[Transcript taken from HBC video record of Agenda Item 5]

Councillor Liz Fairhurst (Chair) Right, before we start with the Strategic Commissioning Programme review, can I invite Councillor Gray to come forward as the relevant Cabinet Lead and Mr Jackson as our Chief Policy Officer and Ms Reay as our Strategic Programme Manager.

Councillor Gray, when you're ready, would you like to introduce this?

[Presentation by Cabinet lead - Link to video at this point]

Councillor Philippa Gray (PG) Thank you, Chair.

The report in front of you today results from a request from the O & S Committee on Wednesday 8 October last year to understand the learnings and outcomes as a result of the Strategic Commissioning Programme.

With that in mind, I want to start by reminding the Committee of the breadth and the programme of work and why we undertook it.

Personal note, I've worked in IT all my life and I have never come across a programme of this breadth. It's very ambitious. The Strategic Commissioning Programme was established as a result of a decision made to exit the IT contract with Capita in September 2025.

That's the exit was last September. The decision was made in 2023.

The date of September 2025 represented a hard deadline, not only to exit our IT infrastructure, but also to move systems over to a modern cloud-based systems by that deadline. And work began back in 2023.

Business cases were formed for the service areas affected, in particular finance, planning and regulatory services. So, just, again, personal note, this doesn't represent the entire breadth of Council services and IT systems. It's the ones that were provided by Capita.

The O & S meeting on 21st November 23, I was there, I remember it well, and it was Councillor Fairhurst who introduced the report about the programme. And at that point we noted the information and the update presented by officers. You can look up the details on the Council website if you want.

Alongside this, a business case was formed and approved to deliver the programme of work as it was acknowledged that additional resources were required to deliver it. Broadly speaking, this led to service specification and procurement in 2024 and delivery in 2025, which was overseen by the Strategic Commissioning Programme.

This was the biggest change programme the Council has undergone for a number of years, a big number of years, which carried with it a significant element of risk due to its size and scope.

This discussion today is about the outcomes, so I'm going to start with positives. There were significant successes. Our finance system changed with no significant impact on customers. Our entire IT infrastructure was migrated with no significant impact on customers.

Our customer service function switched seamlessly from one provider to a new in-house service, with a new case management system, and again, no impact on customers. Any one or a combination of them could have led to significant service disruption to the Council. All of this was delivered to the timeframe of September 2025, so we could exit from the capita services that we were not taking forward.

It's acknowledged, and I'm sure it's going to be discussed this evening, that there were issues with the migration to new software for planning and environmental services. In particular, there was an impact on land charges. The system it was replacing was over 25 years old. It wasn't a modern system, it was at the end of life. Due to its age and the amount of data held, there were challenges. However, the system did go live and we are working on bringing about improvements.

We have run numerous fix runs to improve functionality with the system and we are working on further improvements.

Land charges was a particular challenge. That service was outsourced and remains outsourced. In addition, a key dependency of that service is on GIS, which is again an outsourced service. Therefore, we had limited in-house knowledge coupled with a new system, made it the most challenging of migrations.

When we realised there was a problem, we escalated and fixed it. It took time and resource, but we have returned the service to fully functional service with very good performance metrics. Formal complaints were low during the downtime.

We managed through regular updates to talk to those customers impacted and we cleared the backlog extremely quickly. In the light of these challenges, internal audit are reviewing the ARCUS implementation and will report back to governance committee with their findings. This will also feed into our learnings.

Learnings have been captured and officers are working to ensure they are addressed for future programmes, in particular for LGR. If I could point out, there's no point learning about something that we will never repeat. So we have now moved those key systems into the cloud. We won't have to repeat that exercise.

With modern systems and in-house knowledge, we are in a much stronger position going forward than we would have been if we had remained with existing suppliers.

Again, what I've learned about LGR is that our data is absolutely key to sorting out authorities moving from two tier system to one tier, and we are in a very strong position, possibly better than other councils as a result of the work we've done.

I'd like to thank the committee for the number of questions. Officers have tried to answer as many as possible in the time they had and can elaborate further if required.

