West Dunbartonshire Council

Report by the Chief Executive

Tendering Committee : 28 November 2007

Subject: Risk & Performance Management System

1. Purpose

1.1. This report contains a recommendation to procure an integrated risk & performance management system.

2. Background

2.1. A project team was set-up in April 2007 to review options for improving our performance management and risk management computer systems which including procuring a vendor solution, sharing a system with other councils or upgrading the internal Action Planning database (APD).

2.2. The APD system was developed in-house in 2003 when there was little in the external market. It meets our basic performance management requirements (but not risk management). It is has basic reporting facilities, no visual aids (such as traffic lights) and users find it difficult to use and access their data.

2.3. The CMT agreed that any new system be funded from the capital allocation for the Risk Management software (total £45,000) as long as it met all the key risk requirements.

2.4. The Tendering Committee on 25th April recommended an open-tender process.

2.5. A report to the CMT on 19th June noted further progress with the tender process and it was agreed that the option of upgrading the APD was not viable. ICT have now scheduled the process of decommissioning the system which now requires a replacement system fully in place and operational by 1 April 2008.

2.6. Further analysis of the options of sharing a system with other councils was undertaken and the CMT subsequently agreed on 31st July to pursue the option of a procuring an external vendor system ourselves.

2.7. The tender documentation was delayed somewhat since the abc consortium declined to assist as they had done in the past and our legal section had to create all the tender documentation.

2.8. The contract was advertised on 23rd August in the Herald and on the supply2gov.uk web-portal with a 14th September return deadline.

2.9. The project team comprises strategy/policy officers from all departments plus the council's risk management advisor, an ICT officer and the research manager from the Community Planning partnership.

2.10. A steering group (reporting to the CMT) comprising the Head of ICT, Principal Policy Officer and other senior strategy officers have met on three occasions to review the project initiation documentation and the progress of the project team.

2.11. The CMT received an evaluation report on the 23rd October which reviewed the tender process and the project team's conclusions; they agreed that an appropriate report be submitted to the Tendering Committee for approval of the preferred supplier.

3. Main Issues

3.1. Tender Process

Some 35 copies of the invitation to tender were dispatched by email. In all cases the companies picked up the advert from the web-site – implying that the newspaper advert route was not value-for-money. 8 companies indicated their intention to tender and return envelopes were sent out to them. 7 tenders were subsequently received and opened by Legal & Administrative and Regulatory Services by the due date & time.

3.2. Synopsis of the tenders received (in alphabetical order)

- 360-Systems offer the Excelsis system. This was developed jointly by St Helens Council and the ODPM and is now supported by 360 systems – a software consultancy. It is 'open-source' i.e. free but will require implementation support, training and ongoing maintenance and enhancement from 360-systems. It is used by several councils – mainly in NW England and by Angus Council in Scotland. A small user group prioritises and funds enhancements. It would need to be installed on a new server (alternatively a one-off web-hosted solution could be implemented for us at an extra cost).
- Aspiren offer the Aspireview system which they developed themselves as a web-hosted performance management solution for the public sector. It is currently used by virtually all councils in the UK to collect housing benefit performance data on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). In addition the National Assembly of Wales requires all public sector bodies to submit their performance statistics using the system. East Lothian is the only council in Scotland using the system corporately.
- CACI offer the QPR system from Finland. They are a software consultancy with rights to sell the QPR system – which is a comprehensive system used by the public and private sector. It has recently been installed by Argyll & Bute. It would normally be installed on a server – although individual web-hosting can be arranged at extra cost

