new system. Time constraints are also a concern, with fears that learning and integrating a new system could disrupt existing workflows. Furthermore, some may question the need for change when existing methods are perceived to "just work."

By addressing these challenges head-on and offering clear, tangible benefits, councils can be encouraged to embrace this transformative digital shift, moving away from the "it just works" mindset to a more efficient and effective digital-first approach.

ⁱⁱ [Government and council meetings | Decisions \(meetingdecisions.com\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ For councils not on Microsoft 365, a detailed cost-benefit analysis could highlight the long-term savings and efficiency improvements that justify the initial setup costs.

Conclusion

Adopting Decisions represents a strategic move towards digital transformation for local governments, promising substantial improvements in efficiency, collaboration, and governance. With an ROI typically realised within 6 to 9 months, Decisions stands out as a valuable investment for councils seeking to enhance their operational effectiveness and leverage the full potential of Microsoft 365.

We are confident in the capabilities of Decisions as a transformative tool for local government operations. However, do not just take our word for it – listen to the firsthand experiences of Clerks and Officers who are actively using Decisions. Below, we share insights gathered from a detailed survey of our users, focusing on the specific challenges they faced prior to implementation and the tangible benefits they have observed since adopting Decisions.

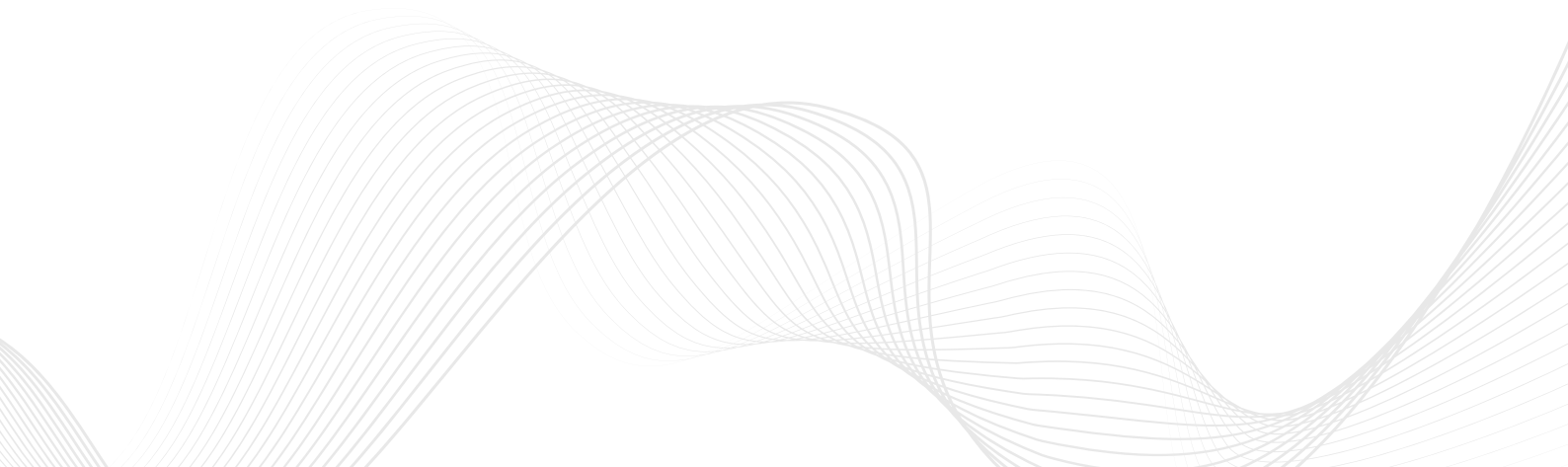
- Can you list specific challenges and quantify the costs or inefficiencies faced before implementing Decisions?
- Where are there any specific activities or tasks that were particularly challenging before using Decisions?
- How do you present Decisions to your members?
- How does the use of Decisions compare with previous methods in terms of time spent on meeting preparation?

They told us:

“At the time we had nine committees and the time it would take to create agendas, reports and then pull together in one document ready for publication was staff intensive. It also meant if reports were updated, the whole agenda pack would have to be resent and published with the updated report included.”

“The automation of the meeting book creation was game changing for us. The ability to, at a press of a button, do something that would take staff hours to do was amazing. We can also update meeting books with late reports/updated information, and we do not need to reissue the entire pack as the report automatically updates for members in Decisions.”

“All our agenda and meeting packs are sent to members directly from Decisions, it is emailed, added to their teams and their calendars. Each has the agenda and meeting pack included no more excuses from members that they did not receive the report!”



Implementation Plan for Decisions Adoption

1. Scoping Session:

- **Objective:** Understand the council's current IT landscape, identify needs and objectives.
- **Participants:** Key stakeholders including the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), and IT personnel.
- **Outcome:** A detailed requirement document outlining integration points, security considerations, and user needs.

2. Configuration and Pre-requisites Setup:

- **Tasks:** Set up a test account for Decisions, ensure Microsoft 365 is properly configured for integration.
- **Prerequisites:** Verify that all users have access to Microsoft Teams and Office 365, with necessary permissions.