Having read the answers carefully, I really have to say I don't feel the questions actually added to my understanding. I felt having been at that O & S meeting in November 23, I had a good understanding of what was being done and why. And I say most of the work, vast majority of it has been very successful.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, Councillor Gray.

Mr. Jackson, do you want to add anything to that?

Will Jackson (WJ:): No,

Ms. Reay?

Nicola Reay (NR:): - No.

Okay, thank you.

[Supplementary questions by Committee Members - Link to video at this point]

Chair: All right, members, we've had several questions that have been submitted, which together with the responses are in your supplementary report.

I will now allow supplementary questions and answers.

Does anyone have questions? Councillor Lloyd?

Councillor Elizabeth Lloyd (EL): Thank you, Chair.

Yes, thank you, Councillor Gray, for that summary. That was very, very useful to, as you say, cite the breadth of the task and the successes. If we go back to procurement, when Arcus was decided upon, are you able to say what it was about the Arcus bid that made them the most attractive for our needs at that time? And given that there was no migration of data involved, although I see at question four from Councillor Hulls, they did say that migration of data was included. So we'll come on to what happened after that next, if we may.

NR: - Thank you.

Thank you.

So with the Arcus implementation in the procurement, we did carry out a full procurement process and everything was scored in accordance to the procurement rules. And Arcus did come out on top and they were scored the highest based on value.

Chair: – Councillor Lloyd?

EL: Thank you for that. When we talk about cost and value, I note that we don't seem to, and I'm going to say ever, but you can correct me, record officers' time as part of the cost of anything we do.   And we certainly, I believe we didn't from reading the report for this big project.   Will that change? Why don't we cost officers time?   And together with that, you needed new resources. So what other, what, what extra resources did we take on?   And can you assure me that the cost of that extra resource was in the cost and therefore value for money?

And so just on the correct, we don't record officers' time. We don't have a corporate mechanism for doing that.   However, as part of this program in November 23, we put forward a paper to cabinet and full council with respect to this program and the resources to implement.   That paper essentially set aside a specific reserve to implement the program and we use that to fund fixed term project managers.   We used it to fund data specialists.   We used it to fund UAT specialists that we didn't have in house to help deliver it.   And the purpose of that resourcing was to fund that work because we knew that we would need that to deliver the program.

Thank you.

Chair: Councillor Keast.

Councillor David Keast (DK): Thank you, Chairman. Page 30. What did not go so well? Because particularly the first paragraph, the latter part of it refers to specialist skills, internal specialist skills availability. Are we saying that we did not have enough staff which were actually trained for this migration?   And have we got the staff now? And there's the training in progress so that people can operate the system efficiently.

NR: Thank you. So I'll answer the first part of the question.   So in terms of do we have the skills internally? We have some skills, but we are limited to resources who are also working on multiple projects. So we did have single points of failure, but we needed to make sure that we could back that up with additional resources. And that was the purpose of the business case and the financing.

The resources we brought in, as Mr Jackson has already explained, were people like migration experts, UAT experts. Because you don't do these types of projects often, you don't tend to have those expertise within the council. And that's why in terms of going forward, we are very invested in making sure that internally we are developing those skills. So we have within each of the service areas now, specialists, SMEs who are learning the systems so that we have less reliance on external support and suppliers themselves.

DK: So from that, then we do, do you say, are you saying we do have the specialist skills now in the house who can deal with the problems?

NR:- I'm saying we're building those skills now.

Chair: Councillor Hulls.

Councillor Jonathan Hulls (JH): Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Councillor Lloyd. You've actually, you asked some of the questions I was going to ask, but just, just following on from Councillor Lloyd's question. There's clearly hundreds of officer hour time being spent on fix on the eight fixes that we've done and the work arounds, but they're not they're not shown anywhere in the costings. So will there eventually be a final cost which takes all that into account? And because somewhere there must be some recording of officers time that's been spent on this. Otherwise, we won't be able to show to our residents and taxpayers that actually the final value of this project is X if we don't know what that time has been spent. And it's a considerable amount of time, I would imagine. And it's still ongoing because the planning system is still not, it's still not there. I was for a planning committee last week. I looked for a planning report for the Domino's pizza application and the information wasn't there. So it's actually still an ongoing issue with the records are not in place and the money is still being spent, over and above what the initial estimate was. So is there a time when we are going to know what the final out turn cost is?

