Cheshire East Council
Cheshire West and Chester Council

Shared Services Joint Committee

Date of Meeting:	24 September 2021
Report of:	Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services, Cheshire East Council
	Mark Wynn, Chief Operating Officer, Cheshire West & Chester Council
Subject/Title:	Best4Business Update

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to formally circulate the update report provided to the informal Shared Services Joint Committee on 23 July 2021, and to update Members on the latest position with regard to implementation of the replacement HR and Finance system for the Councils and their partners. The report provides an update on progress since the last formal meeting of this committee in June 2021.

2.0 Decisions Requested

That Members:

2.1 Note and approve the contents of the report previously shared with the informal Shared Services Joint Committee on 23 July 2021 (at Appendix A to this report); and

2.2 Agree the update on delivery of the implementation plan for the remaining programme.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 This paper provides information to the Committee Members to enable them to review the plans for the implementation of the replacement Finance and HR system for both Councils.

4.0 Report Background

4.1 At the May 2016 meeting of this Committee, Members approved a programme of work to procure a new system to replace the existing Finance and HR system. Both Councils' Cabinet meetings approved a recommendation in July 2017 to award a contract to Agilisys for the implementation of the Unit4 ERP system.

4.2 In November 2019 (Cheshire West & Chester) and December 2019 (Cheshire East), each Council's Cabinet approved recommendations relating to the Best4Business programme. This Committee was provided with an update regarding the scope and phasing of the programme, the revised programme governance arrangements, the procurement of

external advisors, future arrangements for Member oversight of the programme and the scope of revised commercial arrangements with Agilisys.

4.3 Delegated authority was also given to senior officers to finalise negotiations and agree variations to the contract with Agilisys, and to update the Inter-Authority Agreement.

4.4 This Committee have received reports during 2021, on 19 February, 11 June and 23 July (the latter being held as an informal Committee).

4.5 This report seeks formal approval of the full report previously discussed at the informal Committee on 23 July, and provides an update to members of this Committee on progress in the implementation of these decisions, with a particular focus on progress with the programme plan.

5.0 Programme Update

Previous report to informal Committee

5.1 The report presented to the informal Shared Services Joint Committee on 23 July is attached at Appendix A to this report.

Programme Plan – HR and Payroll "Go Live"

5.2 The report at Appendix A contains a comprehensive programme plan update. Key programme delivery highlights in the period since the last informal Shared Services Joint Committee are as follows:

User Acceptance Testing

5.3 User acceptance testing (UAT) is the process of ensuring system functionality is operating as expected. User Acceptance Testing delivery timeline has been extended consciously by around a week, to allow dynamic reallocation of resources to other priority areas of programme delivery. Target completion date of 1 October remains well within the agreed contingency window. Daily reporting takes place and demonstrates progress at a functional level (e.g. HR and Payroll, Finance, Interfaces, etc), at a process level (e.g. starters, expenses, payroll proposal, etc) and at an individual test level. Main focus is on identification and resolution of defects which allow any tests "blocked" by any such defects to be resolved.

Payroll Parallel Run

5.4 Payroll parallel run (PPR) is the process of ensuring calculation of payroll results is sufficiently accurate. At the time of reporting, Payroll Parallel Run delivery is behind schedule and is targeting a mid-October completion date. Activity is being managed closely on a day-by-day basis. Some payrolls (Pension Fund, Academies and Externals) have completed the first round of reconciliation and have moved on to a second month of transactional activity for testing, while others (Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Council-owned companies) are working towards completion of the reconciliation of the first month of payroll outputs. The reconciliation process is focussed on identifying and fixing the most significant differences between Oracle and Unit4 ERP in the first instance, maximising the new solution's ability to pay employees within agree accuracy tolerances.

Data Migration

5.5 Data migration testing is the process of ensuring the mechanisms for transferring live data from Oracle to Unit4 ERP are sufficiently accurate. In the attached report, it is noted that a full "dress rehearsal" data migration exercise was underway. This exercise has concluded very successfully, with high rates of accuracy being reported. A further test data migration run is being undertaken, allowing confirmation that required fixes arising from the full dress rehearsal have been applied to the process prior to the live data migration as part of go live.

