| | **Options Appraisal for the Future of the Acolaid system** |

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the available options for the future of the Acolaid system, which is used by Planning, Environmental Services, Private Housing and the Contact Centre. There is a need to consider the available options as IDOX (company that owns Acolaid) is no longer developing the system and will move to no longer supporting it once only a small number of councils are still using it.

1.2 This report seeks agreement to recommend to approve the upgrade of Acolaid to IDOX Cloud via a direct award using the following framework: Data and Application Solutions - CCS (crowncommercial.gov.uk).

2 Recommendations

2.1 Agree with the findings from the options appraisal set out in Appendix 1 to implement IDOX Cloud.

2.2 Approve that a project is initiated immediately to enable early engagement with the necessary programme and business change resources and staff engagement process.

3 Detail

3.1 Acolaid is an IT system used by many Brent council services and the company that owns it, IDOX, is no longer developing the system. It is an old system that is becoming unfit for purpose and it is likely that it will not be supported by IDOX in the future. It is therefore necessary to move council services that are currently on Acolaid to an alternative system.

3.2 The following council services currently use Acolaid:

- Planning Development Management
- Building control
- Land charges
- Planning enforcement
- Planning Policy
- Spatial Planning for Trees
- Environmental Monitoring
- Health and Safety

- Food Safety
- Environmental Health
- Noise and Nuisance
- Private Housing Services
- Customer Services

3.3 The council also already has IDOX Cloud (sometimes referred to as Tascomi), which is used by Licensing and Waste Enforcement Teams in Environmental Services.

The council also uses Civic Flare for ASB and Trading Standards at a cost of [not for publication - contains exempt information] a year and consideration should be given as to whether these service areas should also be moved to IDOX Cloud.

3.4 Current challenges with Acolaid include:

- The Planning Portal can time out when larger applications are uploaded
- The need in most areas for officers to re-type information manually
- The mobile solution for officers out in the field is poor
- The customer facing sections are poor and customers cannot easily log on and access all their information or documents
- Acolaid only has limited integration with other systems
- Acolaid has limited integration with forms
- As Acolaid is not being developed or improved, even simple configuration changes are hard to achieve and for most areas enhancements are not feasible
- Case management for some services is not user-friendly
- Reporting for some services is not very user-friendly

3.5 A new solution will therefore address the challenges with the current system. It should also increase officer productivity (mobile capability, reduced re-keying and better integration with other systems), improve the resident experience (better customer facing sections) and reduce the on premise IT costs and upgrade costs (cloud solutions).

3.6 To identify and assess options for the replacement of Acolaid, there was engagement with officers from the services that use the system, desk-based research was undertaken on alternative systems, conversations were entered into with suppliers and demos were seen. Information on the systems used by other councils was also considered.

4 **Options Considered**

4.1 The following 4 options were considered:

Option	Summary Details
1	Upgrade to IDOX Cloud (recommended option)
2	Review market and consider alternative systems
3	Build a system on Microsoft Dynamics
4	Stay on Current version (Do nothing)

Table 1 - Summary of options

4.2 The summary appraisal of each of the four options is set out in the following paragraphs and the pros and cons of each are shown in more detail in the options appraisal paper, which is attached to this report. All four options assume the same system for all the different service areas that use Acolaid. This is because it supports the Digital Strategy's aim to rationalise systems, and research shows that it is possible to have a system that covers all the areas.

4.3 See table 2 below for a high-level assessment of the options.

Option	1 Upgrade to IDOX Cloud	2 Review market and consider alternative systems	3 Build a system on Microsoft Dynamics	4 Do nothing
Definition	Move to IDOX's cloud based offering	Explore all available options in the market place	Build a system using Microsoft Dynamics that will cover the needs of all the different services	Maintain current system
Risk Assessment				
Observations	Likely to the least expensive in terms of total costs and most efficient alternative to Acolaid.	Total costs of alternative systems are likely to be higher than IDOX Cloud (some reviewing of the market has taken place to establish this) as there will be additional costs around extracting data from Acolaid and potentially paying for two	There is a high degree of risk in building such a large system that covers so many high profile service areas.	Very high risk to the Council of being on unsupported system.

| | | systems for a period of overlap. | | |

Table 2 - High-level assessment of options

4.4 Option 1 – upgrade to IDOX Cloud (recommended option)

4.5 The UK Government has a "cloud first" policy which has been in place since 2013. There is a move across the IT industry to transfer the risk and costs of having on premise data centres to external, specialist providers so that they manage the software and hardware, including backups, disaster recovery and cyber security arrangements on behalf of the Council. This is in line with the Digital Strategy.

4.6 Moving to IDOX Cloud would likely be the least expensive of all the options in terms of total costs, with the exception of the do nothing option. As the council already has IDOX Cloud for Licensing and Waste Enforcement Teams in Environmental Services, it would help with the rationalisation of systems across the council, which aligns with the wider aims of the Digital Programme and the Redefining Local Services Programme.

4.7 The main benefits of moving to IDOX Cloud:

- Cost saving - Disruptive and expensive upgrade cycles will not be required thereafter, reduce on premise IT costs (currently needs upgrading every one to two years at cost of £8k)
- Increase officer productivity: mobile capability, reduced re-keying and better integration with other systems (e.g. save 3 to 4 hours a week for each of the eight Planning Enforcement Officers, save time for Building Control inspectors and allow them to increase revenue, the provision of the pre-application submission portal would save an estimated 129 working hours a year)
- Improve the resident experience: better customer facing sections
- Better data and analysis to inform decision: customisable dashboards

4.8 Remaining with IDOX means that there will be no double running costs (hard to avoid some overlap if we use an alternative supplier), and using an alternative supplier will still require us to pay IDOX to extract data from Acolaid.

4.9 As there are currently so many different teams and officers using Acolaid, moving to a new system will be a big change for the organisation. It would be advisable to invest in business change at the very beginning to help to ensure good user adoption and a smooth implementation. The business benefits will continue post implementation as users will be better able to use the system and more readily adopt future changes.

4.10 The timelines for an optimum implementation are approximately 12 months.

4.11 Option 2 – review the market and consider alternative options

[not for publication - contains exempt information]

4.12   Option 3 – build system on Microsoft Dynamics

[not for publication - contains exempt information]

4.13   **Option 4 – do nothing (retain current system)**

[not for publication - contains exempt information]

5.0   Financial Implications

[not for publication - contains exempt information]

6.0   Legal Implications

6.1   The DAS framework allows for a direct award where requirements are intrinsically linked to software already used be the business. The DAS Framework Manager and the Crown Commercial Service have confirmed that as the council already have Idox Cloud in other areas of the business, then this would count as an intrinsic link and a direct award is allowed.

7.0   Equality Implications

7.1   This proposal will be subject to equality screening and confirmation that IDOX Cloud meets essential accessibility criteria.

8.0   Any Other Implications

8.1   Moving to IDOX Cloud will lead to efficiencies that will free up officer time. It is up to departments whether this time saved can be applied to other work, or whether savings can be realised.

9.0   Proposed Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

9.1   As part of the project, there will be a programme of business change events created which will be far reaching across the whole Council and all users of Acolaid will be engaged with.

[[not for publication - contains exempt information]

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