



OPEN REPORT GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Governance and Resources Committee 10th October 2024

UPGRADE OF *UNIFORM* PUBLIC ACCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PUBLIC ACCESS TEST SYSTEM

Report of Director of Director of Place and Economy

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

District Wide

Report Summary

Uniform is the planning applications case management system (provided by Idox plc) that is used by Derbyshire Dales District Council, and indeed by many or most local planning authorities. The Public Access 'planning portal', available to all via the District Council website, requires upgrading or else will be unsupported. The report therefore seeks to upgrade Idox Uniform Public Access to version 3.5. The District Council does not currently have a test system for Public Access. Implementation of a test system would allow for better management of the system. The report therefore also seeks implementation of a Test system for Public Access.

Recommendations

1. That action be taken to upgrade to Idox Uniform Public Access version 3.5.
2. That a test system be implemented
3. That Council be requested to approve a supplementary revenue budget of £11,500, financed from the General Reserve in 2024/25, to fund the Idox Uniform Public Access upgrade and test software and implementation.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Quote for work to be undertaken.

Background Papers

None

Consideration of report by Council or other committee

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from Press or Public

No

UPGRADE OF *UNIFORM* PUBLIC ACCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PUBLIC ACCESS TEST SYSTEM

1. Background

- 1.1 *Uniform* is the planning applications case management system (provided by Idox plc) that is used by Derbyshire Dales District Council, and indeed by many or most local planning authorities. As with all software applications, revisions are made to ensure security is maintained and relevant updates are incorporated. The report seeks to upgrade Idox Uniform Public Access, which is the public 'planning portal', available to all, via the District Council website.
- 1.2 The upgrade to version 3.5 will bring improved functionality. This upgrade is not a customer installable version. Without the upgrade, the system will be unsupported, and therefore no longer covered by the supplier. Support for the current version ended in July 2024. This could, in time, jeopardise use and security of the system.
- 1.3 The upgrade will include technical improvements such as:
- Progress Tracker timeline bar for Planning Applications – enabling people to see progress on applications
 - Codes added to descriptions in Case Restrictions
 - New Confirmation of account creation, password change, or email change form and updated meaningful error responses for those who have already completed the process
 - New Consultee Response By field added which maps to Uniform
 - Comments document now states when no case officer assigned
 - Enhanced look and feel
 - Additional compatibility support
 - A new version of Public Access Mapping
 - Functional changes
 - Admin console updates
 - Bug fixes
- 1.4 The District Council does not currently have a test system for Public Access. Implementation of a test system would allow for better management of the system by checking information to be displayed on the website *prior* to it being displayed publicly. The report therefore also seeks implementation of a Test system for Public Access.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council publishes details of planning applications through the Public Access system onto the website to allow residents and others the ability to access information themselves, 24/7 online.

2.2 There is currently no test system to allow checking of what information is being displayed on the website prior to it being displayed. This elevates the risk of publishing data that should be redacted under GDPR.

2.3 Project Objectives

- Be on the latest supported version of Public Access.
- Provide test sites to allow the development management business support team to test what information is being displayed on the website and ensure that any sensitive information is redacted before applying this to the live site.

2.4 Procurement

- The current system is provided by Idox, and the upgrade and test system are only available through this company.
- The District Council's Procurement Officer has confirmed that the original contract was procured via the Crown Commercial Services Vertical Application Solutions framework RM6259, Lot 3 Housing, Environmental and Planning Solutions. The upgrade and test system will need to be dealt with in accordance with the variation procedure as per clause 24 and joint schedule 2 of the contract and Contract Standing Order 28
- A waiver will be applied under Contract Standing Orders where the Council require upgrades to existing software packages or require repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment that are specific to that machinery or equipment.

2.5 Estimated costs

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| • Cost of PA 3.5 Upgrade – Live and Test | = £6050.00 |
| • Cost of PA Installation – Test | = £3850.00 |
| • Cost of project management by Idox | = <u>£1650.00</u> |
| Total Cost | <u>£11550.00</u> |

Quote attached (Appendix 1).

2.6 Governance arrangements

- Project management will fall to Idox in conjunction with the Joint ICT Service.

3. **Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

3.1 Options considered:

- 1) Do nothing and use unsupported software which would in time jeopardise the use and security of the existing system
- 2) Update software only to PA 3.5 and not purchase the test system
- 3) Update software and purchase Test system.

3.2 Recommended Proposal – Update software and purchase Test System.

4. **Consultation**

- 4.1 Internal consultation was undertaken with the Joint ICT Service, the Procurement Officer, the Legal Services Manager, the Data Protection Officer, and Finance team.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 Subject to Idox availability in conjunction with Joint ICT Service.

6. Policy Implications

- 6.1 To ensure the provision of a high-quality customer experience and allow the people the ability to access more services and information themselves, 24/7 online.
- 6.2 Members are to note that additional Uniform modules may be required in future to help meet policy needs, such as Biodiversity Net Gain. Further reports will be brought should finances be needed.

7. Finance and Resource Implications

- 7.1 The upgrade and installation of the proposed test system (to the most up-to-date version) and project management by Idox are all one-off costs; none of these will have an ongoing revenue impact on the Idox annual subscription fees. There may be infrequent upgrades to the test system; however, these are expected to be one-off payments and will be incorporated into the fees for the live system.
- 7.2 There is no budgetary provision for the one-off costs that are described in paragraph 2.5. Therefore, there is a recommendation that Council be requested to approve a supplementary revenue budget of £11,500, financed from the General Reserve in 2024/25, to fund the upgrade and test software and implementation.
- 7.3 The financial risk is assessed as low.

8. Legal Advice and Implications

- 8.1 A waiver will be applied under Contract Standing Orders where the Council require upgrades to existing software packages or require repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment that are specific to that machinery or equipment.
- 8.2 A data protection impact assessment checklist has been completed. The Data Protection Officer has stated that as part of the process is an upgrade and the other is the introduction of a test system for what we already have. No personal data is to be processed and a full DPIA is not required.
- 8.3 There are three decisions recommended to be taken as set out at the beginning of this report. If decisions are taken in line with the recommendations, the legal risk of those decisions being challenged has been assessed as low.

8 Equalities Implications

8.3 None – this is a minor software upgrade.

9 Climate Change and Biodiversity Implications

9.3 None – this is a minor software upgrade.

10 Risk Management

10.3 The system upgrade is to improve current software and minimise any security issues.

10.4 The current risk is that without a test system, the council could publish data that should not be in the public realm.

Approvals obtained from Statutory Officers:

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	30/09/2024
Director of Resources (S.151 Officer)	Karen Henriksen	27/09/2024
Monitoring Officer (or Legal Services Manager)	Kerry France	01/10/2024