

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE NON-KEY DECISION

Decision Taken By: Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing	Decision Number: D240047MEM
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Date: 13 May 2024

Decision(s) and Reason(s)

UPGRADE TO INTEGRA CENTROS FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Council's Financial Management System, Integra, is one of three financial systems that affect all services within the authority. It records all the Council's financial transactions, is used by Services to pay Supplier Invoices, raise sundry debts for services received, provides budgetary control information and is used to prepare the Council's Statement of Accounts for approval on an annual basis.

The system was initially installed in 1999 and has gone through two major changes affecting service users and improving the quality of information provided.

Integra's software company Integrated Business Solutions Ltd, have informed us that they will cease the software support for the existing version of the software, known as Integra 2, from 31st March 2025. This means that any issues with the software, such as security vulnerabilities and bugs, will no longer be addressed and workarounds will be needed. A newer version of the system known as Integra Centros is available for the Council to move onto and offers additional features such as

- Enhanced security and audit controls.
- Refreshed user interface including responsive design and activity specific workspaces.
- Extended reporting functionality including support for Power BI.
- Support for multi-company / multi tenancy organisation.

The Director of Finance & Transformation and her accountancy team have carried out an assessment of the newer system and has carried out some soft market testing, using the G Cloud Framework, to assess the functionality of other systems on the market and their financial costs.

The conclusion of this exercise was that an **upgrade** to Integra Centros would provide the best option to the Council both financially and operationally, as a prolonged implementation of new software could cause resources to be drawn away from other key corporate projects over the forthcoming year.

Further to this, Services expressed a view for enhancements to the current software to aid service functionality. These enhancements were discussed with the provider who can offer the added functionality through additional modules.

The IT team has confirmed that the approach is consistent with the IT & Digital Strategy.

Other local authorities who have implemented Centros have been contacted and no issues have been identified with either functionality or implementation of the software.

Project management on the upgrade will be run in-house with support from the Council's software supplier. The appropriate skill-set exists within the Accountancy team to undertake this role. The upgrade is likely to take several months and in order to avoid key dates for financial information, year end, the Council will push for as early an implementation date as possible.

In order to free up the resource for in-house project management, Management Team will be asked to consider temporary 'backfilling' to ensure that core work is maintained.

The upgrade to Centros will involve the base software, upgrades to current reporting software and the additional modules requested by Services; and will require a budget of £80,500 allowing for a small contingency for additional support from IBS Ltd if required. This does not include the cost of any potential "backfilling" of posts as set out above and will be dealt with separately.

In addition to this one-off cost there will be a slight increase in annual support/maintenance costs of around £2,800 per year which will be absorbed into the IT budget.

The Transformation Reserve is now made up of two distinct sub-funds following the Cabinet's decision to provide funds for wider transformation within the Council during the Budget cycle for 2024/25.

The budget of £80,500 for this upgrade can be met from the sub-fund set aside for digital enhancements to financial systems and it is recommended through this Decision Notice that the funding be provided accordingly.

After careful consideration of the options, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing RESOLVED that:

- (1) the Borough Council's Financial Management System (Integra) be upgraded to Integra Centros;
- (2) the budget of £80,500 to fund the upgrade be approved;
- (3) the budget for this upgrade be met from the sub-fund within the Transformation Reserve for digital enhancements to financial systems;
- (4) the slight increase in annual support/maintenance costs of around £2,800 per year, in addition to the one-off cost, be noted and absorbed into the IT budget; and
- (5) the need to meet the cost of any potential "backfilling" of posts to ensure continuous delivery of core service be noted.

Reasons for decision:

Without an upgrade to Integra Centros there is a risk that financial record keeping, and production of statutory documents could be hampered if the current software package fails after 31st March 2025. The software system upgrade can be funded from the earmarked Transformation Reserve.

Signed Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing:	K Tanner
Signed Leader:	M Boughton
Signed Interim Chief Executive:	A Stanfield
Date of publication:	16 May 2024

This decision will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of 5 working days after publication unless it is called in.