

RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE

Item under consideration: REPORT OF THE DIGITAL BUSINESS AND INSIGHTS (DB&I) TASK GROUP

Date considered: 23 July 2024

1. The Digital Business and Insights Task Group was created at the 18 October meeting of the Resources and Performance Select Committee and tasked with considering the course of the SAP Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) replacement project, why the programme had overrun, what had gone wrong, and what lessons could be learned from the project. Details of the Task Group's methodology and findings may be found in full in its report.
2. The final report of the task group contains 18 recommendations. These are listed below and focus on advised changes to the council's business readiness, project management, data, and governance procedures when undertaking projects, and are to be considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 23 July 2024. The recommendations have been considered and a response by Cabinet, detailing how they will be implemented and operationalised, has been prepared and published in this agenda pack.
3. The recommendations were informed by extensive oral witness sessions with many senior officers involved in the delivery of the programme, input from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, and detailed review of contemporaneous committee and Programme Board reports. A Lessons Learned report produced by Mr Phil Hall, an independent consultant commissioned to report on the project's issues in early 2024, was also very valuable to the work of the task group.
4. The report notes the successful aspects of the ERP replacement programme and delineates examples of best practice, and the fact that the council has in fact successfully implemented a new ERP system should be commended. The task group nevertheless identify where improvements are advisable in leadership and governance, business readiness and communication with users, as well as other areas.
5. The report's recommendations are intended to help the council address these problems for future projects through advising what the task group recognised as vital changes, such as implementing new procedures to assess organisational business readiness, ensuring careful monitoring of stage control decisions, and strengthening links between board members and service users, among others.
6. The report of the task group was presented to a meeting of the Resources and Performance Select Committee on 1 July 2024. Members of the committee noted the report and endorsed all its recommendations.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: A robust business readiness assessment to test the functional services' capacity to receive any new system should be a prerequisite of any other programme of this scale or complexity, with weaknesses ideally addressed in advance or, if not, factored fully into the implementation plan, thus enabling a realistic implementation timeline to be set.

Recommendation 2: Future projects should employ greater discipline in stage control, even where there may be time/cost impact.

Recommendation 3: The Council must ensure that robust testing strategies are in place for all projects that require them, ensuring strong environment and data management practices are in place to support this. Testing of new systems, processes and products should not be exclusively supplier-led, benefitting from heavy participation and design by council officers.

Recommendation 4: The Council should make available independent assurance and monitoring of stage control procedures (in projects of any size, if deemed necessary) by a third party (or possibly Internal Audit) to ensure projects have met all relevant entry and exit criteria before progressing to another project stage along their critical path, and to support the programme team and board in making good stage control decisions.

Recommendation 5: The council's Transformation Support Unit should review existing protocols around effective testing regimes, programme stage control, and environment management, and make recommendations to the Resources & Performance Select Committee to help address the issues that occurred in this project and best ensure they do not reoccur in future council projects.

Recommendation 6: Local authorities approaching ERP implementation programmes should secure in-house ERP knowledge of the target system to improve internal understanding of the product, promote understanding of the issues, support effective decision-making and aid in anticipation of any issues.

Recommendation 7: Ensure that the council has sufficient leadership capacity to manage a programme of this scale and complexity by appointing a full-time senior responsible owner (SRO) within the organisation to work alongside the Programme Director. This should be a distinct, full-time senior leadership role for an experienced individual at the level of council leadership and should not be performed by someone with significant other time commitments. This role should work closely with the Programme Director to provide strategic direction, helping the Director to focus on managing and directing the programme itself while the SRO engages with senior leadership and helps to ensure adequate resourcing and ownership among management.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that there are stronger links between board representatives and their service users to deliver a better understanding of service weaknesses and issues at leadership and Programme Board level. This can be

achieved by implementing clear workstreams and sub-boards, chaired by Board Member service leads, for resolving in-function issues. This would help mitigate the risk of disconnection and over-optimism among Board members concerning challenges faced and the likelihood of meeting deadlines.