Programme Plan

5.6 Key milestone dates in the period between now and go-live are:

Event	Date
Cut off for data changes to Oracle prior to go live	1 October 2021
User Acceptance Testing completion	1 October 2021
Payroll Parallel Run completion	13 October 2021
Decision to commence "cutover" from Oracle to Unit4 ERP	14 October 2021
Unit4 ERP system taken down for end users	14 October 2021
Unit4 ERP system made available to Programme to validate changes	24 October 2021
Completion of Council readiness review and confidence tests	26 October 2021
Decision to release Unit4 ERP to payroll team	26 October 2021
Wider release of solution to end users	1 November 2021

Training and Communications

5.7 Change champions have been identified to support multiple areas of the Councils, schools and partners. These individuals will begin their pre go-live training in mid September. This includes identification of change champions who will each support specific clusters of schools.

5.8 Online training courses for the majority of users will be available by late September, allowing self-service training to take place throughout October in readiness of the solution go live date. Virtual "classroom" training for staff whose roles involve continual use of Unit4 ERP will also take place in October.

5.9 The programme team are engaging with managers and staff across multiple areas of the Councils, schools and partners to ensure the step-by-step processes and deadlines for "cutover" from Oracle to Unit4 ERP are understood.

Next report

5.10 A full update report will be provided to the next meeting of the Shared Service Joint Committee.

6.0 Wards affected

6.1 The implications of the recommendations in this report are borough-wide for both Councils.

7.0 Policy implications

7.1 There are no policy implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The budget implications of the programme are as set out in the attached report as reported to the July informal Committee. The budget impact of the confirmed timeline outlined at paragraph 5.6 above is being kept under continual review, with both Councils ensuring sufficient funding is in place to deliver the remainder of the programme.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 The legal implications are as set out in the attached report as reported to the July informal Committee.

10.0 Risk management

10.1 The main risks to the delivery of the programme are as set out in the attached report as reported to the July informal Committee.

11.0 Access to Information

11.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writers:

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Background Documents:

Documents are available for inspection at:

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or:

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Cheshire East Council
Cheshire West and Chester Council

Shared Services Joint Committee

Date of Meeting:	23 July 2021
Report of:	Frank Jordan, Deputy Chief Executive, Cheshire East Council
	Mark Wynn, Chief Operating Officer, Cheshire West & Chester Council
Subject/Title:	Best4Business Update

12.0   Report Summary

12.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the latest position with regard to implementation of the replacement HR and Finance system for the Councils and their partners.   The report provides an update on progress since the meeting of this committee in June 2020.

12.2 The report provides an update to Members of the Committee on the following key areas:

- Update on remaining programme plan for delivery;
- Update on the financial position of the remaining programme; and
- Update on governance and oversight of the Programme.

13.0   Decisions Requested

That Members:

13.1 Agree the current indicative position on the implementation plan and timetable for the remaining programme;

13.2 Note the reported indicative financial position of the remaining programme; and

13.3 Agree ongoing activity in relation to Member oversight and governance.

14.0   Reasons for Recommendations

14.1 This paper provides information to the Committee Members to enable them to review the plans for the implementation of the replacement Finance and HR system for both Councils.

15.0 Report Background

15.1 At the May 2016 meeting of this Committee, Members approved a programme of work to procure a new system to replace the existing Finance and HR system. Both Councils' Cabinet meetings approved a recommendation in July 2017 to award a contract to Agilisys for the implementation of the Unit4 ERP system.

15.2 In November 2019 (Cheshire West & Chester) and December 2019 (Cheshire East), each Council's Cabinet approved recommendations relating to the Best4Business programme. This Committee was provided with an update regarding the scope and phasing of the programme, the revised programme governance arrangements, the procurement of external advisors, future arrangements for Member oversight of the programme and the scope of revised commercial arrangements with Agilisys.

15.3 Delegated authority was also given to senior officers to finalise negotiations and agree variations to the contract with Agilisys, and to update the Inter-Authority Agreement.