WL: So there will be an out turn position on the strategic commissioning reserve that we utilize to deliver the program initially and that will come forward as part of year end because that the program is now essentially finished from the implementation phase. I think in terms of future work on the program or future work on the systems, each service area is looking at their resources and has in, for instance, in finance and in customer services. And I think they are planning it in within the environmental services and planning resourcing to deliver the system basically overview and maintenance of those systems because all these Software as a Service systems, you know, it gives us the opportunity and the control to update, to modify, to fix.

So there, you know, there will be our posts in the organization which we can provide you with in terms of the cost of those posts that are helping to develop those systems further and basically bring about additional improvements. Just to sort of bring that maybe a bit to light, for example, in customer services, they have a dedicated officer who's working on improvements. What we're starting to see in the net call, we've increased functionality on the reporting features. So how customers contact us is now changed into a sort of a dedicated case management rather than a previous web based form so we can track progress. We've also started sending text messages to customers. It's something that we couldn't previously do within the Capita infrastructure. We can now live text customers who are calling us with information. So that's just one example.

But again, you know, all these systems, they've just come in and we are now looking to develop them with officer time according to how those services want to develop them.

Chair: Thank you. Councillor Hulls?

JH: Yeah, thank you. I think you need to be applauded for all the systems that have gone correctly and I think we all appreciate the effort that's gone into that. I think I think most of

these questions are around the Arcus system, obviously, and especially if you're involved in planning or on the planning committee, that has been a major upset for us and the borough.

So can I just go through a few more supplementaries?

[Link to video - Committee Members focus on Arcus involvement and relationship]

You talked about the UAT and that's that basically my understanding is it was signed off on a data sample. And then when the full upload happened, that's when the big issues started to appear. Why was it just done on a data sample and not on the on the whole amount because the industry standard would be to do the whole thing to check it before it went live, but it was only done on a small sample.

NR:- Sure. Thank you. So just to give a little bit of background that I'm sure you're aware the Accolade system that we moved away from and as Councillor Gray has alluded to was 25 years old. So we that that system itself had inherited years and years worth of work arounds, inaccurate, uncleansed data for 25 years and a massively unstable system which would regularly [inaudible] on the service. In terms of trying to make sure that we tested everything within the given timescales, it wasn't possible, so we had to do sampling. It was the only way we could get through this. Those are prioritized samples based on services, high risk areas and and as a result of that, we did manage to produce and pass most of the UAT, but not all. It wasn't possible within the given timescales.

JH: Just on that, we clearly knew that that was the position before we started and Arcus must have known that before we started. So why did why did they sign up to it and not give us so much help, I don't think, in the migration and that didn't seem to be priced in, although it was mentioned earlier that they had ticked a box to say, yes, they would. They would. They had priced in the migration, but clearly they hadn't. And when that happened, we were sort of left holding the baby and it seems as though they're sort of responsible for that, but are we are we going after them to get some recompense for that or, you know, what is happening with that?

NR:- So I don't think I can answer whether or not we're going after them for that. What I can say is that and I'll use land charges as a really good example. When we did have to take the system down and when we acknowledge that we had a big problem with land charges and we needed to stop the service, Arcus actually really stepped up their game. And they I mean, the hours, the hours spent that they put in along with our own internal resources was was pretty outstanding. So no, we're not going after them, I think is the answer.

But we are much more comfortable and I think we're in a better place from a relationship perspective with Arcus. And I think they also understand our priorities and outcomes.

Chair: OK, Councillor Berwick.

Councillor Daniel Berwick (DB): Thank you to reshape my questions a bit. I think Councillor Hulls sort of covered some of what I was going to say. Yeah, I'm personally involved in a lot

of software projects and I've run sort of test teams. And one of the one of the things that you usually have is solidly defined quality gates that you have to pass before you can move to the next part of a project or deliver what you've agreed to deliver.   And the compression of testing cycles is is one of the most risky and frustrating parts of the industry, something that we try and avoid happening.   So my question really is, did we identify any failed quality gates before we went live with the new system? If we didn't, why didn't we? And if we did, did we make ourselves and the public aware of those those quality gate failures before we went live?

