

Serious Incident Review: Follow-up report to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Recommendation 5

That the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee receive the follow up report on the measures taken since the incident and a progress report from the Head of Service as to how the new control and logging systems and culture are embedding in the service.

A serious incident review panel met on 8th September to consider the measures taken in response to the server failure on Wednesday 18 February 2009. Its findings were reported to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee on 23rd September 2009, and five recommendations for action were made, of which recommendations 1, 2 and 5 applied specifically to the operation of ICT service delivery. This report sets out how those recommendations – and other changes in control processes – have been implemented and the benefits that are accruing in terms of risk reduction. It uses as its baseline the “Further Recommendations” set out in the Independent Review of ICT Operations report prepared for the Committee by KPMG in September.

Server Build

The work required here is a project to remediate all the production servers (the Council’s main data centre) to a common level of patching, thus moving us towards a common configuration.

Since September significant improvement has been made, with all our servers moved to the latest “service pack” level, greatly reducing the risk. However, there is still a gap between our status and the requirements of Government Connect. This gap will be addressed through the implementation of the new virtual production environment (Exec approved 7th December 2009) due for completion April 2010. The project will include as outputs the required procedures to ensure continued Government Connect compliance across the production environment.

Software Procurement and Licensing

The recommendations for further action here are concerned with transparency of licensing obligations and costs (rather than rolling them up in initial capital project costings). This is addressed by the addition to the Council’s capital project appraisal process of a new matrix intended to identify clearly the ongoing revenue costs of licensing, support and maintenance. This has been implemented.

In addition, work is ongoing to verify the records held by the service of the licenses held, required and lapsed for all the applications in use. We are also

considering centralising the responsibility for licensing so that is it more straightforward to maintain and audit a central record of what we have, what we need and what we no longer need. Currently, services such as planning and benefits are responsible for ordering and maintaining their own licensing position.

Backups

At the time of the report, work was just under way to replace the old tape backup system. This project has been completed and has had the beneficial effect planned for, in terms of a 25% reduction in the time taken to copy the council's file systems for transfer off site. Further reductions will accrue as a second phase – a new staging area – is implemented.

The second element of the backups recommendation was in relation to the audit against ISO27001 – the information security standard – scheduled for 22nd October 2009. This two-day audit by Lloyds Register Quality Assurance has happened and found our backups procedure and controls were compliant.

Disaster Recovery Solution

The September review described the project under way at the time to undertake a significant change to the disaster recovery environment held at the Council's second data centre at Thorpe Lane depot. This work has now been completed, undergone three phases of testing, and the project closed. The risk associated with data loss is now at Green.

General controls

The independent review report included recommendations around change control processes, problem and incident logging, and the adoption of the industry best practice standard ITIL.

A new change control procedure has been introduced and refined over time, and in December the final version loaded into the Council's new Service Desk system. This means the change control is fully integrated into the daily working of the team. All members of the team have had input into how the change control procedure should work and contributed to its refinement. Consequently it is becoming well embedded into daily working.

The new service desk was implemented in December and enforces the ITIL way of identifying incidents, escalating problems, and managing work.

Again, the team were involved in identifying the best system for us, and in customising the way it works to provide the best support for the team and the wider organisation. A programme of periodic reviews and further tweaking is in place to the end of March 2010.

The Operations Manager prepares short reports for the Head of Service on the first of each month setting out the activity of the previous month: availability, changes, incidents, projects, and training.

The requirement of out of hours support – has been reviewed and separate report prepared setting out what the potential costs might be against the potential need.

Other matters

The Executive received a report on December 7 setting out proposals to virtualise the “production” environment and begin the significant move away from PCs to “thin clients”. These proposals were agreed and work is underway to start this project. A technical project manager has been engaged for three months to lead the work.

The report also resulted in the establishment of a Member/Officer review group, tasked with a wide ranging review of how the council wishes to get best value from its ICT service, taking into account market opportunities, maximising the capacity of the current team, systems and applications, and reducing risk.