

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **17 November 2005**

By: **Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources**

Title of report: **Core Back Office Systems Solution (CBOSS) Update**

Purpose of report: **To update Cabinet on progress of implementing a SAP solution for East Sussex Schools.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 1. cease the schools CBOSS pilot and the development of a SAP solution for schools; and**
 - 2. endorse the CBOSS team continuing to work with the pilot schools to maximise the benefits in a revised solution which will be more acceptable to all schools.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no additional costs arising from the recommendations of this report. Cabinet will be aware that the capital programme provision has been re-phased in line with the timing of the latest payments profile and is still on budget. The recommendations do not impact on the contractual terms with the Council's partner SERCO.

2. Supporting Information.

Background

2.1 The CBOSS contract with SERCO included developing a solution that would encompass managed services (pensions, payroll, debtors and creditors) as well as managed systems. It was intended to develop the SAP software to provide an opportunity for schools to use the same systems as the rest of the County Council. This report focuses on the progress of developing a system for schools and the outcome of the 'Schools Pilot' which began in December 2004 at: Blacklands County Primary, Icklesham CE Primary, Motcombe Community School, Peacehaven Community School, St Mary's Catholic Primary and Uckfield Community College.

2.2 The 6 pilot schools have been a key element of the project and have played an active and enthusiastic part in developing the new system. This has been a significant demand upon each of the schools and the pilot would not have been so successful were it not for the determination and commitment of each school.

3. School Pilot outcome

3.1 On 14 October the CBOSS Project Board met to review the schools pilot and determine the next steps. The unanimous decision of the Board was to recommend Cabinet that the pilot be ceased and that SAP is not implemented in schools. The reasons for this decision are summarised in Appendix A which is a joint letter to the pilot schools with the Director of Children's Services.

4. The way forward for Schools

4.1 Whilst it is disappointing that it has not been possible to develop the SAP system in a way which is likely to be acceptable to schools this element of the CBOSS Project should not be seen as a failure. There have been many benefits and successes arising from the pilot and it is important that these are recognised and are used to help build a better service to schools for the future. All of the pilot schools are keen to assist in the development of future improvements and believe that their experiences of the pilot will be invaluable.

Whilst it is not believed practical to roll out SAP to schools as originally planned some of the original business benefits may still be achievable:-

- A two-way interface transmitting financial and HR information from school system to SAP and vice versa on a regular basis
- An environment where school finances are up to date with key commitments and balances, whether initiated in school or centrally
- The ability for schools to capture and record data regarding staff once only (i.e. no re-keying)
- Improved connectivity between schools and the centre
- Enabling schools to drive out best value in procurement (with the help of the Council)
- Improved support arrangements
- Adopt the "Keep it Simple for Schools" approach to these systems, and related policies and procedures

5 Cessation of the pilot

5.1 Retaining the 6 pilot schools on SAP is not a viable option so it is important that the pilot schools are returned to their previous system as safely and as swiftly as possible. It is intended that all schools will have ceased using SAP by 31 March 2006. The pilot schools are well aware that the Project Board has made a very clear commitment to ensuring they do not suffer as a result of participating in the trial. An update will be provided to Cabinet once the plans for future improvements and returning schools to steady state are agreed.

6 Summary

6.1 During the last 2 years there has been a significant amount of effort and commitment to finding a solution that would allow SAP to efficiently operate in all of the Council's schools. Despite this level of input and ownership it is clear that further pursuing this goal would not be an effective use of council resources. It would be far better to direct attention at using the positive evidence from the pilot which identified areas where systems and services to schools could benefit from improvement and it is intended that these areas will now be pursued. The pilot has served to prove critical in shaping how services to schools could be improved and how the council can maximise efficiency and communications between its central computer systems and those operated locally in schools.

7 Recommendations

7.1 The Council cease the schools CBOSS pilot and the development of a SAP solution for schools.

7.2 The CBOSS team continue to work with the pilot schools to maximise the benefits in a revised solution which will be acceptable to all schools.

SEAN NOLAN - DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES
Contact Officers:

Programme Director Richard Hemsley, Deputy Director of Corporate Resources 01273 481820
Programme Manager, Larry Mansbridge 01273 482575