

IMPLEMENTATION OF IDOX DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

1. Introduction

The planning service has a history of enhancing service delivery through the introduction of IT capability. Since replacing a long standing system in 2003, Planning has operated a back office system produced by Plantech, known as the Acolaid system which has formed an effective structure for the operation of processes supporting application determination.

It had always been intended to build on the advances provided by the new system and move to web based operating with all application information scanned on arrival available for public view on the web.

In moving to this next stage, the decision was taken corporately to incorporate it within a Council wide approach to document management. The corporate choice was to develop a wholly new software framework with Trinity Systems to meet the Council's overall needs. Trinity Systems were charged with producing a new system from scratch on the basis that this would meet more precisely the needs of the council and would provide the basis for a system that then could be rolled out for other authorities.

2. Current Situation

Although the objectives of this approach were sound, in practice, the development and introduction of the system within Planning has been difficult. Although the system is in place and operating there are a number of difficulties which can be summarised as follows:

- i) complex and time consuming to operate for all staff involved
- ii) not wholly stable
- iii) it remains a stand-alone system. It has not been adopted by any other Planning Authorities in the country with whom to share user experience.
- iv) documents reside in Meridio and data in Acolaid. The User interface provides no integration between the two systems which requires going into and out of systems continually to move between application detail assessment and the process of application handling.

3. Benefits of Electronic Application Processing

The above operational difficulties have been addressed vigorously by all staff involved but have caused complexity in the operation of the system. However, there have been benefits achieved in adopting the principle of IT based planning application handling, notably the placing of all documents and consultation responses on the web which enables them to be seen by members of the public as application information builds up.

It is no longer necessary to come into Riverside House to view a planning file to be aware of all the information. All information is now stored electronically. Indeed, apart from a file to store plans for site visit purposes, there is no parallel paper file and all officer working is taken from the same electronic file information that is available to the public.

Development of electronic planning application handling has also enabled the council to achieve a high score against the "Pendleton Criteria", which set out nationally the levels of achievement on electronic planning service delivery expected by government. As a result, we have secured additional funding for the service through the Planning Delivery Grant system, which has awarded WDC a total of £90,000 of grant over the three years 2005/06 – 2007/08 for achievements in IT based planning service delivery.

4. Future approach to Planning system

However, notwithstanding these benefits, the lack of development potential for the system through user groups and its inherent complexity cause continuing problems which reduce its effectiveness, create operational difficulties and call its future into question.

In addition, there are financial implications arising from continuing to use the Trinity Systems product. Retention of the system will require commitment to the following expenditure from 2008/09 onwards:

Table 1: future costs of existing system

Costs: 4 years to 2011/12	Amount
Capital costs	£230,000
Revenue costs	£170,000
Total	£400,000

This arises from the need to expend on Trinity upgrades together with continuing support costs for the workflow product and Meridio.

The potential costs are therefore high for a product that has its limitations and whose primary rationale was to work within a corporate approach to document management. As the approach is now evolving into a more responsive one to meet individual service area needs, there is not a business rationale to retain this product for either departmental or corporate reasons.

In order to deliver a more effective operational planning system and to avoid the potential additional expenditure arising from continuing with the current system, it is necessary to look to a replacement Planning Document Management system. Given likely expenditure levels on Trinity for the future, it is necessary to secure an alternative system before the end of this financial year.

5. Alternative Document Management and workflow System for Development Control

Research has been undertaken into replacement planning IT systems. The two primary products available are Acolaid and IDOX. These are the two market leaders and both systems have been assessed in detail through observation in practice at other authorities as well as reviewing written proposals and receiving demonstrations from both companies.

Both systems are used extensively by other Authorities and would continue to support the web based provision of information in the public domain which is the prime requirement of the Planning System. It is apparent from an operational perspective that the IDOX approach provides better functionality and ease of use than the Acolaid product. It is considered that the IDOX system is therefore the preferable one in terms of meeting operational needs.

A further factor is that the IDOX company have recently purchased Plantech, the company that produces the Acolaid system, which must put its future as an independent and viable product seriously in doubt.

6. Costs

The quote received from IDOX for implementing their DMS is as follows:

Table 2: Cost of replacement system

Description	Amount
Capital	£39,300
Annual Revenue cost	£9,378

These costs are significantly below the cost of the Acolaid product. Therefore, on both operational and cost grounds, the IDOX product is the preferred option.

