Report author: Kelsey Campbell

Tel: 0113 378 5855

Report of Director of Resources and Housing

Report to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Date: 29th June 2020

Subject: Applications Portfolio Programme – Update on Access project

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	☐ Yes	☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

Summary of main issues

To provide Corporate Governance and Audit Committee an update on the progress made on eradicating Microsoft (MS) Access 2003 from the network to enable us to maintain our current PSN Compliance Certificate.

Recommendations

1.1   Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report and support the actions therein.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 To provide Corporate Governance and Audit Committee with an update on progress with the Access 2003 replacement project.

2. Background information

2.1 The Public Services Network (PSN) was set up as an assured route for information sharing by central government across public sector organisations. It provides a compliance regime to assure a good level of information security arrangements are in place. The Council has worked hard over the last number of years to achieve and maintain compliance as security risks evolve. On 20th August 2019 the Cabinet Office re-instated the Council's PSN certificate. The council network is now being actively monitored for vulnerabilities and patched appropriately.

2.2 MS Access 2003 is no longer supported by Microsoft and therefore could introduce a cyber security risk. The Council will move off 2003 by July 2020.

2.3 In addition MS Access 2010 will go out of support at the end of October 2020 and it may be a requirement of the PSN that this version will also have to be eradicated from the network for compliance in 2021.

2.4 MS Access is a tool that is heavily relied upon in services and underpins important business processes, for example in Finance, Children's and Highways.

3. Main issues

3.1 Members will recall the high level project plan milestones reported to the last meeting. Progress against these milestones is set out for ease of reference at Annex 1 to this report.

3.2 Since the last meeting work has focused on the following issues:

Conversions from MS Access 2003 to MS Access 2010

3.3 Excellent progress has been made in the last reporting period on uplifts to Access 2010, amidst issues posed by the current pandemic. There are currently 200 Access 2003 databases in the process of conversion to Access 2010 (see Annex 2 for a further breakdown of the latest statistics).

- 159 databases are now with business areas, to either clarify technical aspects or test/rollout their uplifted databases. Some of these databases may come back to DIS to complete further technical work on, if any tests fail or issues are found.

- DIS have begun uplift work on the remaining 41 databases, meaning there are no databases in the 'new/not started' reporting column.

Adapting to issues related to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

3.4 Since the situation with the Covid-19 pandemic escalated in March 2020, the Access project has faced the following issues:

- Resources – Both the conversion work stream and main project team have been impacted by resource availability due to the pandemic. As a result, some of the uplift work was on hold until the team were able to replace resources. Additional resources have been identified internally within DIS, including members of staff from the applications teams.

- Some Highways teams experienced issues when initially working over VPN, which affected their use of some Highways databases, thus delaying plans for uplifts to 2010. These issues are now resolved and uplifts have been gradually rolling out to this service area.

3.5 Overall, the initial impact of COVID-19 has meant the project initially lost three weeks of productivity, whilst people adapted to new ways of working and we worked to overcome technical issues. The project team are still working towards the June 2020 deadline.

Getting the right skills and resources assigned onto the project.

3.6 As previously reported, due to the recruitment and retention issues the Council did not have the necessary skills and capacity to develop replacement systems.

3.7 Therefore, the following actions have now been taken:

- A second developer has been recruited to resume the delivery of several replacement databases and this work is now being picked up.

- The project team are still reviewing alternative options for long term resource requirements in relation to Access 2010 databases. Option being considered include use of internal resource and outsourcing all or parts of the work to external providers under the council's supplier framework.

Directorate engagement and support

3.8 As Members are aware, business engagement is crucial to ensuring the successful completion of the removal of Access 2003. As we now have additional resources to help with the rollout of uplifted databases, we can increase communication. It was agreed at the last Access project board that a message would be circulated to keep the momentum going and remind service areas that continued compliance is still a priority.

Stop creation of new MS Access 2003 or 2010 databases

3.9 Service areas are fully aware they are unable to create new databases and the project closely monitors this and report statistics on this at future meetings. Any new databases found by the scans of the network drives will continue to be deleted.

3.10   Members will note that no new databases have been created during this reporting period. The project team can confirm at the time of writing this report, that no new databases have been created since the end of January 2020.

Replacement of Access 2010 databases

3.11   The long term replacement work of the converted databases and MS Access 2010 is currently being scoped out and planned in. The project are currently working with the Cabinet Office to agree an appropriate project timeline for the replacement of Access

2010 and conversations are taking place to agree the timescales. Conversations with the Cabinet Office have been positive and they are supportive of our planned approach. Some of the tasks are already underway including the analysis planning and the assessment and categorisation of the 2010 data. This will enable us to scope out how many databases need replacing in phase 2 of the project. We will share the formal response from the Cabinet Office with the audit committee.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1. Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 Significant consultation and engagement has taken place with all service areas and continual challenge must be maintained.