NR:- Thank you. No, no identified quality gates were failed. What I will do is reiterate my point around the fact that and I'm guessing this question is specific to Arcus again, is that we had a significant amount of data that was uncleansed and be historically not right.

And as a result of that, when we were when we were passing and doing the migration and carrying out UAT, we had stage gates and we had cycles that we were passing, as I've already alluded to.

Unfortunately, we did run out of time because of the hard go live of the exit from the 2025, the September 25 deadline. So, yeah, data was it was an issue that resulted in a short amount of UAT time, particularly on the Arcus project. What I will say is that UAT on the other projects, especially customer services and Bartek, passed 100 percent.

Chair: You don't look very happy, Councillor Berwick.

DB: Sorry, I was just I was just mulling the question. I would add the answer. Sorry, because I would normally see UAT as kind of [happening] after a reasonable amount of testing has been completed that would potentially identify these technical issues. And then by the time it's in UAT, it looks at sort of establishing workflows and how the business accepts it rather than being a technical effort. So I don't know obviously how the testing was run? But under normal circumstances I wouldn't expect UAT to be the first time you see these sorts of problems.   It would be in the technical test period before it's delivered to the customer.   So is there anything Arcus did to test the data migration, seeing as it was part of what they were delivering before we got to the stage of UAT?

NR: So Arcus didn't carry out any testing per se. We carried out all the testing. We weren't provided with any test scripts. We had to provide all of our own test scripts and all of that UAT was carried out internally with each of the individual teams. What we did also was a significant amount of business process re-engineering.   So part of the testing wasn't just the functional technical element of the system, we were testing the end-to-end process.

WJ: I think just to also add, I think in terms of the role Arcus played. So as part of the data migration, Arcus supplied a tool which did a full validation of data to ensure it matched the system configuration requirements. So that data checker tool was what Arcus supplied to us in terms of uploading data to then check that it would then get uploaded correctly into the

Arcus system. And obviously, you know, we were taking data from essentially three different systems.

So within planning, you had Accolade and iDocs. iDocs was the document management system. Accolade was essentially the case management system. And then with environmental health, you had Lalpac. And those three systems we were essentially taking the data from, putting it into the Arcus data tool checker, which basically confirmed that it will get uploaded in the correct way and then uploading it. So that was kind of the process and what Arcus supplied to us.

DB: Thank you. Yeah, without seeing the whole thing, it does sound potentially like there may have been a reduction of test cycles within Arcus themselves, but potentially with more investment would have got a higher quality product. Maybe that's where some of the money was saved. I can't be sure of that, but from my experience and what I'm hearing, that that is a conclusion I could come to I think.

Chair: Okay, thank you. Councillor Lind?

ML: Thank you chair. I do want to reiterate Councillor Hull's congratulations on actually achieving the end day of September. I'm looking at the timeline that you presented in your report and it says that in six months you migrated 13, I think I counted them right, 13 separate projects, which is to be applauded. In a previous life, I suppose I was an IT project manager and I would not have attempted this myself. And I can understand the pitfalls that you've encountered on the way.

So my question is, having got your plan, your timeline in front of you, would you have followed that timeline in the light of the experience that you've had since?

NR:- Thank you. That's a really good question.

I think the fact that it worked would indicate that, yes, we would probably follow the same process and the same methodologies that we did. We got all of those projects over the line. And as Councillor Gray had alluded to, if any one of those projects had gone wrong, we would have been in real problems because the IT system alone would have meant that not only residents couldn't access our infrastructure, but our staff wouldn't have been able to. That was a seamless switch over, as was the customer services, case management and telephony switch over. Residents would have known no different other than the fact that we put comms out on the website and on social media to let them know that. So in answer to your question, I've probably as a team, we probably do it exactly the same. It was a it was a very, very tight deadline, the likes of which you wouldn't normally work to.