The software price is fixed. However, until the services have been fully scoped and agreed with IDOX it is proposed to allow a 10% variation for budgetary purposes.

Table 3: Budget proposals

Description	Quote	Variation	Proposed budget
Software	£20,840	0%	£20,840
Services	£18,480	10%	£20,320
Total	£39,320		£41,160

Using the costs apportionment provided by IDOX it has been possible to calculate the value of the seven products being delivered by them. These figures will enable the Project Manager to calculate earned value as the project progresses.

Table 4: Product values

No.	Product Description	Product Value (Rounded)
1.	Doc. Mngmnt. Module	£12,500
2.	Workflow	£8,500
3.	Web publishing	£7,000
4.	Redaction	£1,500
5.	Acolaid 'Lookup'	£3,500
6.	Loaded documents/ metadata	£3,000
7.	Back scanning load tool	£3,500
	Total	£39,500

Product values will not be used as the basis for payments to IDOX. Their payment will be triggered upon going live.

7. Resources

Table 5: Development Control DMS Project Team

Name	Project Role	Estimated Project Time (Days)
John Archer	Project Sponsor	3
John Edwards	Senior User	3
Dave Adcock	Project Manager	10
Steve Webb	Business Analyst	3
Cathryn Pritchard	Application Support Manager	1
Colin Daly	Application Support	10
Teresa Muddeman	System Testing	5
Rob Young	System Testing	5
IDOX	Senior Supplier	30

8. Provisional Timetable

A definite timetable cannot be agreed until the contract with IDOX has been signed and the formal kick-off meeting held between their project team and ours. However, IDOX have a well oiled implementation methodology. Therefore, the following outline timetable has been prepared and approved in principle by Development Control, the DMC and ICT Services:

Table 6: Development Control provisional timetable

No.	Key Tasks	Start	Finish
1.	Project authorised (end of Exec. call in period)	22 October 2008	
2.	Project kick-off meeting with IDOX	w/c 27 October 2008	
3.	Project Board approve project plan and budget	3 November 2008	
4.	Install system	3 November 2008	7 November 2008
5.	Design document loading/ migration method	3 November 2008	14 November 2008
6.	Design and configure workflows	3 November 2008	14 November 2008
7.	Configure web publishing	3 November 2008	14 November 2008
8.	Configure document loading/ migration tools	3 November 2008	21 November 2008
9.	Test system	17 November 2008	28 November 2008
10.	Sign off system	28 November 2008	
11.	Project Board authorise 'go live' date	1 December 2008	
12.	Train staff	1 December 2008	12 December 2008
13.	Migrate documents to IDOX	1 December 2008	12 December 2008
14.	'Go live'	w/c 15 December 2008	

The finalised project plan will use the product values from Table 4 to enable the Project Board to monitor the value of the work undertaken.

9. Scanning

All scanning and initial processing of applications is currently carried out in the Document Management Centre. The remaining processes are carried out within the Planning Service area. Whilst in principle, the benefits of a centralised approach to scanning are recognised, in practice, this has caused some operational difficulties. These have been magnified by the complexities of the Trinity system itself.

In order to secure and maintain an effective Planning Service delivery, it will be necessary to look at practical ways of improving this situation. One alternative is to consider the integration of scanning and application handling within the Planning Service Unit. However, if the IDOX product is implemented, its significantly better operational effectiveness may enable scanning to be undertaken more efficiently and with less complexity than the current Trinity based system. This may overcome the difficulties presently being encountered.

It is intended, therefore, should the IDOX system be implemented, to continue with a centralised scanning service and review its effectiveness after a set period, probably three months. At that time, a view can be taken on whether the system is operating effectively enough to continue, or whether alternative arrangements need to be explored.

10. Initial Key Risks

An initial risk assessment has highlighted the following key risks:

No.	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Activity
1.	IDOX solution not sufficiently integrated with Plantech	2	4	8	Solution already validated with other Local Authorities Some acceptance necessary. However, need to identify any major issues pre-contract signing not after.
2.	Resource conflicts with	3	4	12	Project plan signed off by all

	other projects				resource managers. Conflicts resolved by ICT Steering group and/ or Programme Board
3.	Operational priorities delay project implementation	4	3	12	Project plan signed off by all resource managers. Acceptance that team performance may temporarily dip. Service Area manager is Project Sponsor.
4.	Scope creep	3	4	12	Ensure product specifications are agree and signed off. Improved change control procedures.