

**Report of Director of Resources and Housing  
Report to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee**

**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019**

**Subject: Applications Portfolio Programme – Update on Access project**

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

**Summary of main issues**

The Public Services Network (PSN) was set up as an assured route for information sharing by central government, to facilitate shared services. It acts as a compliance regime that serves as both a commitment to a basic level of information security for connecting government departments and local authorities and also a level of trust between Leeds City Council and other public services.

Due to more stringent compliance controls brought in by the Cabinet Office in 2014 the Council has worked hard to ensure it meets PSN compliancy. The Cabinet Office contacted the Council through the Chief Executive in January 2017, to ensure that the Council brought itself into compliance as soon as possible. PSN accreditation was awarded in 2018 on the basis that good progress had been made and with the assurance the Council will remove Access databases running on the 2003 version by December 2019.

**Recommendations**

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report and be assured that considerable effort is being undertaken to rectify the current situation with regards to the Council’s approach to maintaining PSN compliance and where progress has been made.

The Access Project Team recommends providing the Committee with another update paper on Access progress for the next meeting.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

1.1 To provide Corporate Governance and Audit Committee with an update on the current position on Access databases and compliance to PSN.

## **2. Background information**

2.1 The council relies heavily on a large number of 2003 Access Databases. This software is unsupported and carries a 'critical' score in the IT Health Check (ITHC).

2.2 Specifically, Access 2003 Runtime is the issue for PSN Certification, not 2010 as an example (so those are not currently in scope for the 2019 deadline).

2.3 The project initially identified over 300 live databases which needed to be migrated to managed systems to ensure services are able to continue without disruption. A plan is in place with proposed timescales for completion by end of December 2019.

2.4 Re-application for PSN Certification was made to the Cabinet Office at the end of May 2018 using the November 2017, mid-year IT Health Check. The residual 'Security Gaps' were detailed and signed off by Tom Riordan, Chief Executive. As detailed above, PSN accreditation was awarded in 2018 with the assurance we will remove Access databases running on 2003 by December 2019.

2.5 The PSN accreditation award was not solely based on the Access remediation commitment and we have subsequently been awarded our current PSN certificate until 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

## **3. Main issues**

3.1 The project team has appointed additional resource to focus on the replacement of the databases and help these progress. However, progress has not been at the pace first anticipated. Factors impacting on the slow progress of the replacement programme include:

- Resources available within services to engage with the project team
- The heavy reliance of services on these databases and potential business impact of the changes
- The continued creation of new Access 2003 databases. Every month, new databases are discovered by the Project Team. These are picked up on a monthly scan, following which the Project Team have to contact the service responsible and arrange for deletion.

3.2 In order to successfully achieve the project deadline, following advice from the Cabinet Office, the Information Security Assurance and Compliance (ISAaC) Board has agreed to upgrade the remaining databases (and those not pending replacement) to Access 2010 which is currently still compliant.

3.3 The work began to convert the databases w/c 14th October 2019. Multiple resources have been identified to work solely on converting them. As soon as the database is converted and tested, it is passed to services to test themselves before switching over to the upgraded version.

3.4 This is only a short term solution and the Council must eventually move away from Access entirely. Plans are in place to commence the removal of Access 2010

databases from January 2020. The Cabinet Office have accepted our progress and current plans.

- 3.5 The upgrading of the databases is a complex process, but the project team are focussed on reducing the number of users reliant on 2003 as quickly as possible. Isolated work environments have been set up to ensure the team are securely and separately working on the databases, to avoid impact on the existing database. The team has successfully converted five databases and the work to convert the quick wins (i.e. smaller databases with less data) will speed up. Two additional developer resources have been recruited to assist with this work and focus just on this task.
- 3.6 The project team are still working towards the December deadline. However if there is any slippage into 2020, this will not impact on the current PSN award, as our current certification is valid until August 2020.
- 3.7 The project team will continue to work with service areas to replace the databases longer term, alongside the temporary upgrade. Planning is underway to remediate the 2010 databases for phase two of the project and this work will begin in 2020.
- 3.8 The project has been heavily focussed on removing the ability to access the 2003 databases (known as the 'runtime') in the last reporting period. The 2003 runtime is where the security risk is, rather than with the databases themselves, so it's important for the project to progress with the removal of this from across all users. As some users still need to access the databases until we replace them, the project had to ensure a group of users maintained access via the runtime. The current plan involves reducing this number further in November 2019 to continue to show progress. We have successfully reduced the runtime figures from 10,008 users to 4077 users so far.
- 3.9 The current PSN certification has been awarded until 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020, following efforts from various projects and teams to remediate the issues identified. This is with the caveat that Leeds City Council fulfils its remedial action plan, as presented to the Cabinet Office. We will reapply for our certificate on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- 3.10 The project has recently worked with internal audit over the course of four months on an audit of the Access project, where the report has now been circulated and the control environment was cited as Acceptable. The report also acknowledges that additional work will need to be undertaken to identify alternative solutions to achieve the aim of moving away from using Access and this still remains the main objective of the project and the work to replace the databases long term will continue alongside the conversions.
- 3.11 Following a recommendation from the internal audit report, the project will report on the figures in more detail going forward, breaking down the categories further to more clearly demonstrate the project status within the engagement stage. The current figures are based on the previous reporting method with the basic gateways and the project team are working on a more detailed breakdown for future reports.
- 3.12 The data below gives the current statistical breakdown by status of the databases in each directorate.