4.2. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 There are no issues in relation to Equality and Diversity or Cohesion and Integration.

4.3. Council policies and best council plan

4.3.1 The Access replacement are part of the Council's wider compliance programmes for General Data Protection Regulations, Public Services Network Information Assurance, Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards and Data Security and Protection Toolkit.

4.4. Resources and value for money

4.4.1 Analysis by DIS shows that the essential requirements of many of the databases can be met by Council solutions such as SharePoint lists or corporate case management solutions. This means services accepting the corporate solutions offered and adapting business processes whilst having solutions that meet the primary requirement of the original database.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 Delegated authority sits with the Director of Resources and Housing and Senior Information Risk Owner and has been sub-delegated to the Chief Digital and Information Officer under the heading "Knowledge and information management" in the Director of Resources and Housing Sub-Delegation Scheme.

4.5.2 There are no restrictions on access to information contained in this report.

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 Microsoft Access 2003 Risks

There is a risk the June 2020 deadline will not be met, compounded by issues caused in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Availability of business areas and

prioritisation of work in response to COVID means the rollout and completion of database tests has been slower than originally planned.

Mitigation: Additional resources have been added to the team to assist with uplifts and an early decision was taken by DIS to continue with this project as a priority, when work was being reviewed in the immediate reaction to the pandemic. The project was not placed on hold and issues have been immediately raised and responded to swiftly.

4.6.2 Microsoft Access 2010 Risks

Dependencies on service areas to work with the project in the timescales we need them to.

Mitigation: Services have been directed by CLT to prioritise this work, and other compliance work, over other work. This message will need to be reiterated once Access 2010 analysis begins and the project will pick up on this communication.

The risk of not getting the right technical resource recruited for this project.

Mitigation: All avenues to recruit the necessary skills and capabilities are being employed as per 3.7.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Director of Resources and Housing and the Chief Digital and Information Officer continue to ensure this project is prioritised, this has been readdressed gven the current situation and is still a priority project. CLT have been informed and are provided with regular updates, with escalation routes established. Risks are been managed, with remediation monitored by the Access Project Board.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report and support the actions therein.

7. Background documents[1]

N/A

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[1] The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

ANNEX 1 – High Level Project Plan Milestones.

Tasks	Timescales		Comments
	From	**To**	
Categorisation of the different solution options for Access replacements. E.g. What are reporting solutions, what can be done by exisiting systems and so forth.	20.01.20	29.01.20	Complete
CLT stakeholder communication	14.01.20	17.01.20	Complete
Conversion from Access 2003 to Access 2010	31.10.19	30.06.20	See work remaining at Annex 1
Removal of Access 2003 runtime	01.05.18	30.06.20	
Access 2010			
The Solution Architect through review of each database is determining the target solution and as a result able to estimate the resourcing requirements to replace them within the available timeframe.	29.02.20	TBC	
Analysis of data sensitivity within the databases (e.g. personal and sensitive data) in order to determine the priority	24.02.20	TBC	
Continual scanning with focus on MS Access 2010	March 2020	July 2020	The inventorying will entail gathering a data inventory from across the network
Delivery of MS Access 2010 replacements depending on agreement with Cabinet Officer regards compliance requirements.	TBC	30.06.21	Delivery covers **all** remaining Access databases across the estate. Whilst dates are TBC, we're working closely with the Cabinet Office to plan and confirm these dates

ANNEX 2 MS Access conversion statistics per Directorate.

Note the increased number in the testing stage, we now have dedicated resource on the conversion team to assist with the engagement to work on getting them live as soon as possible.

DIRECTORATE	NEW	IN PROGRESS	WAITING ON BUSINESS	ON TEST	AWAITING GO LIVE
Adults & Health	0	1	0	0	0
Children & Families	0	0	1	0	0
Communities & Environment	0	2	1	21	2
City Development	0	8	13	70	0
Resources & Housing	0	28	0	51	0
West Yorkshire Joint Services	0	2	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	41	15	142	2

Key descriptions:

New (Not yet started) – Work has not begun on a database yet and is awaiting the developer to begin assessing and converting.

In progress – Work has begun on converting the database and the database is currently with the developer to complete.

Waiting on Business – This status is used for the project team developers to track whether we are awaiting answers from business areas about functionality of the database, whether it is still required (due to infrequent use) or discussing dates for hand over of the database with the up to date version of runtime.

On test – In user testing and awaiting feedback from user about whether database can be signed off as successfully converted or if errors have occurred and further development is needed.

Awaiting go-live – Access 2010 database is ready to go-live and Access 2003 database can be removed. Agreeing a swap over date with the business.