And you certainly wouldn't try and implement that many systems in that short space of time. So, yeah, hopefully that answers your question?

ML: Do you still say that even though you've had other difficulties with Arcus?

NR:- Yeah, I mean, taking that into account and we've mentioned that in the report in the lessons that we've learnt, we would absolutely make sure that going into any IT transformation programme, in fact, any transformation programme, you would make sure that those lessons were learnt and that were implemented going forward.

The Arcus project was always going to be a challenge. We knew that. That hard deadline of the September 2025 was unavoidable. So there was nothing else we could do. It was an unavoidable situation.

Chair: Mr Jackson.

WJ: And I think in terms of one of the key learnings is particularly around contract end dates. So, you know, we were in the situation where we have these contracts all coming up, being driven by the exit of IT services from Capita. I think going forward now we've got all these different systems in place. They, you know, they would not all change at the same time in the future because we would stagger the contracts eventually so that any system changing we could not do all at the same time. So although I think my colleague says, you know, the approach we took, we would do again. But essentially, I don't think we would be in that situation again because not all these contracts are going to end at the same time. So we have that space now going forward.

Chair: Thank you. Councillor Lloyd?

EL: Yeah, thank you, Chair. Yes, you mentioned that you undertook business process re-engineering at the same time, which of course is a great opportunity.   Did you discover any or many cost savings and or process improvements that stick out to you? Thank you.

NR: We did, as you can imagine, especially in the accolade system that was 25 years old. So as I suggested earlier, there are many, many work around within that system. What we did also find throughout many of the projects was that there is still a reliance on paper heavy processes. So we have been able to automate paper heavy processes. So we have been able to automate a lot of paper heavy processes. And by putting systems online and stuff, it makes things easier and more accessible for residents and for staff.

The other savings that were achieved through business process re-engineering were around officer time. In many of the projects, we were able to establish where processes were taken longer than they should have done. And through the automation and the implementation of these systems, we have been able to reduce officer time.

Chair: Thank you, Councillor Briggs.

Councillor Ann Briggs (AB): Thank you, Chairman. My family called me an IT dinosaur, which I am. So to me, this was a huge undertaking to take place. But as a dinosaur, reading the key lessons learned, normally I complain about not a lot of information, but this time you gave us some information. And thank you for that. So was it because of the short time, how many things like take procurement wasn't thought of? That's really my question. Why is

there so many key lessons learned? I'm glad you've learned them, but how did it happen? Thank you.

NR:- I think really the answer is because of the size of the programme. That's why there are so many lessons. Something that I probably should mention isn't mentioned in the report is that as we were, as this was a staggered approach and each of these projects were going live, we were learning as we went. So we were applying lessons to the next project and so forth in a kind of domino effect. So yes, the answer to your question is the size of the programme.

Chair: Any other questions? Councillor Hulls?

JH: Thank you, Chair. Yeah, it's just around my questions 35 to 38, which basically looked at the functionality of the new Arcus system. It's not as good as the old, I mean, we had to lose the old system, but the new system's not as, it's not got the functionality of the old one. And it's really about whether that decision to move to a less functional system was purely on cost saving or was it a technical reason?

For example, you can't see a document on the system, you have to download it. So you can't, the old system, you could just pull it up on your screen. Now you have to download that document and then look at it, which is pretty inconvenient. If you're looking at an application that's got 250 documents in it, it's quite time consuming and you have to keep clearing your hard drive of documents because they just get full up. So it's really a question about whether that was a cost saving or whether it was a technical reason.

NR: So I think you probably already answered part of that question yourself. But the accolade system had to go because it was at the end of its lifespan and it was sat on a server. So we had to move away from Accolaid. We needed to move to a more modern system. We needed to move to a cloud-based system of which accolade was not. The Accolaid system, as I mentioned earlier, was extremely unstable and regularly crashed, leaving the planning team, the environmental health team with no system and having to revert to paper based systems and spreadsheets. That hasn't happened since Arcus went live.

The answer to the question in terms of was it a cost saving? No, it was purely based on the fact that we had to move away from accolade and we needed to move to a modern cloud based system.

