

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 September 2024

Report of Director of Finance & Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 REVIEW AND PROCUREMENT OF IT SYSTEMS

At the request of the Chair of this Committee, the purpose of this report is to inform Members of the approach the Council adopts in reviewing and procuring IT systems and contracts.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Chair of this Committee has asked for a report detailing how the review and procurement of IT systems across the Council is approached.

1.1.2 In overview, any new business requirement or renewal that comes through IT (whether these are new/existing systems, hardware or services) go through the same process to determine whether they are:

- 1) Fit for purpose and meet the business requirements
- 2) Value for money
- 3) Sustainable over the lifetime of the contract and beyond.

1.1.3 The Head of IT, Ganesh Thangarajah, will be present at the meeting to answer any questions Members might have.

1.2 Processes for review and procurement

1.2.1 The Corporate procurement process is followed for each of the systems to make sure that a fair process is in place to enable maximum visibility of the market to get the most competitive and effective solution. All projects and renewals go through this process.

1.2.2 Routine IT system reviews and adherence to procurement policies play an essential role in ensuring that our technology infrastructure remains efficient, secure, and aligned with organisational goals and strategic priorities. By evaluating existing systems and identifying areas for improvement, we are able

to better support our Frontline and Backoffice services and ensure the customer and staff user experiences are maintained at high levels.

1.2.3 Key benefits of the procurement policies and the systems reviews include:

- **Value For Money:** IT system reviews help identify opportunities to streamline operations, reduce redundant systems, and eliminate unnecessary expenses. By optimising IT infrastructure, we are able to achieve cost savings and maximise the value of our technology investments.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Routine IT system reviews and adherence to the procurement policies support a cycle of continuous improvement within TMBC. By evaluating performance, implementing feedback, and making data-driven decisions, we are able to evolve our IT systems to better serve the community.
- **Optimised Performance:** Routine reviews allows the council to assess the performance of our IT systems, identify bottlenecks or inefficiencies, and implement improvements to optimise system performance. This leads to better service delivery and improved productivity.
- **Compliance and Risk Management:** Regular reviews ensure that IT systems comply with relevant laws, regulations (i.e. GDPR, DPA), and industry standards (PCI DSS). By assessing compliance and managing risks effectively, we have been able to avoid penalties, legal issues, and reputational damage.
- **Innovation and Adaptability:** Regular reviews and procurement policies have help us foster a culture of innovation and adaptability within the council. By staying abreast of technological advancements and market trends, we are able to leverage new solutions to improve service delivery and meet our changing needs
- **Enhancing Security:** Regular reviews help us identify vulnerabilities in IT systems and ensure that appropriate security measures are in place to protect sensitive data and prevent cyber threats. By staying proactive in addressing security risks, local governments can safeguard information and maintain public trust.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** IT system reviews provide valuable insights into the performance and effectiveness of technology investments. This information enables the IT services to make informed choices about upgrading systems, investing in new technology, or reallocating resources to meet evolving needs.
- **Supplier Management:** Procurement policies establish guidelines for selecting vendors, negotiating contracts, and managing supplier relationships.

By following established procurement policies, we are able to ensure fair competition, transparency, and accountability in the procurement process.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involving the relevant service stakeholders in IT system reviews and procurement processes has helped us ensure that technology investments meet the needs of our end-users and support the Council's objectives. Stakeholder engagement promotes buy-in from the services, collaboration, and user satisfaction.
- 1.2.4 IT systems are systematically reviewed and procured (including the Council's technology infrastructure along with the relevant licensing) resulting in improved quality of services rendered and achieving cost savings/avoidance.
- 1.2.5 Full details of the reviews and procurements achieved for substantial projects and systems since 2019 are set out in **[Annex 1]**.
- 1.2.6 Some of the procured IT systems are what could be described as '*core foundation*' systems which are essential in keeping everything else operating on a day-to-day basis. Examples of these are : firewall and cyber security procurement; Microsoft licenses. These systems would be procured and implemented by IT Services on their own.
- 1.2.7 However, when it comes to procuring what we term "business-based" systems (for example: revenue and benefits, planning, electoral services), the procurement is done as a partnership between the relevant Service area (i.e. the "business") and IT Services. Each will have their own requirements – the "business" will specify what they require from the system and IT will specify the technical requirements that need to be fulfilled (e.g. it is cloud based).
- 1.2.8 Those two specifications are put together to form the actual specification for TMBC as a whole and a procurement will need to satisfy those combined requirements. Once procured, the implementation is a partnership between the relevant Service and IT.
- 1.3 External systems**
- 1.3.1 Whilst the majority of the Council's key line of business systems are procured and managed by our internal IT services, there are a number of systems that are provided by Kent County Council, central government agencies and other partners as part of wider service provision. **These systems are outside of the IT infrastructure managed by the Council's IT services. Hence, the Council has no direct management of the system procurement or performance of them.**
- 1.3.2 External systems include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Huume,
- Delta,
- Nrosh,
- MOAT Mimecast,
- Planning Portal
- Commonplace consultation system,
- DWP Data Hub,
- CCTV system,
- DVLA,
- Bailiff systems,
- Whitespace,
- Breathing Space,
- HM Revenues & Customs systems (Inland Revenue, VAT, Construction Industry Tags),
- KCC pension system (iConnect),
- Resilience Direct and Licensing Applications (GOV.UK).

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 All procurements of IT systems are in compliance with the government procurement legislation and the Council's current procurement policy/ purchasing guide **[Annex 2]**.
- 1.4.2 Members should note that the Council joined the Mid-Kent procurement partnership in April 2024 and already the Council is receiving advice, support and guidance in respect of all procurement. The Council's procurement guidelines are currently being reviewed by the Mid-Kent partnership and will be updated in the immediate future; and it is expected that a new Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in the coming months.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Value for money is an integral part and primary objective of IT Services' system reviews and procurement process. The Council has consistently achieved cost

efficiencies over the last five years (2019 – present), whilst improving the operational efficiency of the organisation.

- 1.5.2 The inclusive list of procurement history over the years can be viewed by accessing the [Tenders and Contracts register](#) on the Council's website.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 As a result of the system reviews and changes made by IT services the Council's corporate and operational risks such as business continuity and cyber security have been mitigated/minimised.
- 1.6.2 It is important that systems we operate can adapt to cater for changing needs; and if they can't adapt then alternatives are considered.
- 1.6.3 Like most organisations, the Council is now reliant on IT systems to deliver its services. From a risk and capacity management perspective, it can be more effective to have fewer systems to operate and manage.

1.7 Policy Considerations

- 1.7.1 Business Continuity/Resilience
- 1.7.2 Climate Change
- 1.7.3 Communications
- 1.7.4 Procurement
- 1.7.5 Customer Contact

Annex 1: IT Systems Review & Procurement Road Map 2019 – 24

Annex 2: TMBC Purchasing Guide

Background papers:

Nil

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