- Corporater are based in Norway and supply their own system – (Corporater) which is used by public and private sector mainly in Scandinavia. They have no user base in Scotland.
- Corvu offer the Corvu system which is a widely used system in both public and private sectors worldwide. It is used by South Lanarkshire – who specifically wanted a server rather than a web-hosted solution. It also would normally be installed on a server – although individual web-hosting can be arranged at extra cost.
- Consilium Technologies Ltd offered the Covalent Software system. only in a web-hosted mode specifically for local government. 70 customers in England and nine councils use the system in Scotland (Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Edinburgh, Moray, East Renfrew, Renfrew, East Dunbarton, Mid-Lothian and West Lothian).
- CTK also offer the QPR system (same as CACI above). They are a UK-based software consultancy but have no user base in Scotland

3.3. Short-Listing

An analysis of the prices quoted in the tender document was carried out (Table 1) as a first screening step. As well as the initial purchase/installation price, potential 'whole-life' costs were estimated for a six-year period and included all training, implementation, ongoing maintenance, user-group fees and hardware where required. A site licence (or an approximate equivalent number of users) was chosen to allow true price comparisons.

The steering group agreed that two of the tenders be considered no further on this basis. The tender from CTK offers the same software (QPR) as supplied by another tenderer (CACI) but at a higher price and has no local user base. The Corporater system is the most expensive and also has no Scottish user base. Thus Corporater and CTK were eliminated at this stage.

The steering group agreed that the resource required to assess fully the remaining five tenders would be considerable and thus the detailed evaluation concentrated on the three companies who offered a system with an initial cost that was within the sum allocated in our capital budget (£45,000). The steering group concluded that other two tenders could be fully evaluated subsequently if none of these first three met our user and technical requirements.

Thus, demonstration versions of the Excelsis, Aspireview and Covalent systems were requested and installed locally. These three systems were then further evaluated by the Project team against all the evaluation criteria published in the tender document. Contacts were also established with the users of these three systems in Scotland and financial evaluations of the company accounts carried out.

3.4. Risk Management functionality

This was assessed against the requirements laid out in the tender. The Covalent system fully meets the risk requirements and is regarded as very user-friendly. The Excelsis system has considerable functionality but cannot integrate risk action plans into the main action planning part of the system is less user friendly and makes less use of graphic displays. Aspireview has limited capacity to actively manage risks (though it can hold basic information) – it is also less user friendly and reporting is limited.

3.5. Strategic Planning functionality

The Covalent system fully meets the requirements and is regarded as very user-friendly. Excelsis is less user-friendly but does have the extra functionality to store the narratives of corporate, departmental and service plans. Aspireview also meets the requirements but is judged to be less user-friendly.

3.6. Performance Indicator functionality

This was also assessed against the requirements laid out in the tender and the Covalent system fully meets our requirements and offers a comprehensive PI system. Aspireview is less user-friendly but does have all the required functionality. Excelsis meets the basic requirements but is not very flexible. Angus Council report that they do not use it for PIs.

3.7. Other functionality

Consilium (Covalent) are working with Doncaster Council to develop GIS-type reporting functionality and their tender contains details and screen shots of this. It is not available in the on-line demonstration system being evaluated. This is an area where many councils are taking an increasing interest as more emphasis is being placed on visual presentation of performance data by ward, neighbourhood etc. Aspiren are also developing this and the system currently can display PI information for housing benefit at the council area level – undoubtedly they will further develop this in the future. Excelsis currently has no GIS type functionality and this would need to be developed (and funded) by the user-group.

The Covalent system has developed a module (again not evaluated) to hold self-assessment Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for IiP, Charter Mark and EFQM and the related improvement action plans etc. This gives the ability to integrate these into the mainstream performance management system. The Continuous Improvement team believe this would be a very useful product to sit along-side the PSIF. Of the Scottish users only Edinburgh are making use of this module to date.

3.8. Uploading & transfer of data

Both Covalent and Aspireview have functionality for users to upload data simply from spreadsheets (e.g. risk registers) and also give us the option of semi-automating the population of regular PI data from our core systems – whereas Excelsis seems relatively limited in this respect. Both Covalent and Aspiren note that they can pre-load historic SPI data.