Just on your point about the downloadable documents, it's worth noting that with all of these systems, we went live with MVP, which is the 'minimum viable product' because of the time scales that we had, because it was a pretty much a six month implementation timeline within each of the projects, including Accolaid and Arcus, they are now working on the improvement part of the of the program. So they're now looking to make the difference and make those improvements and go beyond the minimum viable product. And that's

where that internal skill base comes in as well. So we're learning as we go so hopefully the things that you've mentioned to be fixed in the future.

Chair: Thank you. Any other questions, members? Councillor Forrow?

Councillor Wilf Forrow (WF): Thank you for that. You mentioned data cleansing in the process. I heard a story that I think I heard that redaction of data was a problem that the two systems are incompatible the way that they redacted data, and obviously releasing public publicly releasing private data would have been a nightmare. How much of that was how big a factor was that in the problems that you have with data?

NR: So the redacted documents was picked up quite early and much like the land charge system, a team assembled quite quickly to ensure that we fixed and improve that and going forward, that that's not likely to be an issue because the issue was resolved.

Chair: Thank you. Right, Councillor Lloyd?

EL: Yeah, thank you, Chair. Just something you said about MVP and that Arcus are working on going beyond an MVP for the product. Is that all within the cost that we paid or are they charging us extra to go beyond the minimal viable product?

NR: Yeah, so I'll just go back to my original point about building those internal skills. So we're learning the system. We're trying to develop and make those improvements internally. There may be additional costs going forward where we have to implement things that are non-functional, not operational, but at the moment, everything's being done internally.

EL: So when you say Arcus are working on it, what you mean is our own people are working on the system. OK, thank you very much.

Chair: Councillor Berwick?

DB: Thank you very much. I'd just like to say before I ask this question, I know it may have seemed that we're sort of picking on difficult subjects, but obviously that's the nature of this and we may not be concentrating so much on all the things that went well. So just to add to that, thank you for all the parts that went really well.   But as a question on the public impact of the Arcus system difficulties, have we, to our best of our knowledge, effectively caught up with the delayed public impact or is there more we need to do to resolve some of the issues that were created by that?

NR: So public impact for land charges, as mentioned previously, was picked up pretty quickly. Again, team assembled and we were back up to 100% within 10 days, I think it was. So we are, we're no longer in a situation where we don't have services to offer through the Arcus system. Yes, there's improvements and we're working on those and all of the lessons learned from the programme will be applied going forward.

DB: Thank you.

Chair: Any other questions? No?

Right. Councillor Gray, Mr Jackson, Miss Reay, thank you very much. You may withdraw.

Chair: Right. Do any members wish to debate this?

Chair: Councillor Lloyd?

EL: Oh, thank you. Thank you, Chair. I've not found my place now.

Chair: Don't worry, we can wait.

EL: Yes. So I think there's no doubt this has been a massive undertaking. And we have to say that because we're operating BAU, that that was a success overall. And there's no doubt there would have been things that we didn't anticipate. There always are, and they seem to have been covered well. And we're learning as a result, so we're upskilling officers, which is always a bonus.

Just one thing that I'm concerned about, which is being transparent in value for money. When we do projects like this, which are significant and set us in on a path for the future about the way we operate with these different services. I personally would like to see that we do record officers time and their hourly rate.

Now, I note in the questions on page 17, question 50, Councillor Hulls, you talk about the internal audit following this implementation. And the answer is that the findings from the audit will ensure that future transformation programs adopt the same governance approach. And I think personally, I would just like to see that that part of that governance is that we are able to understand the cost of officers time because it's significant. It always is.

Now, I know that's not something as an organization we do. For example, you know, for example, I know we don't do it. We don't do it for any officers, I believe. We don't do it for planning officers. And sometimes planning officers time on a particular application is again significant and should be reflected on what we therefore charge people in my personal view. So I wonder whether this is an opportunity to recommend that perhaps we do move to recording officers time. I know it would mean another bit of infrastructure to whatever we do. But, you know, without our without our officers, this organization does not exist. They are key and their cost is key, and that cost is paid for by the taxpayer.

