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Argyll & Bute Council

Argyll & Bute Council Internal Audit – Planning and Building Warrants

KPMG LLP

January 2008

This report contains 10 pages

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1 Internal Audit – Planning and Building Warrants Review

1.1 Background

1.1.1 As part of their commitment to eGovernment, Argyll & Bute Council have made their Planning system available online through the Public Access website. The site allows users to search for and view planning and building standards applications and related documentation. In addition users can monitor the progress of applications, submit comments related to those applications and access application and property details.

Argyll & Bute Council are reliant on IT systems for the operation of the website and the underlying IT infrastructure that supports the Planning and Building Warrants system.

The Council needs to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the data residing on these systems. The ongoing availability of the system is also crucial to the Council.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 The review of the Planning and Building Warrants system was performed with the intention of understanding the security, robustness and maintainability of the system solution and the associated business processes, risks and controls that underpin successful ongoing operations.

1.2.2 The focus was placed on the controls associated with the security of the Planning and Building Warrants system, the approach to the testing of the Comino/Uniform overnight batch interface and a review of the supporting documentation.

1.2.3 The specific objectives of this audit were divided into two main areas:

Technical systems and general IT controls work:
- high level review of the implemented technical architecture to provide assurance that systems are appropriately locked down.

- review of the completeness and adequacy of the testing approach used to validate the Comino/CAPS overnight batch interface prior to go live (the data interface represents the only bespoke unsupported aspect of the delivery).

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- review of the supportability and maintainability of the systems going forward, including a review of the adequacy of current systems documentation.

Business process, risk and controls work:

- review of current business process analysis documentation for completeness, accuracy and validity, ensuring they reflect current operations

- identification of any areas where workarounds have been developed that undermine standard usage of the implemented system

- define and document key areas of procedural risks and controls in place to mitigate the risks

- where appropriate the review will define gaps within business process or control and suggest potential areas for process standardisation and efficiency.

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1.3   Approach

1.3.1   The approach adopted to carry out the audit was to: -

- interview appropriate staff members
- document unlisted processes and identify process gaps
- complete specific audit tests

1.3.2   As part of ongoing knowledge transfer to the Council, Mhairi Weldon (Senior Audit Assistant) shadowed the KPMG audit team.

2   Executive Summary

2.1   The review of the Council Planning and Building Warrants systems used by Argyll & Bute Council indicated that the systems are appropriately controlled with some minor weaknesses.

From our high level review of the system's technical architecture we determined that appropriate steps have been taken to secure access to the system, although we did note some minor weaknesses. The system was configured by the supplier and there has been little involvement by the Council's IT Department in configuring the security of the system. Where the IT Department was required to change existing configuration of software and hardware then this was done with consideration to the overall impact on security. The IT Department has been running the Nmap (network mapper) application to perform limited vulnerability scanning of the internal network. This is a positive step by the IT Department to self-assess their own levels of security; although this is at an early stage the intention is to perform a greater degree of vulnerability scanning in future.

The design of the system's technical architecture is appropriate to achieve a secure level of access to the Planning and Building Warrants system. A demilitarised zone has been setup to separate the web servers from the rest of the Council's network. Firewall's have been configured to provide access to only those services needed for the functioning of the system.

One area of weakness was the lack of documentation around the configuration of systems. There was no documentation available for the configuration of the web server used for the Planning and Building Warrants system, without this it was not possible to determine what steps had been taken to security harden the configuration to prevent possible unauthorised access.

The two main findings from the review of the process maps were that the current maps provide adequate coverage of all processes within the Planning and Building Warrants process. From our inquiries with staff in the Oban and Ardrishaig area offices, and from walkthroughs we determined that the processes represent a fair representation of their actual operation. It was noted that in some processes that there was some deviation in responsibilities, with staff at a more senior level performing the process.

2.4   Below is a summary table indicating an assessment of the Council's Planning and Building Warrant systems against the specific objectives of the audit.

Planning & Building Warrants

Technical systems and general IT controls work

Specific objectives	Overall assessment
high level review of the implemented technical architecture to provide assurance that systems are appropriate locked down	✓✓✓✓
review of the completeness and adequacy of the testing approach used to validate the Comino/CAPS UNI-*form* overnight batch interface prior to go live (the data interface represents the only bespoke unsupported aspect of the delivery)	✓✓✓
review of the supportability and maintainability of the systems going forward, including a review of the adequacy of current systems documentation.	✓✓✓

Key:

✓✓✓✓✓	-	Arrangements accord with good practice and are operating satisfactorily.
✓✓✓✓	-	Arrangements accord with good practice, but certain minor matters noted as requiring improvement.
✓✓✓	-	Adequate arrangements in place, but certain matters noted as requiring improvement.
✓✓	-	Arrangements in place offer scope for substantial improvement.
✓	-	Concern is expressed about the adequacy of the scope of these arrangements.

Planning & Building Warrants

Business process risk and controls work

Specific objectives	Overall assessment
review and prioritisation of current business process analysis documentation	✓✓✓
definition of overall approach to business process, risk and controls review that is applicable	✓✓✓
review of prioritised business process analysis documentation for completeness, accuracy and validity, ensuring they reflect current operations	✓✓✓
identification of any areas where workarounds have been developed that undermine standard usage of the implemented system	✓✓✓
define and document key areas of procedural risks and controls in place to mitigate the risks	✓✓✓

Key:

✓✓✓✓✓	-	Arrangements accord with good practice and are operating satisfactorily.
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✓	-	Concern is expressed about the adequacy of the scope of these arrangements.

3   Management Letter Points

Action Plan Number	Paragraph	Grade	Weakness Identified	Management Response/ Agreed Action	Responsible Officer	Date of Implementation
1	3.1.1	Material	**Observation** There is a lack of documentation around the configuration performed on the web servers used by the Comino and UNI-*form* applications. **Risk** There is a risk that the web servers have not been configured in line with recommended supplier security practices. **Recommendation** We would recommend that documentation is obtained from Comino and CAPS (UNI-*form*) specifying how the servers are configured, particularly with regard to their security configuration.	This documentation was available to the Project from the onset and can be found within the DNAS2 Project folder within Public Folders. (Public Access : Hardware and Software Requirements, Architecture And Recommended Set-up) The Risk described is considered by the IT Service to be low. However current server configuration is to be reviewed against Industry Standards and best practice guidelines.	Katrina Duncan Alex McDougall	Complete End February 2008

Action Plan Number	Paragraph	Grade	Weakness Identified	Management Response/ Agreed Action	Responsible Officer	Date of Implementation
2	3.1.2	Material	**Observation** The testing of the overnight batch interface between UNI-form and Comino involved the use of a single address. **Risk** There is the risk that errors may exist in the batch interface that have not been identified during testing. **Recommendation** We would recommend that a larger sample size be used to provide greater assurance of the operation of the batch interface.	Test plans are being drawn up for the upgrade of all Planning systems including UNIform, Comino and Public Access. These are being developed as part of the 6 month secondment period of a second technician to the Planning Department. These test plans will incorporate the testing of a larger sample of data where needed	Dorothy Allan and Beth Connelly	UNIform – September Public Access – November Comino – January/ End February 2008