


Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Corporate Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	28th January 2025	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Library Management System	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
 Letter to Axiell FINAL 7.11.2024 DS :		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 On the 3rd of June 2024 a new library management IT system was implemented across our Libraries in B&NES. This includes the 3 libraries run by B&NES in Bath, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton along with 8 community run libraries. Unfortunately, the new system experienced performance problems, with the system running very slowly and crashing. Alongside performance problems there were some unexpected functionality limitations. The performance problems continued for several months and have had a negative impact on the experience for customers, staff and volunteers.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to approval Proposal 1

2.1 Recommended Proposal 1 – Continue working with LibrariesWest Consortium and the LibrariesWest Board to improve the Library Management System.

Pros	Cons
Retain access to consortium benefits such as significant buying power	Reliant on LibrariesWest Board to liaise with Axiell supplier
Customers have access to 2.3million library stock items	Occasional delays to improvements as all members need to agree next steps
Reduced overheads for stock	
Digital Library access	

2.2 Proposal 2 – Provide notice on LibrariesWest Consortium for B&NES to withdraw.

Pros	Cons
Fully in control of our own Library stock	Loss of buying power of the consortium
Fully in control of our Library Management System	Loss of access to 2.2 million stock items <i>(164,000 are B&NES owned out of 2.3million)</i>
	Significantly increased costs for stock
	Significantly increased cost for IT systems
	Negative impact on customer experience with a much smaller library stock
	Digital library access would be removed including magazines
	Audiobooks access would be removed/reduced significantly

3 THE REPORT

3.1 Background

Libraries West

- Libraries West is a consortium of 7 local authority library services, created as a buying consortium to obtain more efficient and cost-effective contracts for shared buying such as book suppliers and the library management system.
 - The authorities are B&NES Council; Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council; Bristol City Council; Dorset Council; North Somerset Council; Somerset County Council; South Gloucestershire Council.
- Libraries West is managed by a small team, paid for by the consortium and embedded within Somerset County Council. Somerset CC provide procurement, legal and other services to Libraries West as required. Fees for the consortium are calculated on a % based on population of each authority.

Library Management System (LMS)

- The LMS is the computer system that contains and manages the full library catalogue and borrowers. It has a staff interface, and public interfaces via the website and apps.
- Having a shared LMS across Libraries West enables customers from any of the included authorities to access over 2 million items plus additional facilities (e.g. printing) at any Libraries West library, providing a high level of customer provision that would not be individually possible.
- B&NES also provides the LMS and book stock for 8 Community Run Libraries (CRLs), though the CRLs are independent organisations.


LMS Procurement

- Libraries West's contract for the previous LMS ended in June 2024 and the contract was put out to tender.
- The procurement process was managed by Somerset County Council as per the consortium agreement, closely guided by the Libraries West Board and the Joint User Group (representatives of each authority).
- Axiell won the contract after a robust tender appraisal process

Axiell – LMS Supplier

- Axiell are a well-established international supplier of library management systems. They provide systems to many UK local authorities including Wiltshire, Coventry and Northern Ireland.
- The contract with Axiell and the Spark LMS system is for 10 years.

3.2 Implementation Timeline

Date	Item	
30/04/2024 – 10/05/2024	Training of new LMS to all staff and volunteers	
22/05/2024	Old LMS turned off in preparation for new LMS Library services continued using manual processes. Website, apps, and payments offline	
30/05/2024 – 05/06/2024	B&NES libraries moved onto Spark live system	<i>Performance issues on all platforms until 10th August when improvements were made</i>
07/06/2024	Website and app moved on to Spark live system	
21/06/2024	Due date for Phase 1 completion and move to BAU – deadline missed on many functions due to performance issues	
26/06/2024	First public apology communication from Libraries West released via website	
10/08/2024	Axiell moves the Spark LMS systems onto new servers – performance improves and work on Phase 1 functions starts	
18/10/2024	Work started to complete all Phase 1 functions	
21/10/2024	Libraries West met with Axiell to review all implementation phases in full, including items delayed. The Board instructed them to obtain revised deadlines on all outstanding items.	
22/10/2024 – Onwards	Functionality improvements being implemented including: Customer Facing Website – Improvements to experience Customer Notifications – Emails for book reservations etc. Customer Payments – Payments were waived until 22 nd October when the issue was resolved. Access Levels for staff – Volunteers being given more access. Reporting – Management Information reports. Cataloguing – Work ongoing with Libraries West to improve	
7/11/2024	Letter sent to Axiell from Libraries West. Detailing requirements to apply service credits and make improve in several areas. This was signed by Dr Darren Smart who is the Chair of LibrariesWest Consortium.  Letter to Axiell FINAL 7.11.2024 DS :	

3.3 Axiell have acknowledged to all UK customers at a recent event in London that they have not delivered the right service this year, in 2024, and are putting many systems in place to prevent it happening again (e.g. notification system to engineers if system slows).

3.4 The Libraries West Board are continuing discussions with Axiell to ensure robust contract management and service credits.

3.5 As a result of the performance issues many aspects of the LMS that should have rolled out in the first six months have been delayed and are only now being planned and implemented.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 Due to the issues with the implementation of the Library Management System the amount of resources from our libraries team has been prioritised over the last six months to work on improving the situation.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 EIA is not applicable for this particular report which is related to Library Management System implementation issues.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 N/A

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 S151 – Andy Rothery reviewed a draft version of this report in December 2024

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Background papers	<i>N/A</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	