And I think if anything, this major successful project has taught us is that, you know, we cannot operate without ICT, good infrastructure and skilled staff. So that's just a thought I would I would like to see as part of the recommendations. Thank you.

Chair: Councillor Hulls.

JH: Yeah, I totally agree with Councillor Lloyd. I think a lot of the answers to the questions I put were around this is within budgets within the budget envelope. But we don't know that

without knowing the officer time that was put into it. And I know I know those officers are paid anyway. They're here. But I think it's important that their time and their costs are attributed to a specific project to give a true outturn cost and to be able to compare it to the original business case as to why that product was picked.

Because, you know, in reviewing, going back to that original business case and looking at the other bids, and if those bids hadn't had this, this extra time and officer time that we needed to put in, they may have been much closer in cost. So I think it's really important. And I think a recommendation from the lines that Councillor Lloyd has put forward would be very welcome.

Chair: Thank you, Councillor Forrow.

WF: Thank you, Chair. Well, I've worked in in it outsourcing for 20 years. We had to do time recording because it was multi-client. That was the main reason to have our time recording system. It's not free. It costs to do it. And most and the only thing we really got out of it was charging back to clients. We never learned very much because most staff are very polished at finding time codes to dump time onto. So before you do it, just be careful.

Chair: Councillor Lind.

ML: Thank you, Chair. To add to this debate, I actually worked in local government IT. And when we engaged with other departments, other groups within the authority. To get their expertise in delivering IT solutions, we didn't ask them to record their time. We didn't record that in the cost of the project. So to ask Havant Borough Council to do the same, I think, is going against the norm, and as Councillor Forrow says, time recording has an overhead in its own right. And there is always going to be an opportunity to mis-record time and not get as true value anyway. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Councillor Lloyd

EL: Yeah, it's very interesting to hear people's, you know, professional experience. And I know that any time recording system costs money and takes time. However, my thoughts here are on any, not all the time, but on a significant programme such as this. And I'm sure there will be others in the future. And if you assign an officer to that programme and they're there for N weeks and their BAU is being picked up by somebody else, that is sufficient to record. I understand when you're billing clients, it's per piece of paper or phone call you touch and make. So I'm not advocating that. But I think in some way, and I would say just to reconsider recording officers' time and their hourly rates on any future significant programme. That's what I'm advocating because, as I said, you know, that constitutes a major part of any programme in any part of the organisation. Thank you. But it's useful to have the debate.

Chair: Thank you, members. Councillor Berwick?

DB: Thank you, Chair. Yeah, I think there's a lot of information that's still to come. The audit needs to be completed. We will understand more once that's done. So we don't have the whole picture yet. But to echo what some other people have said, I think the project at this scale in that amount of time is actually quite an undertaking. I won't talk about myself too much, but I worked for a company once where when I started, there was six months away from an old system migration project. When I left about five years later, there was six months away from finishing that project. So it to have a defined timeline like this does put a lot of strain on things. But what the public see, obviously, the mistakes or the public sees that they can't get their things through. So it's right, I think, to acknowledge that there was a lot that was good, but then sort of heavily scrutinised the bits that didn't work that well, even if it's a small part of the overall project and come up with answers, especially for the public.

So I'm not sure we can completely do that here because obviously we've got audits against this going on that we won't know the result from. So I think there is a gap that we're probably missing that we may want to come back to in the future once.

Chair: Once the audits have been completed. Yes. OK. Anybody else want to join in? Oh, Councillor Briggs.

AB: Thank you, Chairman. Having been a councillor for 13 years and seen how in Hampshire the officers work hard, it would never, I don't think, have entered our head to ask about the time they put in, because you have to have faith in your officers that they're doing the best that they can for you. We ask them to do a job and we expect them to do it, but not to necessarily put a timeline or how long. It's something I would never, ever have thought of.

Maybe I'm wrong, but I think you have to have faith in your officers that they're doing the best they can for you. We set the programme, we ask them to do it and not to put the timeline. I think, but others may think.

Chair: Thank you Councillor Briggs, Councillor Hulls?

