



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

Cabinet

6th January 2021

Report of the Director of Social Services, Health & Housing (Andrew Jarrett)

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: THE COMMITMENT TO A PREFERRED I.T. SYSTEM TO SUPPORT SOCIAL SERVICES FUNCTIONS

Purpose of the Report:

1. That Cabinet notes that the risks associated with adoption of the 'Welsh Community Care Information System' at this point in time, are assessed as outweighing the anticipated benefits and that Cabinet endorses the Director of Social Services, Health and Housing's intention to delay participation in the programme until the identified risks have been sufficiently mitigated.
2. That Cabinet endorses The Director of Social Services, Health and Housing's intention to further develop the in-house Social Services Information System (SSIS)

Executive Summary:

3. By deferring on the adoption of WCCIS and instead, developing the SSIS within Oracle Apex, we will ensure that we have an I.T. solution designed specifically for the needs of the Social Services Directorate, that will provide a modern, stable, futureproofed digital platform.

Background:

4. Since the inception of Neath Port Talbot Council in 1996, Children and Adult Services have benefited from having access to a bespoke 'in-house' developed I.T. system, designed to specifically meet the needs of the Directorate. This system is currently built on an Oracle Forms Platform.
5. The SSIS is well regarded amongst both the workforce and our partners, particularly in regards to its functionality. However, it is anticipated that the current version of the system based on Oracle Forms, will become unsupported by the host company in 2023. Consequently, should we wish to remain with an 'in-house' system beyond this date, then we will need to migrate to Oracle Apex.
6. In 2012 it was agreed nationally, that joint procurement should be undertaken for a 'Wales Community Care Information System' (herein referred to as WCCIS).
7. WCCIS is an I.T. system which is being adopted by some Local Authorities and Health Boards with support from Welsh Government. The aim of WCCIS is to meet the requirements of both Community Health (including Community Nursing, Therapies and Mental Health) and Social Care. As at 31st August 2020, there were 13 Local Authorities and 2 Health Boards using WCCIS. Two more Local Authorities have signed deployment orders. Of the remaining 7 local authorities, 3 are in active dialogue with the supplier and 4

are not currently pursuing WCCIS take-up (Neath Port Talbot being one of these).

8. In recognition of the emergence of WCCIS, a scoping exercise was undertaken by my officers to determine the best solution for our medium term I.T. requirements, specifically; remain with an 'in-house' system and future-proof by moving from Oracle Forms to Oracle Apex, or procure and migrate to WCCIS. An analysis of these options are detailed under the section entitled "*Analysis of Medium I.T. System Requirements*".
9. Adult Services are embarking on a significant initiative to remodel their services. Given that the "shelf-life" of our current Oracle Forms system is naturally coming to an end, there is an imperative need to re-write our SSIS to consolidate this change.
10. Neither Oracle Apex nor WCCIS are a viable option in regards to being the platform to support development of the Adult Services system in the short-term i.e. both systems could take up to two years to develop. Following consultation with I.T. colleagues, an interim solution has been identified. It has been agreed that the current system will be re-written within Oracle Forms (version 12). This work will be undertaken within existing I.T. staffing resources and will extend the "shelf-life" of the current system to 2023. This will provide sufficient time to develop a system that will remain in place, into the medium term.

Analysis of Medium Term I.T. System Requirements

WCCIS

11. In the 18 months leading-up to the Covid-19 pandemic, we worked closely with both regional and national colleagues to

better understand the functionality on offer within WCCIS, including its strengths and limitations.

12. During this period we also undertook an exercise in comparing existing WCCIS functionality against our current system and the potential enhancements on offer if we progress with the development of Oracle Apex.
13. In principle, the aspirations of what WCCIS is attempting to achieve is to be commended, particularly with regards to supporting greater integration between health and social care. However, our analysis of the system suggests that this vision of integrated working is still in its infancy and unproven on a large scale.
14. In terms of WCCIS' current functionality, we have witnessed a system that is user friendly and can display basic performance information in the form of dashboards, specific to each user. However, there remains a number of areas of the system, which appear yet to be fully developed; such as the elimination of duplicate records and the utilisation of mobile working.
15. NPT Council's ICT Service Manager has commented that there is a planned refresh of the current WCCIS infrastructure in 2020/21. There is a risk that the cost of the refresh and the agreed development plans may exceed the budget guidelines. Organisations which have signed a deployment order may be liable to meet the excess costs.
16. Our ICT Service Manager has also made it known that the current version of the WCCIS platform is built on a Microsoft Technology stack, which will become de-supported in July 2021. The latest version is a Cloud based offering. The National Program Team do not advocate moving to the Cloud offering at the current time. Costs, functionality and the risks

associated with a migration to the Cloud offering, or maintaining the current version are not yet fully defined.

17. In addition to our analysis of the merits of WCCIS, 'Audit Wales' have undertaken their own review of the system and its implementation and roll-out across Wales. Their report entitled '*Welsh Community Care Information System*' was published in October 2020 (see **Appendix A**).
18. Audit Wales summarised its findings with the following statement; '*Implementation and roll-out of WCCIS are taking much longer and proving more costly than expected. Despite efforts to accelerate the process, the prospects for full take-up and benefits realisation remain uncertain. Some important issues around the functionality of the system, data standards and benefits reporting are still to be fully resolved*'.
19. The Wales Audit report noted that the programme of work to implement and roll out WCCIS and realise its benefits, is complex and ambitious. However, Wales Audit referenced many areas of concern, including;
 - a. Differences in how organisations are choosing to deploy WCCIS currently limit opportunities for integrated working and raise other value for money issues.
 - b. Key aspects of the expected functionality have been significantly delayed. This includes certain enhancements to the original contractual requirements such as integration and mobile functionality.
 - c. Implementing and rolling out the system is proving more costly than expected, with additional investment needed to support related service transformation.

