Strategy and Resources Committee
25 September 2025

PLANNING SOFTWARE PROCUREMENT

Head of Service:	Andrew McGuire, Head of IT
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Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	None

Summary

This report sets out the case for renewing the Council's planning software contract with Idox Software Ltd. The IDOX Uniform system currently in use supports a wide range of essential planning and regulatory functions.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

(1)   Approve the procurement of the Uniform software suite from IDOX Software Ltd for a further three years.

1   Reason for Recommendation

1.1   The existing contract expires on 30th October this year and marks the final year of a three-year agreement, including a two-year extension. As IDOX currently only offers new contracts with a minimum term of three years, this necessitates the procurement of a new three-year contract via a Framework Agreement.

1.2   It is very unlikely that systems and software will be switched off once we transition to the new unitary authority. These arrangements are expected to continue until new provisions are formally established, which can typically take several years. If the Council were to terminate the contract early without cause, Idox may adjust the charges, and the Council will be liable for any actual stranded costs incurred by the supplier as a result.

1.3 The IDOX Uniform system has supported essential planning and regulatory functions since its introduction in November 2000, and there is currently no operational or financial reason to consider switching to another solution. Evaluating and implementing a new system would be complex and time-consuming, particularly in light of the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation. Renewing the existing contract is therefore the most practical way to ensure uninterrupted service during this period of change.

1.4 The Local Government Reorganisation harmonisation is expected to take several years, during which time common services will be aligned across the new unitary authorities. Depending on the outcome, either two or three councils within the likely EastSurrey.gov structure will already be using a variety of IDOX software products. The proposed three-year contract extension provides a sensible window to plan and, if necessary, migrate to a new solution in a coordinated and cost-effective manner.

1.5 In accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders, and recognising that this procurement falls within the parameters of a Threshold 4 classification, the committee is formally requested to grant approval for the proposed expenditure as outlined in this report.

2 Background

2.1 The Uniform software suite provides comprehensive support for planning, building control, environmental health, housing services, licensing, and estate management. Planning modules include development control, appeals, monitoring, enforcement, tree preservation orders, listed buildings, and contaminated land. Building control covers contraventions and dangerous structures. Environmental health includes accident reports, commercial premises, infectious disease tracking, notices, and pest control. Licensing modules cover a range of regulated activities.

2.2 The system features comprehensive modules and most of these are in use by EEBC, specifically:

2.2.1 **Planning Services** - The planning modules support the Council's statutory responsibilities in managing land use and development. They cover the full lifecycle of planning applications, appeals, and enforcement actions. Features include monitoring compliance with planning conditions, managing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), overseeing listed buildings, and addressing contaminated land. These tools help ensure that development is well-regulated, transparent, and aligned with local policies.

2.2.2 **Building Control** - This area focuses on ensuring buildings meet safety and regulatory standards. The system helps manage contraventions of building regulations and respond to reports of dangerous structures. These capabilities are essential for maintaining public safety and ensuring that construction activities comply with legal requirements. For Epsom and Ewell this function is outsourced but the contracted company uses the EEBC IDOX platform.

2.2.3 **Environmental Health** - These modules enable the Council to monitor and respond to public health concerns. They include tools for logging accident reports, inspecting commercial premises, tracking infectious diseases, issuing statutory notices, and managing pest control services. These functions support proactive health protection and regulatory enforcement.

2.2.4 **Licencing** - These modules streamline the management of licences for activities such as alcohol sales, entertainment, and taxi operations.

2.2.5 **Housing** – Whilst our principal product for Housing services is Abritas, EEBC also uses part of the Idox Housing module for HMO licensing and Residential Premises (specifically for issues with properties that are reported to us).

2.3 In addition to its core planning and regulatory functions, the UNIFORM system also serves as the repository for the Council's Corporate Address Gazetteer, ensuring consistent and accurate address data across services. Complementary systems currently in use include TLC, which supports the Land Charges function, and the Document Management System (DMS), which is utilised by all departments operating within the UNIFORM environment to manage and retrieve planning-related documentation efficiently.

2.4 The scope of the IDOX contract further extends to include Public Access, the Council's online portal that enables members of the public to view and interact with the Planning Register. This facility plays a vital role in promoting transparency and accessibility, allowing residents and stakeholders to track applications, decisions, and associated documents in real time.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 The renewal of the Idox contract is operationally neutral in its impact on users and residents. The system has been in place since 2000 and continues to support statutory functions without bias or limitation in its application.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 None for the purposes of this report

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None for the purposes of this report

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None for the purposes of this report

3.5 Other

3.5.1 As detailed in the recommendations this renewal is taking place in a time of considerable uncertainty in Surrey as a whole and how the services will be delivered in the future. However, this renewal as stated ensures a continuity of services to the residents while the transition to new operational models takes place.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The contract spans three years (31 Oct 2025 – 30 Oct 2028) with the following annual costs:

Year	Uniform & EDRMS	Digital Services	Upgrade Service	Total
1	£63,068.78	£6,438.60	£18,150.00	£87,657.38
2	£66,222.22	£6,760.53	£19,057.50	£92,040.25
3	£69,533.33	£7,098.56	£20,010.38	£96,642.27

4.2 The total cost of the three-year extension will be £276,339.90

4.3 The Upgrade Service ensures the Uniform system stays up to date with the latest features, security patches, and regulatory changes. It helps maintain system stability and supports integration with other platforms like the Document Management System and Public Access portal.

4.4 The Digital Services part of the Idox contract includes tools like the Public Access portal, which allows residents view planning applications online. It also supports integration with the Council's document system, helping departments manage planning records efficiently.

4.5 **Section 151 Officer's comments**: There is a base budget to cover this yearly cost for at least next 3 years, ensure continued service and value for money within the current context of LGR.

5   Legal Implications

5.1   **Legal Officer's comments**: None arising from the content of this report.

6   Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1   **Council's Key Priorities**: The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council - Improve access to services through technology

- Smart & Connected – Increase digital connectivity for all

6.2   **Service Plans**: The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3   **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations**: None for the purposes of this report.

6.4   **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications**: None for the purposes of this report.

6.5   **Partnerships**: None for the purposes of this report.

6.6   **Local Government Reorganisation Implications**: As detailed in the body of this report.

7   Background papers

7.1   None for the purposes of this report.