15.4 This Committee received a report on progress on 19 February 2021, was scheduled to receive a further report on 12 March 2021, prior to the cancellation of the scheduled meeting on that date, and more recently received a further progress report on 11 June 2021.

15.5 This report provides an update to members of this Committee on progress in the implementation of these decisions, with a particular focus on progress with the programme plan, the programme budget, and continuing arrangements for Member oversight of the programme.

16.0 Programme Update

Live Finance system

16.1 Since the last report to this Committee, the Programme Board have approved formal exit from the post go live "hypercare" phase, a period of activity where the live system was provided with a focussed set of support arrangements to ensure any significant issues arising from the implementation of the Finance elements of the system are resolved satisfactorily.

16.2 The Councils' newly established Governance & Support team continue to provide ongoing support and guidance to users of the new system, resolving routine problems, liaising with our software supplier, and providing training and guidance, while also contributing to the implementation of the remaining areas of functionality.

Programme Plan – HR and Payroll "Go Live"

16.3 Since the last report to this Committee, the programme team with our implementation partner Agilisys have continued to deliver the implementation of the remaining HR and Payroll elements of Unit4 ERP, currently still being delivered by our legacy Oracle system.

16.4 Since the last report to this Committee, the programme has focussed on three areas of system testing:

- User acceptance testing (UAT) – ensuring system functionality is operating as expected;
- Payroll parallel run (PPR) – ensuring calculation of payroll results is sufficiently accurate; and
- Data migration – ensuring the processes for transferring live data from Oracle to Unit4 ERP are sufficiently accurate.

16.5 The Councils' payroll requirements are complex, with a wide range of terms and conditions across staff employed by the Councils themselves, schools, academies and Council-owned companies, as well as members of the Cheshire Pension Fund also receiving pension payments via the Councils' payroll system. The testing team have sought to test a wide variety of processes, transactions and scenarios as part of the UAT process.

16.6 The complexity of this testing process has led to UAT completion rates being slower than forecast when planning for this phase of activity was undertaken. As a result, the programme team have begun a review of the testing approach, to determine the extent to which the time required to deliver UAT can be reduced safely, while ensuring all key processes are tested to an appropriate extent and in a risk-focussed manner. This exercise was undertaken in mid-July 2021, and a verbal update on this work will be provided to the meeting.

16.7 Several phases of data migration testing have been planned as part of the activities leading to the second go live date. The current round of data migration testing is a full "dress rehearsal" of the processes which will be undertaken as part of the "cutover" from Oracle to Unit4 ERP at the point of the second go live. At the time of reporting, this round of testing is around a week behind schedule. The causes of this delay are under investigation at present.

16.8 As previously reported to Members, the programme's priority with respect to the HR and Payroll element of the new system is to ensure the implementation is carried out safely and without exposing the Councils and our partners to unnecessary risk.

16.9 Taking this into account, the Programme Board, on the advice of our programme management advisers Ameo, have reviewed the timeline for the implementation of the HR and Payroll components of the Unit4 ERP solution, and are proposing that it should be further extended to ensure a safe implementation, although whilst further work is being undertaken, a final recommendation has not been made.

16.10 However, at this stage Ameo have indicated that an additional two months of programme activity should be allowed for. This based on their experience of undertaking the testing at organisations of similar size and complexity to the two Councils.

16.11 This provisional additional allowance of time can be potentially reduced once completion of the review of UAT, the outcome of the current data migration testing cycle, and the resolution of data migration delays all indicate that this can be done safely and with an acceptable level of risk to the planned go live.