3. Training Sessions:

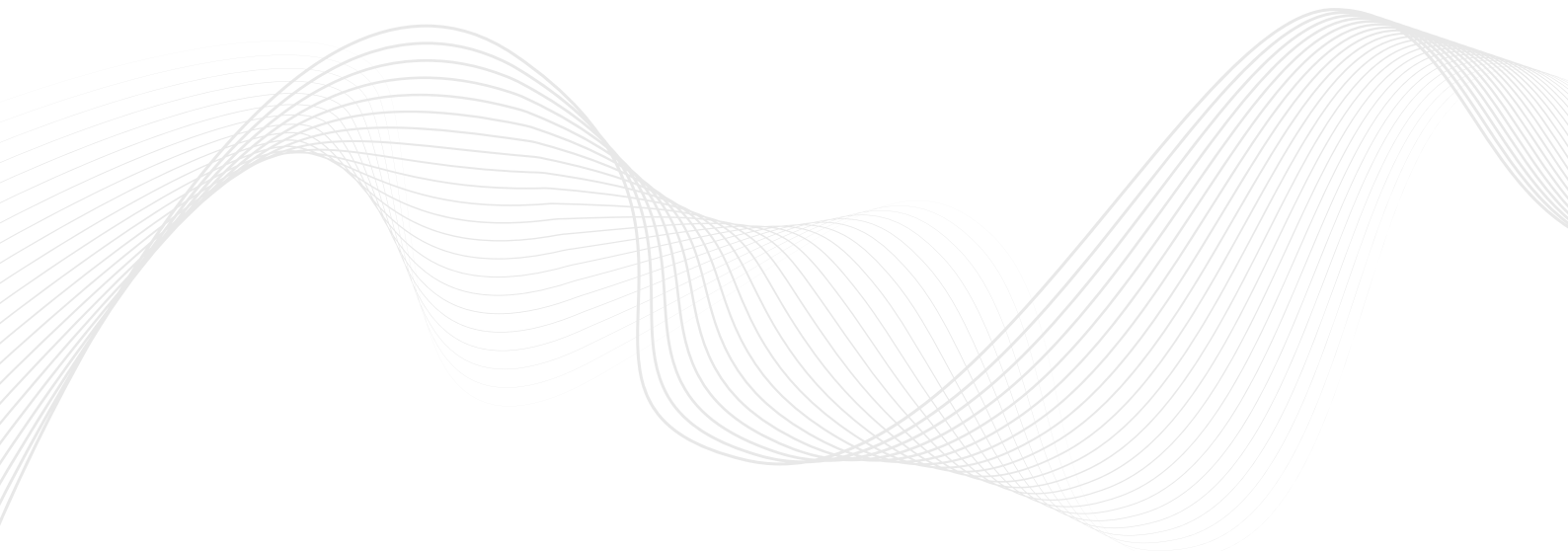
- **First Session:** Basic training for Clerks and Officers on using Decisions for agenda creation, meeting scheduling, and document management.
- **Second Session:** Advanced features training including voting, task management, and the use of analytics for meeting improvements.
- **Third Session:** Best practices for secure and effective meeting management, including role-specific workflows for the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and RFO.

4. Pilot Testing:

- Conduct a trial period with a select group, utilizing the Decisions trial planning guide to measure success against predefined criteria.

5. Review and Full Roll-out:

- **Review:** Assess trial feedback, adjust training and configurations as needed.
- **Roll-out:** Implement Decisions across all council operations, with ongoing support and periodic review meetings to ensure continuous improvement.



Testimonials

*I like the ability to store the agenda in a Team's channel. It makes retrieving meeting archives fast and easy. Not only can you store the meeting agenda, but you can store minutes, decisions, and tasks there also to make referring to a meeting a breeze. – **Town Council Clerk***

*Decisions is a great tool to Organise your Meetings. Especially to structure, Time-Management and providing Information it helps to improve the effectivity and efficiency very much. – **Parish Clerk and RFO***

The ability to generate meeting minutes in the same platform. I usually take meeting minutes, I have had to type if on word, then upload, but with Decisions, it is automated. which makes it easy to use.

The second thing I like is the link with Planner, I am now able to assign action items or task directly to participant and Planner will take over with reminding them – such a great integration.

*The ability to generate meeting minutes in the same platform is transformative. I usually take meeting minutes; having it automated, which makes it easy to use, is a game changer. The link with planner allows me to assign action items or tasks directly to participants and Planner takes over with reminding them. Finally, building agendas is easier as it is no longer a one-person task. Members can suggest agenda items which increases participation and takes away the pressure from the Clerk.
– **Town Clerk & RFO***

Meet our Experts:

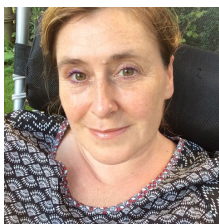
The Digital Champions Steering Local Government Innovation



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