- d. CareWorks' (the system provider) capacity to support implementation of WCCIS has been a concern through much of the roll-out period to-date.
 - e. There have been some significant performance issues with the system over the past year. These have included some complete outages. Wales Audit have heard from the front-line about the impact of system-performance issues on the ability of staff to do their job effectively. Concerns due to system performance issues, including risks to staff and service users, have also been raised in some local reporting by Care Inspectorate Wales.
20. In terms of associated costs, it's worth noting that if we were to commit to WCCIS, there is an expectation on Neath Port Talbot Council that we will pay an annual licence fee of approximately £100K to CareWorks, with any enhancements over and above the standard specification also incurring one-off fees. Dependent upon the nature of these enhancements, fees could be significant.

In-house I.T. System

21. Our existing 'in-house' (Oracle Forms) system has gone through many iterations, each one refining functionality to meet the needs of its users. The autonomy this provides the Directorate is unique within Wales, something which we would have to relinquish should we adopt WCCIS. Similarly, the existing complex workflows within our system e.g. 'Reminders' for frontline workers, is superior to that of any other system we have encountered, including WCCIS.

However, it is recognised that our in-house system could benefit from an improved user interface with dashboard functionality. These enhancements would be provided as part

of the migration to Oracle Apex. It is recognised that to promote greater integration between health and social care within Neath Port Talbot, a more creative approach will need to be developed to achieve this goal. The re-modelling of Adult Social Care provides us with an opportunity to start to address this issue.

Summary Analysis

22. Having fully considered the available options with regards to our medium-term I.T. System requirements, namely; to either develop our in-house system or procure WCCIS, on the balance of proven functionality, and the imperative need to re-write our SSIS system to support the re-modelling of Adult Services, my preferred option would be to; **further develop our in-house system (to Oracle Apex).**
23. It is anticipated that Oracle Apex will take up to 2 years to develop and implement, and thereafter a number of years use to fully realise the benefits of the project / investment, whereupon, it will be our intention to re-evaluate our long-term I.T. requirements, including the option for adopting WCCIS.

Financial Impacts:

24. Having consulted with the ICT Service Manager, it has been estimated that the development of the SSIS Oracle Apex System could take up to 2 years at a cost of approximately £100K per annum (Total implementation cost of £200K).

Integrated Impact Assessment:

25. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report as there is no direct impact on Service Users.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

26. No Implications.

Workforce Impacts:

27. It is anticipated that the development of the SSIS Oracle Apex System will provide an enhanced user experience for the workforce.
28. It is anticipated that during the development period of the SSIS Oracle Apex System, additional staffing resources will need to be allocated to the project, both by Corporate I.T. and the Social Services Directorate. The impact of this could last up to 2 years.

Legal Impacts:

29. No implications.

Risk Management Impacts:

30. The primary risk associated with the development of the SSIS within Oracle Apex is the potential lack of I.T. expertise. In mitigation, I.T. staffing resources will need to be allocated to support this initiative both pre and post implementation.

Crime and Disorder Impacts:

31. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the Council in the exercise of its functions to have “due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent:
 - a) Crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and
 - b) The misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area; and
 - c) Re-offending the area”
32. There is no impact under the Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 through the implementation of WCCIS.

Counter Terrorism Impacts:

33. The development of the SSIS within Oracle Apex is likely to have no impact on the duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts:

34. Section 2(1) of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 introduced a general duty where a person exercising relevant functions must have regard (along with all other relevant matters) to the need to remove or minimise any factors which —
 - (a) increase the risk of violence against women and girls, or

- (b) exacerbate the impact of such violence on victims.
- 35. The proposal contained in this report is likely to have no impact on the above duty.

Consultation:

- 36. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

- 37. It is recommended that:
 - a) That Cabinet notes that the risks associated with adoption of the WCCIS at this point in time are assessed as outweighing the anticipated benefits and that Cabinet endorses the Director of Social Services, Health and Housing's intention to delay participation in the programme until the identified risks have been sufficiently mitigated.
 - b) That Cabinet notes that until such time as the WCCIS is deemed as fit for purpose, Cabinet endorses the Director of Social Service, Health & Housing intention to work alongside Corporate I.T. colleagues and invest in the development of the SSIS within the Oracle Apex Environment.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

- 38. Opting to develop the SSIS within Oracle Apex will ensure we have an I.T. solution designed specifically for the needs of the Social Services Directorate, in addition to being built on a

platform that will provide a stable I.T. environment for the foreseeable future.

Implementation of Decision:

39. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices:

40. **Appendix A:** Audit Wales report entitled; '*Welsh Community Care Information System*'.

List of Background Papers:

41. None.

Officer Contact:

Ian Finnemore, Principal Officer, Business & Performance
Management
Telephone: 01639 763023
Email: i.finnemore@npt.gov.uk