16.12 The potential changes to the programme milestones are summarised in the table below:

	Milestone Activity	Outcomes	Target Completion	Progress Update
8	Build and unit test of remaining HR functionality and all payroll functionality	• Build and first level of testing of all defects and changes for the remaining HR and Payroll functionality	August 2020	• Complete
9	Integrated System Test remaining HR functionality and all payroll functionality	• An end to end test of the functionality to ensure it works and no unintended or cross-functional issues are present	November 2020	• Complete
10	Data Migration activity to support HR and Payroll testing	• Data is extracted from the existing Oracle system, transformed and loaded into the test Unit4 ERP system, reconciled to ensure quality, and prepared for testing activity or live cutover activity as required	Multiple rounds of testing to September 2021 (was March 2021)	• Ongoing
11	User Acceptance Test of the remaining HR functionality and all payroll functionality across both Councils	• Testing to ensure all required processes can be completed • Go live critical tests to be completed by August with further round of lower priority testing into September	September 2021 (was June 2021)	• Underway • Approach and scope being reviewed
12	Payroll Parallel Run for all payroll functionality across both Councils	• A Payroll Parallel Run is the process of comparing the results of the current Oracle payroll with the new Unit4 ERP payroll to ensure the new system is calculating payroll accurately	September 2021 (was August 2021)	• Underway with encouraging early results
13	Training and Business Change completed for remaining HR functionality and all payroll functionality	• Alongside technical development of the new system, new business process, training and stakeholder engagement activities will be delivered to ensure users are ready to work with the new system and will adopt any new ways of working	October 2021 (was August 2021)	• Preparation ongoing

	Milestone Activity	Outcomes	Target Completion	Progress Update
14	Go-Live for remaining HR functionality and all payroll functionality	• Final snapshot of data uploaded to the system and employees / system users migrated	November 2021 with first payroll run in November (was August 2021 for September payroll)	
15	"Hypercare"	• Hypercare is a period of heightened support from the programme team to ensure any go live issues are resolved at pace • The support team gradually take over the day to day support	December 2021 (was October 2021)	
16	Programme Closure	• A post implementation review following the second go-live is undertaken • All programme artefacts are documents and stored securely for future use and programme team are stood down	January 2022 (was October 2021)	

16.13 The dates indicated above have changed since the last report to this Committee, in accordance with the latest indicative programme plan. Members of this Committee will be kept informed as replanning activities conclude and a revised programme timeline is formally recommended by the Programme Board.

16.14 It is emphasised again that the remaining implementation of the payroll element of the solution is highly complex and requires the careful management of several key risks and challenges (outlined at section 11 below). The programme is mindful of assurances provided to members of this Committee previously that the implementation of payroll would prioritise safety over speed, and continues to monitor the target dates set out above to ensure they remain achievable while maintaining an acceptable exposure to risk. Any challenges arising which require change to the proposed timeline will be raised with Members as they are identified.

16.15 Another consideration for the proposed changes to the implementation timeline is the concerns previously reported regarding the timing of the implementation in relation to the schools community and the start of the academic year, which are now mitigated by the proposed revised go live date of November. The programme will continue to work with schools and other stakeholders to ensure impacts of the evolving implementation timeline are understood and risks mitigated.

16.16 The impact on the Best4Business programme budget of the revised timeline for delivery of the HR and Payroll element of the solution is noted at paragraphs 5.19 to 5.25 below.

Training and Business Change

16.17 A range of training and business change activities have been and continue to be undertaken, to ensure the Councils and our partners continue to prepare for the planned HR and Payroll go-live date for the new system.

	Subject	Activities
1	Training	• Early training for Change Champions to enable them to support early engagement activity and be more skilled before the actual go-live • Schools training window changed to accommodate their best availability at the start of the new academic year • Multiple delivery plans developed to support alternative potential go live dates • Training remains as virtual classroom sessions for heavyweight users and Change Champions, virtual conferences for line managers and schools and Council companies, and online training for all other staff
2	Communications	• Change Champion network refresh ongoing, with greater coverage for schools • Continued communication of Go Live 1 "hypercare" messages plus Go Live 2 requirements to ensure Oracle is up to date with personal details, work patterns and contract changes • Microsite continues to be maintained and refined
3	Cutover	• Multiple cutover plans developed to support alternative potential go live dates • Regardless of go-live date, initial cutover tasks have already commenced and plans are being actively managed
4	Schools	• Ongoing impact assessment of new HR and Payroll processes on schools to tailor engagement messages • Encouraging schools to update Oracle prior to go live to ensure less work at the point of transition • Ongoing engagement of schools management teams and accommodating their desired training delivery window to maximise take-up
5	Council Companies	• Ongoing impact assessment of new HR and Payroll processes on Council Companies to tailor engagement messages • Engagement and readiness sessions prior to launch • Investigation of impacts of hierarchy changes
6	Support	• Signed out of Go Live 1 "hypercare" • Transition of HR and Payroll resources into support team • Finalise proposals for permanent team structure or extension of temporary contracts
7	Business Processes	• Continue to update process design documents • Assessing operational impacts of new system on all business areas to help inform engagement messages and manage expectations