JH: Thank you, Chair. Yeah, I think I understand what you're saying, but I think what Councillor Lloyd is suggesting is that for a particular project, we're not trying to check up on the officers that they're putting in the hours. We know they put in all the hours, but it's just apportioning that time, that cost to a specific project that those officers might not necessarily be working on. So they've been called in because of the migration of the data and that that cost is not known against the project cost. So it's trying to apportion that cost, not to check up on it. We know the officers work really hard and we appreciate that. And it's just trying to work out what the overall cost of the project is, I think.

Chair: Any other comments? No. Right. Let's close the debate now. And we can either agree:

For the Cabinet to be informed that the Committee has scrutinised the matter and does not wish to make any formal comments or recommendations to Cabinet.

Agree to submit comments to Cabinet for their consideration.

or

Agree to make formal recommendations to Cabinet for their considerations.

Would members or any member like to propose their preferred option and say why? A, B or C.

Councillor Berwick.

DB: Thank you. Correct me if this isn't the right option for this, but I would propose C with a request that once the audit is completed and once we have full visibility of the outcomes of investigating this, it's that we bring it back to **O & S** and for final scrutiny on the outcomes of that. Is that valid for C as a formal recommendation? That's it.

Chair: Jenny?

Jenni Harding - Democratic Services (JH): Thank you, Chair. So it depends on timing. So you can't have this back within six months because you've already scrutinised this matter already. So you would need to wait until the next municipal year if there is a review being undertaken. Is that correct? And so at which point? Yes, you could have a review back if you wish, but it's timing.

Chair: So after the audit, we could have it back provided it was over the six month mark? Okay, so. Would anyone second Councillor Berwick's?

[Councillors Lloyd and Hulls raise their hands]

JH: Okay. So we could just add that to your work programme. So that's not a formal recommendation or comment, but we can certainly add that to the work programme and get that scheduled in with officers.

DB: Yeah, that that feels fair. It did feel like I may have been shoehorning it in a bit. Yeah. Onto option C, but yeah.

Chair: But if we put it on the work programme, you'll be happy?

DB: Yeah.

Chair: Okay. Right. So can I have someone to propose either A, B or C? C.

JH: This is really Councillor Lloyd's. I'm not sure this is a recommendation or just something which the officers can agree to do, because we've heard that before, but the recommendation to look at whether on specific projects officer time can be a portion to

those projects. So I don't know if it's a recommendation or whether it's something the officers can just agree to do.

JH: Thank you, Chair. So, yeah, so this isn't a recommendation for Cabinet. It's not their decision. This this goes into the realm of officers, processes and procedures and how they operate. Officers are here. They've heard you. Will Jackson is a director already. So he's already in a position to input any procedures if he wishes, but it isn't really a recommendation for this committee can make. But of course, officers are here and can do something about that if they wish.

Chair: Do you want to?

Patrick Lee (Deputy Chief Exec) PL: Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Jenny. Yeah, absolutely. It's been it's been heard and recorded. So we'll take that away.

Chair: Okay. Councillor Keast?

DK: Do we not record officer time at all already? We certainly used to do it. Have we stopped doing it completely?

JH: Yeah.

Chair: Jenny.

JH: Yeah. Thank you, Chair. So we run a flexi system, so some officers or the majority of officers will call time on a flexi system, but that's not on a particular project. I know coastal partners, for example, have timesheets and they will allocate time to certain projects. It's an operational thing. It is not something for members or, you know, corporately, but some officers in some cases do record it on projects. Not all do, obviously.

Chair: Councillor Forrow.

WF: I'm fairly confident that Cabinet already understand the issues, so I'm quite happy to propose option A.

Chair: Okay. Do we have a seconder for option A?

[Councillor Horton raises hand]

Right. Okay. Shall we take a vote? Shall we go to a vote then? So could people raise their hands if they agree with option A?

All those in favour? All those against? Abstaining?

[Councillor Lloyd appears not to vote]

No.

I think actually we've got majority for option A.

So thank you members. I think we are agreed. We'll go with option A.

[Agenda item closes]