3.9. Use by Managers

An important requirement is that occasional users such as section heads, other managers, members etc can easily find their data (and update as necessary). Indeed this is the main complaint about the APD. All three systems offer a methodology whereby these types of users can see all their specific actions, PIs and risks on a 'home page'. The consensus amongst the project team is that the Covalent system is somewhat more user-friendly (because of better use of graphics and colour).

3.10. Reporting

Covalent users in Scotland are generally very pleased with the system – and their only complaints seems to be in the area of integrated reporting of PIs and Actions, Risks etc on the same report. Covalent are aware of this and have made the current integrated reporting more flexible in the next release in early 2008. Reporting in Excelsis seems relatively basic as does that in Aspireview.

3.11. Training and Help

The on-line help and printable user manuals from Covalent appear to be very good and comprehensive. Aspireview on-screen help is less comprehensive and those from Excelsis virtually non-existent. Angus reported that they trained their users themselves. The training packages for the Covalent system and Aspire seem comprehensive as long as we ensure we have adequate provision made for them – their trainers work for the companies that created and maintain the systems (which can be an advantage over 'generic' trainers that have little or no connection with the system).

3.12. User Groups

Covalent have nine customers in Scotland and operate an active Scottish user group, which meets at least twice a year. Participants seem pleased with its content, style and usefulness. 360-systems facilitate an Excelsis user group, which is focussed in NW England since they only have one Scottish user. Aspiren operate a Scottish user group (though this appears to be mainly aimed at meeting the DWP's requirements since they also only have one user in Scotland)

3.13. Technical Requirements

Both Aspiren and Covalent system are set-up specifically as web-hosted solutions. All upgrades and maintenance are carried out simultaneously for all users on the core system. By contrast Excelsis would require to be installed on a server here (and a new server would probably be required with attendant costs and space issues). In addition the Excelsis system appears to be a slightly different implementation in each authority as modifications are made by the user group and individual councils and some users take them and others do not.

Performance management is ideally suited to a web-hosted solution since it is not a critical system (being down for a day is not a disaster) – neither does it hold confidential personnel or critical financial data.

The other advantage of the two web-hosted systems is the speed and ease of implementation. The current APD is installed on a server that is due to be decommissioned very soon. ICT have committed to retain access to the system to allow end-year reporting to be completed. The plan therefore is to have a replacement system fully installed, training completed and basic data entered by April 2008. This deadline could be compromised if a new server has to be procured and a system installed here – whereas choosing a web-hosted solution will allow the project to meet these time constraints.

ICT have reviewed the technical proposal of the Covalent system web-hosted solution and believe it offers a sound technical solution – following a few clarification questions. Some users have reported problems with connection speed over the web but they think that this may be more to do with their connection speed rather than any problems with the supplier.

3.14. Financial Evaluation

Our Finance section has conducted a financial evaluation of the seven tenders from the information supplied in their documentation. Further details may be required from the successful tenderer but it is not anticipated that this should prevent the contract from being let.

3.15. Legal Evaluation

Legal were informed of the preferred bidder and asked to comment on the suitability of the tender. While the rest of the tender was compliant with instructions to tender, Covalent should have been identified as a subcontractor in the tender return. Provided that this additional risk has been considered and marked accordingly in the evaluation and suitable guarantees are provided to ensure business continuity, this should not preclude entering a contract with them.

4. Conclusions

4.1. The results of the analysis are shown on Table 2 – where a 1-5 scoring (5 highest) was assessed for each of the criteria and multiplied by the weighting and then totalled for each supplier.

4.2. The scoring indicates that the Covalent system offers the most economically advantageous solution for West Dunbartonshire Council. Being web-hosted it is independent of our hardware situation and can be implemented quickly. It offers all the functionality we require and can be purchased within the allocated budget. It is specifically designed for councils and the company only deal in this product. It has a considerable local user base, as well as extra functionality such as GIS integration and self-assessment.