Subject	Activities
	• Handover processes to "business as usual"

16.18 Members will receive regular updates on ongoing training and business change activities as part of ongoing reporting to this Committee.

Programme Budget

16.19 While the remaining programme timeline remains under review, for budget monitoring purposes the Programme has assumed that the second go live will take place in November 2021. Revised forecast expenditure based on this proposed programme plan described at para 5.12 is as follows:

Programme Spend	Previously forecast 20/21 and 21/22 expenditure £m	Financial Year (actual) 20/21 £m	Financial Year (estimated forecast) 21/22 £m	Total forecast £m
Retained element for asset purchase	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.25
Estimated payments to software provider	2.59	2.44	0.37	2.81
Programme Management costs	2.79	2.34	0.61	2.95
Other (including training)	0.55	0.35	0.19	0.54
Less: chargeable to COVID	(0.20)	(0.06)	(0.14)	(0.20)
Less: costs charged outside programme	(0.27)	(0.27)	0	(0.27)
Total	**5.71**	**4.80**	**1.28**	**6.08**

16.20 When the proposed revisions to the programme timeline outlined at paragraph 5.12 are confirmed and approved by Programme Board, the estimated forecast costs for 2021/22 above will be updated and reported to Members.

16.21 As reported in June 2020, the spend on the programme up 31st March 2020 was £18.46m. With the additional £6.08m spend forecast for the previous and current financial year, the overall projected total spend for the programme is £24.54m, based on the proposed revised programme timeline at para 5.12.

16.22 Both Councils have made available funding sufficient to accommodate the remaining costs of the programme as outlined above. For Cheshire West & Chester, funds have been set aside in an earmarked reserve as part of the 2020-21 outturn report and approval will be sought as part of the regular quarterly reporting to draw this funding down. For Cheshire East, capital funding, which has already been approved to support Core ERP systems during 2021-22, has been identified and could be transferred to the main B4B programme, should this become necessary. Both Councils will continue to fund an equal share of remaining costs. Some elements of the cost of the remaining programme relate to COVID-19 challenges and will be charged to appropriate COVID contingency funds.

16.23 Any further changes to the programme timeline will inevitably result in additional costs being incurred. Should this arise, a further report will be brought to Members on the

affordability of the programme resulting from any proposed change to the remaining implementation timeline.

16.24 There is continuing ongoing dialogue as to the cause of previously reported delays to the programme plan reported in November 2020, and the associated costs between the Councils and the provider.

16.25 Additionally, some costs are being incurred within the Councils to support the delivery of this programme. Directors in each Council have agreed to absorb the costs of Council staff within their own budgets, subject to a cost sharing mechanism between the Councils as agreed by this Committee in November 2019. These will be reported to members as part of the regular financial reporting within the Councils.

17.0 Member oversight of the programme

17.1 Member oversight of the programme remains key to its success. The table below summarises key member engagement events which have taken place during 2021 and which are planned for the remainder of 2021:

Date	Meeting
Shared Services Joint Committee	
19 February 2021	Update report
12 March 2021	Update report
11 June 2021	Update report
23 July 2021	Update report
24 September 2021	Update report
Joint Scrutiny Working Group	
18 February 2021	Review Finance go-live
To be scheduled for September 2021	Update report
To be scheduled for November 2021	Review of HR and Payroll go-live
TBC	Post implementation review
Scrutiny Committees	
Cheshire West and Chester Scrutiny – 21 January 2021	Briefing note in lieu of Committee meeting
Cheshire East Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 8 April 2021	Verbal update
Cheshire West and Chester Scrutiny Committee – 7 June 2021	Feedback on published SSJC report
Later scrutiny reporting arrangements to be confirmed	

