New Children's Social Care IT Systems

City of York Council

Internal Audit Memo

Service Area: Transformation and Change, Children's Services
Responsible Officer: Head of Performance & Innovation
Date Issued: 1st April 2015

1.0 Introduction and scope

The current electronic case management system, RAISE, which is used by children's social care staff has been in place since 2005. The project business case states that RAISE has been deemed 'unfit for purpose' by users despite being subject to bespoke development. Some elements of the system's software are now unstable and are out of their support period due to the age of the system.

A report was taken to the then, ACE Directorate Management Team (DMT) in March 2013, outlining the business case for the purchase of a new children's social care IT system capable of meeting the transformation agenda in children's social care.

It was recognised that replacing the RAISE system would be a complex, high risk project, which would require effective project management arrangements to be in place if it was to be delivered successfully. The council uses VERTO to record project management information.

This project was given the go-ahead in *August 2013* and the project board were in the process of choosing a preferred supplier when the initial stage of this review was carried out in January 2015. Since then Corelogic have been chosen as the preferred supplier.

This review has taken two snap shots of the arrangements in place for the project and reviewed the documents and VERTO information available in early January and mid-March 2015.

2.0 Findings and conclusions

2.1 Roles and responsibilities

In the original RAISE replacement business case it was stated that the project should be led by a project board, reporting to the DMT.

Position as at 05/01/2015
At this time only three project members were identified in the VERTO project management system, one of whom was the auditor.
Documentation supports a project start-up meeting being held on 09/10/2013 and referred to the project board and team membership being finalised at that meeting. However no minutes are available to confirm any decisions made at this meeting and the membership of the board is not confirmed in the agenda/minutes of the next meeting. No separate document outlining roles and responsibilities within this specific project was available.

Position as at 17/03/2015
The Head of Performance & Innovation has advised that VERTO is not being used to manage this project, and that all relevant information will be held on the V: drive.

A document has now been created on the V: drive which lists board members, their roles / job titles, and area of responsibility within the project. This includes a project manager from Corelogic. The draft project initiation document (dated 12/03/2015) includes further definitions of roles in various sub-teams, most of which have not yet been assigned to individuals.

- Project board roles and responsibilities have been formally documented. Other sub-team roles need to be assigned.

2.2   Project risk register

Position as at 05/01/2015
The original project business case from March 2013 recognised the risks involved in IT projects. However, only three issues and no risks had been listed in the Issue-Risk Log found on the council's V: drive, and no risks were logged in VERTO.

The Project Manager confirmed that the document found in the V: drive was the only register viewed to date by the project board. No evidence could be found to support active management of the project's risks.

Position as at 17/03/2015
The Issue-Risk Log saved on the council's V: drive has now been expanded to seventeen issues, but there are no risks identified. The Head of Performance & Innovation expects the risk management process to develop rapidly, now that a supplier has been appointed.

- Given the scope of this project and also the highly sensitive data involved, risks should have been considered along with the mitigating actions/controls to manage them at each stage of the project. These may be included in risk registers for individual work streams, but the board needs to have assurance that they are being managed at a strategic level. As the project proceeds, risks and mitigating actions need to be identified and logged promptly.

2.3   Project board and other key meeting minutes

Position as at 05/01/2015
Some documents have been provided relating to the initial meetings in 2013, which are held on the council's V: drive. It is unclear whether these are agendas, minutes, or both. An email in lieu of minutes for the meeting of 30/04/2014 was also found; however there was no subsequent agreement of the contents of this email or evidence that the contents had been carried forward to other meetings.

There was a lack of information to support the numerous meetings which have taken place relating to this project. From the information available, there is no clear, accurate recording of actions, decisions or of risks emerging as the project progresses.

Position as at 17/03/2015
The most recent meetings for which minutes are available on the V: drive are the board meetings of 07/11/2014 and 14/01/2015, and the project initiation meeting of 02/03/2015. These minutes now use a standard template, and the format is much improved over that of earlier meetings.

- Until recently, there was a piecemeal approach to minuting meetings and saving them centrally, meaning that records of decisions in the earlier stages of the project are incomplete. It is important that key discussions are recorded throughout projects, to provide evidence that a robust decision-making process has occurred (specifically over contentious issues).

2.4   Action plans

It is good practice to have an ongoing action plan to record the work being undertaken to drive the project to meet its objectives. The format of the action plan can take a number of formats (part of meeting minutes, separate documentation etc).

Position as at 05/01/2015
Within the council's project management tool, VERTO, actions can be recorded. At the time of the review, no actions had been recorded in VERTO. Two sets of meeting minutes and an email in lieu of minutes held on the V: drive were reviewed, which include actions, but these do not appear to be tracked from meeting to meeting.

Position as at 17/03/2015
The Head of Performance & Innovation has advised that VERTO is not being used to manage this project and that the Project Initiation Documentation (PID) is currently being worked on with Corelogic. The PID should include actions.

The minutes for the meetings of 07/11/2014 and 14/01/2015 include actions, but they are not always assigned to individuals (either at the meeting or afterwards), while the actions from the project initiation meeting of 02/03/2015 are all assigned. It is not yet clear how actions are tracked from meeting to meeting.

- There is no formalised approach to recording actions and monitoring progress against them.

2.5 Highlight reports to the project board

Position as at 05/01/2015
At this time VERTO did not hold any highlight reports, and none could be found on the V: drive. It was unclear what information had been given to the project board, as no formal report could be found.

Position as at 17/03/2015
As VERTO is not being used to manage this project, an Excel template is in place for highlight reports. These will be saved on the V: drive.

- The project board and other key stakeholders may not be being provided with key summary information about the status of the project. The lack of highlight reports makes comparison of outputs and deliverables to timescales difficult.

3.0 Recommendations and further work

3.1 If the VERTO system is not being used to provide the necessary information to the project board, then all information should be retained within the council's V: drive. The Project Manager must ensure that the governance arrangements for the project are maintained and that there is evidence to support actions taken and decisions made, and that the project team has considered all risks specific to the relevant project stage.

3.2 Some improvements have been noted since the initial review in January, such as the format of meeting minutes. The Head of Performance & Innovation has provided the Project Manager with document templates to be used for managing the project outside VERTO. These need to be put into use promptly.

3.3 Additional audit work will be carried out in the coming months, to provide assurance that the issues above have been addressed and effective project management methods are being followed.