4.3. West Lothian Council note that greatest challenge that will face us in bringing in the system will be that of culture change and that they have found that Covalent is relatively easily understood by staff and managers and that removes a major excuse for inaction. They also note that the Covalent system has undoubtedly taken them forward in performance management and there is much ground left to cover within the programmes capability

4.4. The Excelsis system has much of the basic functionality we require but is less user-friendly. It would require new hardware. Training, support and help seem to be relatively poor.

4.5. Aspireview offers much of the required functionality (except risk management) and being web-hosted confers the benefits of ease of implementation. It is less user-friendly.

5. Personnel Issues

5.1. There are no personnel implications.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. The purchase of the system plus implementation and initial training to be funded from the 07/08 capital allocation for the Risk Management software (maximum £45,000).

7. Risk Analysis

7.1. The risk in not agreeing to this recommendation would result in a re-tendering exercise and the costs that this would entail. This could impact on the timetable to have the new system operational by April 2008.

8. Recommendation

8.1. The Tendering Committee is invited to accept the recommendation for the purchase of the Covalent system provided by Consilium Technologies Limited to replace the Action Planning database.

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Date: 21 November 2007

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Appendices: Appendix 1- Evaluation of Costs

Appendix 2 - Detailed Evaluation of Short-List

Background Paper: Report to Tendering Committee 25th April 2007
http://wdccmis.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=4233

Wards Affected: All Wards

Appendix 1- Evaluation of Costs

Tender Evaluation - Risk & Performance Management system

Supplier	**360-Systems**	**Consilium**	**Aspiren**	**CACI**	**Corvu**	**Corporater**	**CTK**
System	**Excelsis**	**Covalent**	**AspireView**	**QPR**	**Corvu**	**Corporater**	**QPR**
No of Users	unlimited	Unlimited	Site	500	to	??	200
Server Software licences	£0	£35,000	£12,500	£44,995	£45,000	£75,000	£55,900
User Licences	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£13,224
3rd part licences	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£1,790
Sub-Total	£0	£35,000	£12,500	£44,995	£45,000	£75,000	£70,914
Delivery & installation	£19,200	£0	£0	£1,600	£950	£10,000	incl
Implementation	£0	£3,000	£5,000	£12,000	£19,000	£0	£45,000
Other costs	£0	£0		£1,000	£0	£2,000	£0
Training	£0	£4,000	incl	£6,000	£4,200	£5,000	incl
Sub-Total	£19,200	£7,000	£5,000	£19,000	£24,150	£17,000	£45,000
Total	**£19,200**	**£42,000**	**£17,500**	**£63,995**	**£69,150**	**£92,000**	**£115,914**
Annual Maintenance	£4,000	£8,750	£12,500	£8,999	£9,000	£22,000	£17,360
User Group Fees	£6,000						
Hardware	£10,000	£0	£0	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Total Cost over 6 year period	**£79,200**	**£85,750**	**£92,500**	**£108,990**	**£124,150**	**£212,000**	**£212,714**
Points	5	4	3	3	2	1	1

Appendix 2 - Detailed Evaluation of Short-List (re-evaluation required for Consilium unless all others are systems.)

Criteria	% Evaluation Weight	Covalent	Aspiren	Excelsis
Functional and Other Requirements *- Consultancy* *- Technical Environment* *- General Requirements*	42	5	3	4
The pedigree of the system; *- Specific reference sites* *- Customer base* *- Contractor history* *- User groups*	3	5	4	3
Capability to interface with other corporate systems	5	5	5	3
Delivery times and Ability to commit to prescribed timetable	3	5	5	3
Operational Support : *- help desk* *- maintenance agreement* *- provision for enhancements* *- Documentation provided* *- Online Help Facility*	5	5	4	3
Training	4	5	4	2
Company status and financial reports	3	1	2	4
Costs	35	4	3	5
		453	**325**	**411**
	Ranking	**1**	**3**	**2**

Scoring on 1-5 scale for each criteria