**It is important to note that the overall list of databases also includes back ends to databases, as well as copies and back ups, so they are not necessarily made up of a separate number of databases that need to be individually actioned by the project.**

Directorate	Number of database March 2019	Number of database June 2019	Number of Database Nov 2019
Adults & Health	2	2	2
Children & Families	9	9	8
City Development	107	120	103
Communities & Environment	44	45	45
Resources & Housing	98	74	73
West Yorkshire Joint Services	n/a	4	4
Unknown*	28	2	2*
	<b>Total: 288</b>	<b>Total: 256</b>	<b>Total: 237</b>

\*The two remaining unknown databases are no longer in use and access has been restricted.

#### Conversions from Access 2003 to Access 2010

Total Number to Convert	Converted	Still to Convert
237	11	226

The main objective with the conversion piece of work is to demonstrate progress in reducing the number of 2003 runtime instances across the estate. We currently have two internal developers dedicated to this task with another developer due to join the team on 11/11/2019.

## 4. Corporate considerations

### 4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation has taken place across service areas, along with Application Managers and Business Partners to gather the information needed to assess the status of the databases. Regular communications and updates are planned in and provided to the key stakeholders.
- 4.1.2 Engagement with service areas takes place regularly and is planned in on an ongoing basis, to reassure them, provide updates and discuss potential solutions. We are consulting with the Information Management and Governance service where necessary.

### 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 project falls under a large programme of work within DIS called the Application Portfolio Programme. This programme is set to look at all applications to ensure the Council meet statutory and regulatory requirements and where possible reduce the overall cost to the Council via rationalisation. The Access replacements will take into account the other projects under the programme, e.g. GDPR and Cloud Security Principles to ensure we continue to remain compliant whatever the new solution.

#### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 The approach to resolve the Access 2003 databases is to remove or replace with suitable in-house solutions initially, thus saving time and money. Therefore internal resource is being utilised and value for money sought. Initial analysis shows that the majority of the databases can be replaced by in-house developed solutions, such as SharePoint lists or corporate case management solutions.
- 4.4.2 There are no issues in relation to resources and value for money.

#### **Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

- 4.4.3 Delegated authority sits with the Director of Resources and Housing and Senior Information Risk Owner and has been sub-delegated to the Chief Information Officer under the heading "Knowledge and information management" in the Director of Resources and Housing Sub-Delegation Scheme.
- 4.4.4 There are no restrictions on access to information contained in this report.

#### **4.5 Risk management**

##### **Access Risks**

##### **Timescales**

- 4.5.1 The project has concerns due to the lack of information being provided within timeframes that will potentially impact on timescales for delivery. This is due to a number of factors, including services being unclear about who manages or owns their databases (i.e. staff who built it have now left the council) and the level of information which is held. The project team are working with service areas to identify this information and will escalate any problem areas.
- 4.5.2 The amount of data held in the redundant databases and where it needs to go. Identifying what we need to keep and do not.
- 4.5.3 Dependencies on service areas to work with us in the timescales we need them to, e.g. providing information in a timely manner, being able to implement a new solution within timescales and working around their usual business workload. It's been identified by more than one service area that they have restrictions on when they can implement new solutions (e.g. financial reporting period) and timescales for new solutions in the pipeline to be delivered (e.g. Housing's new solution). Communication has been established with the other projects to ensure any slippage is communicated urgently.
- 4.5.4 Databases which are live and in use which the project are not aware of. Work has been done to identify the databases in use, but there is a small risk there are other databases in use which tools have not yet identified – meaning the number to work with could be bigger. The project has mitigated this as much as possible and without completely removing essential access to databases, it's not possible to fully restrict creation of new databases.

4.5.5 The conversion exercise may pose further risks and issues to the overall timeline but the detail and impact of these will not be known until we begin the work to convert and unpick each database. Every database is unique and contains different VBA code, so until we begin the conversion for each one, we can't determine the complexity. We are reducing this risk by referring to the analysis already gathered on each database, e.g. size of database and data they contain.

## **Resource**

4.5.6 The amount of resource needed once the work progresses to deliver in the timescale needed with the correct skills, is a risk, if this cannot be provided. We have recently allocated additional resource to the Power BI reporting team for the database conversions and have agreed a way forward for identifying alternative solutions without the need to depend solely on a Solution Architect resource.

## **PSN Risks**

- 4.5.7 Should action against the current PSN Remediation plan not be to the satisfaction of the PSN Authority the council will have to withstand a number of risks.
- Having now been taken out of 'escalation' through remediation and into a period of compliance the Council will have to re-enter remediation and continue with close assessment of activities by the Cabinet Office.
  - Should continued improvement not be made; the Head of PSN can place the Council back into 'escalation' and inform the Information Commissioners Officer, which could culminate in the revisiting of the audit conducted by the ICO in 2013 to ensure compliance against the Data Protection Act.
  - The Head of PSN could inform the Deputy National Security advisor to the Prime Minister, who could in turn conduct an assessment based on the national risk profile.
  - The Head of PSN could also instigate an external audit of all our security systems by the National Cyber Security Centre. The Council could end up under partial commissioner control.
  - Ultimately, the Head of PSN could instigate a complete 'switch off' from PSN services.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 The actions outlined in this report are being managed both in the project scope and through to service delivery and any risks such as timescales have been identified (as above) and we are working with service areas and teams within DIS to remove the databases within the timeline.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report and be assured that considerable effort is being undertaken to rectify the current situation with regards to the Council's approach to maintaining PSN compliance and where progress has been made.

6.2 The project team recommends providing the Committee with another update paper on Access progress for the next meeting.

**7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

None

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<sup>1</sup> 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.