

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

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

**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**

Concern was raised at the November 2019 Corporate Governance and Audit committee with regards to the progress being made on the Access 2003 database replacement project which must be completed before the Council is subject to a Public Services Networks compliance Healthcheck in July 2020.

It was reported at that board that progress had been slow due to issues with skilled technical resources being available to do the work and conflicting priorities.

This report updates members on the progress made to remedy the situation and get the project back on track.

**Recommendations**

- 1.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report and support the actions therein.
- 1.2 The 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 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.
- 2.2 Microsoft Access 2003 is no longer supported by Microsoft and therefore could introduce a cyber security risk. The Council must move away from Microsoft Access 2003 as soon as possible, and at latest by July.
- 2.3 Microsoft Access 2010 will go out of support at the end of October 2020 and the Council will need to migrate from it before end of June 2021.
- 2.4 Microsoft Access is a tool that is heavily relied upon in services and underpins important business processes, for example in Finance, Children's and Highways.
- 2.5 The project initially identified 534 Access 2003 databases in May 2018. The project is currently working on 237 databases, either to be replaced and/or converted by the project. Of these, 31 are 'pending deletion' leaving 206 to resolve.

## **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 Since the last board work has focused on the following:

- a) Ensuring the right technical expertise and amount of resources are assigned onto the project.

A new Solution Architect (SA), with the right expertise to determine and decide the optimal plan of action for each database, has been assigned to the project as of 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2020.

A Business Analyst (BA), is assigned to the project with the expertise to determine the requirements for replacement (as in what the database does that an alternative solution would have to do).

It was determined necessary to recruit a number of technical developer resources be dedicated to do the work of converting Access 2003/2010 databases into alternative solutions. DIS are currently putting specifications out to the contractor market and a requirement to the new Digital and Information Service supplier framework to address this. This issue was compounded by a further contractor resignation in December and the Christmas break.

- b) Challenging and reviewing the methodology for moving off Access 2003 in the timeframe.

The methodology is:

The BA ascertains the requirement for the database and challenges its value. The SA determines the plan of action which is move the service to use an existing system that meets the majority of the requirement, develop an alternative using LCC tools or buying or building an alternative. In cases where it will be impractical to replace the database by July, there will be a migration to Access 2010. Different resources, including those in services, are then required to do the implementation of the option.

- c) Challenging the project management, governance and escalation arrangements.

The project management arrangements, e.g. resource and governance on this project will be strengthened. Resources will not be taken off the project without escalation to the Chief Officer. Now that there is a revised scope a fortnightly board is to be set up and run from the 31<sup>st</sup> January that will initially be chaired by the Chief Digital and Information Officer with the Head of Information Management and Governance as the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO).

- d) A communication has gone to services instructing them that they must not create new databases which compound the problem. The Director of Resources and Housing will ensure that there is visibility of the issue at Corporate Leadership team.

- e) Re-baselining the plan:

3.2 The table below demonstrates the revised milestones:

Milestone	Actions	Planned date
<b>Set up of revised team and development of more granular plan.</b>	<p>Assess the problem and plan of action of each database.</p> <p>Recruit resource to do the work.</p> <p>Provide clear communication to services.</p> <p>Kick off with revised arrangements.</p>	Feb 2020
<b>Phase 1 CRITICAL MILESTONE</b>	The deletion, replacement* or conversion** of	30.06.20

	Access 2003 databases	
<b>Phase 2 CRITICAL MILESTONE</b>	Deletion or replacement of Access 2010 databases	30.06.21

\*Replacement with an alternative solution

\*\* Conversion to Access 2010

#### **4. Corporate considerations**

##### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 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**

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

##### **4.3 Council policies and best council plan**

- The Access replacement are part of the Council's wider compliance programmes for GDPR, PSN IA, PCI DSS and IG Toolkit.

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

- Analysis by DIS shows that the essential requirements of many of the databases can be replaced by current in-house developed solutions such as SharePoint lists or corporate case management solutions. It may be necessary for some services to make appropriate trade-offs in terms of accepting slightly less functionality whilst having solutions that meet the primary requirement of the original database.

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

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

##### **4.5 Risk management**

## **Ongoing risks that have not been noted so far in this report:**

- 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.

Mitigation: The project team are working with service areas to identify this information and will escalate any problem areas to the Director of Resources & Housing to be picked up with the respective Director or head of service.

- 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). Regular communication has been established with the other projects to ensure any slippage is communicated urgently.

Mitigation: Services to be directed by CLT to prioritise this work, and other compliance work, over other work.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 Work has been done to re-base line this project, assign the right skills and expertise as well as introduce increased rigour to its management and governance. This will result in a more detailed understanding of work that needs to be done and the plan of delivery that we can be more confident in.

## **6. Recommendations**

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

N/A

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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.