

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

4th October 2011

IT SYSTEMS RELATING TO MAPPING AND PLANNING - REQUEST FOR FUNDING

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Jinny Pearce, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport
Portfolio Holder Consulted	September 2011
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning and Regeneration & Deb Poole, Head of Business Transformation
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not Applicable
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

Changes to procedures and data transfer formats in communicating data between Central and local government mean that the urgency of upgrading Redditch Council IT software has increased, and therefore funding for this needs to be identified in order that the Council avoids the risk of defaulting on its contract and also paying a fine.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

- 1) a sum of £22,350 be allocated in the 2011/12 Capital Programme to enable the necessary IT upgrades and the Capital Programme be amended accordingly;

subject to which, the Committee be asked to **RESOLVE** that

- 2) authority be given for expenditure of up to the sum detailed in 1), above, for the reasons summarised in this report.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 As part of the budget bid process for 2012-13 these software upgrades were to be included in a bid for capital funding, however this need has brought forward the urgency of upgrading the software.
- 3.2 There is a potential financial risk to the Council of non compliance with the formal agreement. In addition there would be subsequent annual charges for using the Ordnance Survey derived electronic map data.

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- 3.3 The relevant Service Manager in Financial Services has been consulted with regard to the financial implications.
- 3.4 The Development Management Manager and officers in the business development team would work together on these proposals, with support from ICT services officers as necessary.

Legal Implications

- 3.5 There is no specific legislation relevant to this matter, although the PSMA (Public Sector Mapping Agreement) would be governed by contract law and data protection law as appropriate.
- 3.6 A solicitor in Legal Services has been consulted with regard to the legal implications, which are minimal in this case.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.7 Under the terms of the PSMA contract, mapping services are provided to local authorities free of charge, subject to conditions relating to the two way flow of information. This includes the now weekly provision of data back to the National Address Gazetteer centre from local authorities, which is an automated process. Currently, this data is automatically generated from within the Idox Uniform system and returned electronically. [The PSMA is an agreement that lasts for ten years, and replaces the previous MSA (Mapping Service Agreement) which negated the need for local authorities to pay approx £40-50,000 per annum (p.a.) for the electronic mapping data needed for use by the Council.]
- 3.8 Due to upgrades and changes to processes centrally, this weekly provision of data can no longer be carried out for Redditch Borough Council after the end of September 2011, as the version of the software used is too out of date, not supported and in need of upgrade.
- 3.9 Each new version of the software has to be purchased by the Council, and after a defined period from launching a new version, the software provider usually diminishes the amount of support until they cease to provide support for older versions when problems arise, which is the situation that now exists. The linked software for public access that feeds information from uniform will no longer work once uniform is upgraded to version 8 and so a new public access module would also need to be purchased, in order to maintain our existing customer service of making information available through the Council website.

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- 3.10 The upgrades required had previously been identified as necessary, and were due to be included in a capital bid for the next financial year, along with other software enhancements. However, this also relates to the risks identified below. Therefore this is an advanced request for funding that would have been made soon anyway.
- 3.11 It is imperative that the Development Management function can continue to operate in accordance with the statutory framework relating to the processing of planning applications, and therefore it is important that the software is well maintained, up to date and supported. This clearly assists the team in contributing towards a well managed organisation and all the other benefits that the service provides. It should be noted that other services also use the uniform software and so would also benefit from its upgrade and the benefits that brings to users. No other services would suffer any decrease in customer service provision as a result of these upgrades. These services include building control, local land charges, licensing and environmental health services currently. (Other services are also considering its purchase as part of their reviews.)
- 3.12 The data provided back by the Council to the Ordnance Survey also assists in the national compilation of statistics etc that help to inform our evidence base for policy making.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.13 As a result of the software upgrades, customers would experience a better way of accessing planning data online which would be more customer friendly.
- 3.14 In terms of central government being our customer, the upgrades would result in us being able to provide the service that they require and therefore clearly be of benefit to our customer.
- 3.15 The upgrade would simply replace an existing information source in an easier to use format, and therefore the range of methods of accessing data for planning would not change and therefore there is no perceived change or detrimental implication for diversity and/or equalities.
- 3.16 As a result of upgrading Idox Uniform from v7 to v8.1, the links between it and the web based software for viewing planning data online would also need to be upgraded, otherwise there would be a loss of service provision in this respect.

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 The risk of not spending the money on upgrading the software is that the Council could incur a fine of up to £100,000 for not complying with the agreement, and then in a worst scenario case have to be removed from the contract for a period (subject to severity of non-compliance), which would result in an additional £100,000 pa charge. This would not negate the need to spend the funds identified in this report to cover the costs of upgrading the software and so would be in addition to the funds now being sought.
- 4.2 A two stage approach is in place in relation to these changes, whereby the request was that the changes required would be in place by 30 September 2011. However, if this was not technically possible, then having a plan in place that clearly demonstrated that the matter was in hand and identified that the new requirements would be met on or before 31 January 2012 was considered to be acceptable and sufficient to avoid the imposition of a fine. Therefore, the money needs to be allocated now in order that an order can be placed and the software upgraded, tested and made live before the end of January 2012.
- 4.3 The risk to service provision of using unsupported software is also quite high in planning, as the loss of information both for customers and for officers, as well as the loss of function, would render the service very difficult to perform, if it were to continue for a significant length of time (in excess of one day). In consultation with colleagues in the business development team, the risk of the software being unsupported had been identified and considered, hence the likely forthcoming capital bid for these funds that would have been made.
- 4.4 The risk to service users of losing a source of planning data if the online module is not upgraded alongside the main software is also of concern to officers, and this is why this element is included in this bid, in order that there is no loss of service provision, however temporary (other than whilst the software itself is being replaced).

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Break down of funds sought

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

PSMA

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APPENDIX 1: FUNDS SOUGHT URGENTLY

Software	Upgrade required	Cost
Uniform	Upgrade to v8.1 test	£1900
	Upgrade to v8.1 live	£950
	Upgrade to oracle 11	£4500
Public access	Upgrade to v8.1	£15000
		£22350