



WRS Board: 6th October 2022

Update on progress of the automation project

Recommendation	Members are asked to note the report.
Introduction	<p>At the first meeting of 2022/23, members agreed to create a reserve of £150,000 from last year's underspend to fund the implementation of automation of data entry for customers, enabling a range of services to be addressed by the client entering data in forms on the WRS website, which would then upload directly into our IDOX Uniform back-office system. This includes the automation of payments for Licensing, so our host authority Bromsgrove District Council will collect fees for the 6 partners and pass money back to the other 5. Officers agreed to provide a short progress report at each Board meeting between then and the actual implementation of the project.</p>
Report	<p>The Summer holiday period got in the way of a very quick start to the project, but it is now moving forward. Wyre Forest District Council's IT team were asked to provide project management support as out IT Host. They have accepted this, and the IT Manager is providing support with the development of specifications and relevant documentation and one of the team's officers with experience of managing implementations will engage once a provider has been identified.</p> <p>Calls have been made to colleagues in other local authorities and conversations are on-going to gauge first-hand experience of their journey in this area of work. The mid-Kent shared Licensing service have shared their experience of implementing the Victoria Forms package with IDOX Uniform. This was very informative. We have also had conversations with colleagues at Cheltenham Borough Council, who implemented a bespoke solution with IDOX, again to pass the information directly into their Uniform back-office system. It is pleasing that, after 2 years of isolation, local government colleagues are still willing to support each other in this way. A demonstration from Idox was delivered and a third system offered by Verso has also been viewed. Officers have been provided with contacts for authorities where this last solution has been deployed so we hope to speak to them soon.</p> <p>Contact has been made with the Procurement Officer at Bromsgrove District Council as our host to look at the options for engaging with suppliers. There are two Government Procurement portals that offer the suppliers we are interested in, so these are options that can now be pursued. These may give the option for direct award, which would probably speed up the procurement phase. We are also discussing the option of creating a variation to the current IDOX contract, which can be done if the value is below a certain percentage of the current agreement. This would eliminate the need for any form of tender process, but we do want to consider the alternative suppliers, rather than jumping straight to this as a solution.</p>
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