17.2 An update will continue to be provided to each meeting of the Shared Service Joint Committee.

18.0   Wards affected

18.1 The implications of the recommendations in this report are borough-wide for both Councils.

19.0   Policy implications

19.1 There are no policy implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

20.0   Financial Implications

20.1 The budget implications of the programme are noted at paragraph 5.19 to 5.25.

21.0   Legal Implications

21.1 Each Council entered into a contract with Agilisys for the ERP System. Cheshire East Council are responsible for managing the contract through the implementation phase for both Councils. The Councils entered into a Deed of Variation with Agilisys to reflect the reset of the programme. Under the Deed of Variation, work packages are agreed with Agilisys, setting out the services to be provided by them and the target price of the relevant resources, which are priced in accordance with the mechanism contained in the Deed of Variation provided that the Councils responsibilities and dependencies are met. The estimated forecast for future works orders has been revised in accordance with the revised proposed programme plan set out in this report, and the estimated costs of the remaining works orders are included in the budget update at paragraphs 5.19 to 5.25.

21.2 A comprehensive Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) was entered into by both Councils, at the time the original contracts were agreed with Agilisys. The IAA ensures that each Council's obligations to the programme are documented and ensures that Cheshire East Council are in a position to meet their contractual obligations on behalf of both Councils during the implementation phase. The IAA was updated when the Deed of Variation was entered into to reflect the reset of the programme, and will be updated to reflect the rephasing of the remaining programme plan set out in this report.

21.3 Following implementation, each Council's ongoing operational management of the system will be managed through the separate contracts with Agilisys.

21.4 Cheshire East entered into a contract with programme management advisors Ameo on behalf of both Councils. The costs of the agreement with Ameo are shared equally between the Councils through the IAA. The revised proposed programme plan has resulted in additional programme management costs being forecast. In line with the revised programme plan approved by Programme Board, the related milestones in the contract with Ameo have been revised to reflect the amended deliverables and timelines. The estimated costs of the remaining deliverables are included in the budget update at paragraphs 5.19 to 5.25.

21.5 Cheshire West & Chester entered into a contract for change management support with Augere Ltd on behalf of both the Councils. The costs of the agreement with Augere are shared equally between the Councils through the IAA. The contract with Augere has been reviewed in line with the revised programme plan, with additional forecast costs included in the budget update at paragraphs 5.19 to 5.25.

22.0   Risk management

22.1   The programme has a detailed risk register which is monitored regularly. The main risks to the delivery of the programme at the time of reporting, and subject to review following approval of a revised programme timeline, are:

Risk	Severity	Mitigation	Post mitigation severity
• Pace of UAT is currently not sufficient to ensure completion within target dates in the current plan.	Amber	• Review of UAT approach and scope to ensure coverage of key risks while reducing elapsed time.	Amber
• Resource and capacity challenges resulting in delays to delivery of UAT and PPR.	Amber	• Additional capacity being sought • Resource availability monitored daily.	Amber
• Support team capacity to continue to deal with service queries from the user base while preparing to support the second go live may be insufficient.	Red	• Monitor ongoing workloads. • Temporary additional resources secured to supplement support team during remainder of programme.	Amber
• Resources to support training and change activities (eg training content finalisation, cutover planning) is constrained by other programme demands (eg UAT, data migration).	Red	• Resource demand and key dates mapped out in programme plan. • Programme sponsors support prioritisation of change-related activities.	Amber
• Delays to programme timeline beyond December 2021 will result in additional unbudgeted costs being incurred in relation to ongoing support to the legacy Oracle solution.	Amber	• Proposed revisions to programme timeline focus on completion prior to the end of existing support arrangements. • Contingency options under development by ICT Shared Services.	Amber

23.0 Access to Information

23.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writers:

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Background Documents:

Documents are available for inspection at:

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