Recommendation 9: Quality stakeholder engagement and leadership are required to enable effective delivery of programmes of this scale, as well as the associated behavioural change. The council should provide training for Programme Board members on the importance of staff engagement and providing effective ownership and leadership for change when undertaking change programmes.

Recommendation 10: Lead Cabinet Members should have routine access to copies of all relevant Programme Board papers, updates, schedules, proposed decisions and any other relevant materials. The task group discussed the benefits of inviting the Cabinet Member to attend meetings of the Programme Board ex-officio, as an observer, to ensure full visibility of the project. This may have unproductive outcomes on the dynamics of these meetings and won't lead to improvements in this area. As a suggested improvement we recommend that the Lead Cabinet Member is consulted at each critical gate/stage in the programme to ensure full visibility and is included as part of that decision-making process.

Recommendation 11: Greater focus should be given to the behavioural change aspects of implementing new systems and the impacts on users who may be required to work in new ways, ensuring the provision of more, better-timed training, education and support for staff.

Recommendation 12: Ensure that effective user engagement centred on all relevant users and clients begins at the outset of the design process, and that the contract model encourages constructive collaboration and involvement from an early stage of the project. This should include key project stages being led by the appropriate participant, with effective knowledge transfer to the council reinforced by collegiate working.

Recommendation 13: The council should ensure thorough and rigorous data 'cleansing' to streamline the migration process, saving time and staff resource, before the outset of future projects and programmes. This is also recommended for other local authorities approaching ERP implementation programmes.

Recommendation 14: The council is recommended to engage in work to audit and record the ownership of data more widely, with some degree of sampling or 'dip testing' undertaken to test data management processes and the operational ability of related functions. Review of how these will interface with data migration procedures should also be carried out.

Recommendation 15: GDPR and data governance requirements must be considered and engaged at early project stages.

Recommendation 16: The council should implement contracting procedures for new projects that ensure that the full range of different contracting options are considered before project initiation, including contracting different elements of work

under different arrangements - such as limited time-and-materials contracting if deemed appropriate - in recognition of the fact that a hybrid contracting model is likely to encourage a more collaborative approach. These should complement the council's existing Procurement Strategy and Procurement Standing Orders in Part 5 of The Constitution of Surrey County Council.

Recommendation 17: The council should formalise arrangements for significant engagement with stakeholder recipient groups, potentially subject-matter experts, who will be involved or affected by an upcoming project. This can report to aspects of the committee structure as appropriate, such as the Schools' Forum in the case of any project involving schools, for instance.

Recommendation 18: The council should undertake a review of its pre-procurement processes for stakeholder engagement and requirements capture so as to ensure that the needs of stakeholder communities are appreciated in the early stages of future projects.

Cllr Robert Hughes - Chairman, Resources and Performance Select Committee

Date: Wednesday, 3 July 2024

Cllr Steven McCormick - Chairman, Digital Business and Insights (DB&I) Task Group & Vice-chairman, Resources and Performance Select Committee

Date: Wednesday 3 July 2024

Background papers:

[Digital Business & Insights Programme Outline Business Case Report – Cabinet – 29 October 2019](#)

[Digital Business and Insights Programme Update - 8 Oct 2020 - Resources and Performance Select Committee](#)

[Digital Business and Insights Programme Update - 18 March 2021 - Resources and Performance Select Committee](#)

[Digital Business and Insights Programme - Status Update and Lessons Learned Approach - 20 January 2022 - Resources and Performance Select Committee](#)

[Annex 1 - Digital Business Insights Programme Update](#)

[Annex 2 - Digital Business Insights Programme Update](#)

[Annex 3 - DBI Cabinet Report - December 2021 v1](#)

Digital Business and Insights Programme Status Update and Lessons Learnt Approach - 18 October 2023 - Resources and Performance Select Committee

Digital Business and Insights Programme Highlight Reports (various)

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