PREPARATIONS FOR THE MILLENNIUM AND AS400 MIGRATION

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1.   **Purpose**

1.1   To update Members regarding the progress of preparing the Council's Information Technology systems for the Millennium and for migration from the AS400.

2.   **Summary**

2.1   Progress in preparing the Council's Information Technology systems for the Millennium is generally satisfactory but timescales and resources remain tight. A number of projects have now been successfully completed although there are significant problems with the project to upgrade the Social Care database.

2.2   The intensity of this work is causing growing difficulties in providing Information Technology services for new projects around the Council. Members and officers will need to be conscious of this limitation during 1999 and wherever possible plan new projects for next year and beyond.

3.   **Background**

3.1   On 22 July 1998 this Committee approved funds to prepare the Council's Information Technology Systems for the Millennium. Progress was last reported to this Committee on 3 February 1999.

4.   **Progress**

4.1   With the exception of the Social Care system (SSID) upgrade progress on millennium Information Technology preparations has been good. All schools opened the new financial year with millennium compliant financial systems and the project to upgrade their hardware and administrative software is more than half complete. All Housing staff are now using PCs with access to the Council's e-mail and it is still expected that the first three modules of the new Housing Management system will go live at the end of July.

4.2   The new National Non Domestic Rating system (NNDR) has been in use since 22 March. The new Cash Receipting system and Income Processing system has been in use since April, even though conversion to the new Accounts Receivable system won't be complete until November the system is already in use for some functions.

4.3   The old Payroll and Personnel system was successfully upgraded to open the new financial year and enable payroll to run safely until the new Payroll and Personnel system takes over

in August. This years Local Elections were supported by use of the new Elections system and Land Charge Searches are now being processed through a new system using GIS (Graphical Information System) technology. The burner equipment used at the crematorium has now been upgraded and is ready for the millennium.

4.4   **Annexed** to the report is a summary of progress to date for the projects approved by this Committee and provides progress information regarding some other projects where additional funding was not required.

5.   **Issues**

5.1   Information regarding millennium compliance is constantly being updated and from time to time additional testing is being carried out and additional work identified. A small number of PCs which initially passed millennium testing have failed subsequent tests and will need to be replaced. It is hoped that these can be covered by careful management of the existing Information Technology leasing budget.

5.2   The Council uses Microsoft Office on its PCs. During Local Government Reorganisation Office '95 was installed on all PCs and a programme of upgrading to Office '97 is being undertaken when critical support work allows or when PCs are being changed for other reasons. Microsoft have now made it clear that Office '95 is not millennium compliant but that Office'97 is, this will necessitate the completion of the upgrade programme before the end of the year. The Council already has the correct licences to enable this to be carried out but there will be some memory upgrade costs and it will put considerable pressure on technician resources to achieve this.

6.   **AS400**

6.1   The planning of the project to move systems off the AS400 to a UNIX environment has not been completed. The staff who need to be involved both from Information Technology and from Finance have been fully committed to the millennium preparations for the Council's financial systems. The work to plan this project has now started which should enable the budget requirements to be taken into account during the autumn budget planning cycle. It is recognised that this delay is not ideal, however the risks associated with a delay to this project are considerably less than delaying millennium work.

6.2   It is anticipated that it may possible to plan this project to start in late January or February 2000 which should enable the original deadlines to be met, however, until the planning has been completed this is not certain.

7.   **Implications**

7.1   Environmental

The only system with identified environmental implications is the Crematorium (**Annex No.17**). This project is now complete.

7.2   Equalities

Some Council systems are used to support the provision of services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community, failure of such systems could limit the Council's ability to deliver services. e.g. Community Alarms use the Housing Management system.

7.3   Financial

The out turn for expenditure during 1998/1999 on Information Technology millennium preparations was £1.02 million capital and £102,055 revenue with the balance being rolled into the current financial year to complete the remaining work as approved at the February meeting of this Committee.

The original split of budget requirements between 1998/1999 and 1999/2000 was indicative as detailed project plans had not been drawn up at that time. As projects have progressed and contracts have been signed many of the costs have slipped in to this financial year.

These preparations are required to be flexible due to the changing information that is becoming available and it is therefore impossible to be precise about the probable out turn for 1999/2000. At this stage it is still anticipated that the preparations will be completed within the approved budget allocation.

7.4   Legal

Failure of critical systems could leave the Council unable to carry out it's statutory duties. No specific risks are identified at this time.

7.5   Staff and Accommodation

The Payroll and Personnel system (**Annex No. 10**) is necessary to ensure that staff salaries and wages are paid. The change over from the old system to the new system will be timed to ensure continuity of payments to staff.

8.   **Conclusions**

8.1   Progress in preparing the Council's Information Technology systems for the Millennium is generally satisfactory but timescales and resources remain tight. A number of projects have now been successfully completed although there are significant problems with the project to upgrade the Social Care database.

8.2   The intensity of this work is causing growing difficulties in providing Information Technology services for new projects around the Council. Members and officers will need to be conscious of this limitation during 1999 and wherever possible plan new projects for next year and beyond.

Background Papers: None.