Confidential

Nursing & Midwifery Council

Meeting of the Finance and IT Committee

to be held at 15.00 on Thursday 24 January 2013
at 23 Portland Place, London W1B 1PZ

Grahame Owen	Paul Johnston
Chair	Secretary to the Committee

Agenda

Item

1	Chair's opening remarks	
2	Apologies for absence	
3	Declarations of Interest	
	To invite any member to declare an interest in the confidential business of today's meeting.	
4	Minutes of the previous Finance Review Group meeting	FITC/13/01
5	Matters arising	Verbal

For discussion

6	Finance and IT Committee – Terms of Reference	FITC/13/02
7	2013-14 Draft Budget and Business Planning	Verbal
8	ICT update	FITC/13/03
9	Annual Fee Review	Verbal

For information

10	Monthly Finance Report - December 2012 results	To follow with supplementary agenda

Meeting of the Finance Review Group

Held at 13:00 on 21 November 2012

at 23 Portland Place, London W1B 1PZ

Nursing &
Midwifery
Council

Minutes

Present:	Judith Ellis (JS)	Chair
	Lorna Jacobs (LJ)	NMC Council Member
	Grahame Owen (GO)	NMC Council Member
	Louise Scull (LS)	Independent Advisor

In Attendance:	Jackie Smith (JS)	Chief Executive
	Lindsey Mallors (LM)	Director Corporate Governance
	Mark Smith (MS)	Director Corporate Services
	Verity Somerfield (VS)	Asst. Director of Finance
	Maggie Wood (MW)	Asst .Director of Corporate Governance
	Paul Johnston (PJ)	Council Services Manager
	David Gordon (DG)	Council Services Officer

Welcome and Chair's opening remarks
The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.

Apologies & Declarations of Interest
No apologies were received.
There were no declarations of interest.

1   Minutes of the previous meeting and matters rising
1.1   The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 October 2012 were confirmed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

2   Financial strategy
2.1   Mark Smith presented the paper, which was to be considered by Council at its meeting on 14 December 2012. He advised Members that FRG had previously seen the strategy as it was being developed.

2.2   Members' attention was directed to paragraph 12 and members approved the 7 components discussed.

2.3   Members noted paragraph 22 - measures of success - were a mixture of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators, by which financial management of the NMC would be measured.

2.4   With regard to training, Members discussed the various training methods available such as staff providing the training or e-learning (e.g. HFMA's materials as guidance). The Chair emphasised the importance of providing financial training for all future Council Members.

2.5   With regard to paragraph 22.1, the absence of patients and the public from the list of stakeholders was raised as a concern.

2.6   Members noted that the strategy would be presented to Council on 14 December and approved the financial strategy to go forward to Council.

ACTION	Inclusion of members of the public to be added to list of stakeholders.
BY	Director of Corporate Services
WHEN	14 December 2012

3   **Annual fee review process**

3.1   Members thought it would be useful to find out what other regulators do in relation to frequency of direct debit payments and tiered payments.

3.2   It was noted that the FtP Action Group had also been looking at KPIs and Members agreed that it was important that the review of progress on FtP KPIs should dovetail into the annual review of fees. Members requested that reference to reviewing and agreeing the FtP KPIs was explicitly expressed in the timetable.

3.3   The issue of monthly direct debits payments (Paragraphs 16-25) was raised, and whether there was enough information in the report to make a decision straight away. Members recognised that whilst the matter of employer checks on monthly payments was burdensome, NHS Employers were offering help with support and that the results of the recent consultation did make it imperative that the issue was considered robustly.

3.4   Members noted that the first annual review would be in March 2013 and asked that the paper be presented to FRG before being submitted to Council.

ACTION	Research practices in other Regulators

		Include in timetable reference to reviewing and agreeing the Ftp KPIs. Present to FRG in advance of Council. Consideration is given to consulting with employers on the feasibility of monthly payments.
	BY	Director of Corporate Services
	WHEN	March FRG.

4   **NMC business planning and budgeting 2012-2016**

Business plans and budgets

4.1   It was acknowledged that the deadlines for the business plan and budget were tight but Members felt that there was enough time allowed within the overall timeframe for a full discussion.

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Budget assumptions

4.2   VS advised Members that the majority of budget assumptions in the paper were the same as those used in calculating the revised fee with the exception of inflation, which had been revised from 3.5% to 2.5%, based on latest information.

4.3   Members noted that a 2% staff pay rise had been included for planning purposes but that no decision had been reached on staff pay rises. After debate, it was agreed that 2.3% should be used for budgeting purposes.

	ACTION	To amend the pay assumption percentage.
	BY	Mark Smith
	WHEN	14 December 2012

4.4   Members noted that the funding likely to be required by the CHRE expected to be in the region of £0.8million, would now not be required in 2013-2014.

5   **Response to CHRE criticisms – update**

5.1   VS gave a verbal update and Members noted that progress was being made in all areas noted by the CHRE, and that Council felt more confident in the financial management of the NMC.

5.2   Members noted that the Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee would be on the Agenda, for approval, at Council meeting the next day.

6   **NMC contractor and temporary staff analysis Apr-Oct actuals**

FRG/11/12/19   In relation to Temps and Contractors a paper was tabled. VS updated Members on the latest position. FRG felt that receiving information in advance of meetings would enable a more detailed discussion to take place and it was agreed that the file would be sent in advance and be password protected.

ACTION	To present the report in advance of the meeting.
BY	Verity Somerfield
WHEN	24th January meeting.

6.2   Members noted the costs in relation to interim staff and, in particular, the position of the HR Director who as an interim, had been in post over 12 months. Members were informed that the contract had been extended due to two other members of staff leaving within the period.

Mark Smith advised Members that new procurement processes were being developed to reduce contractor daily rates and seek better efficiencies and value for money. Members noted that within FtP, the number of vacancies had been reduced to 20. Members also noted that the new Assistant HR Director would be looking at the temporary staff/contract situation.

There was concern expressed by Members as to whether interim staff could challenge the NMC on being considered permanent staff due to the length of time they had worked in their interim role and Members asked that this be investigated.

ACTION	Report back to FRG on whether a legal challenge could be mounted.
BY	Assistant Director HR
WHEN	February meeting –

7   Monthly financial monitoring – October results

7.1   VS presented the paper, which Members thought set out the results in a clear way. However, they were concerned to note the under spend on both FtP and IT and sought reassurance with the figures. VS advised that the Directors staff were confident at this stage that the figures presented were a reasonable representation.

7.2   Members noted that the £20M grant was not showing in the forecast at present as the accounting treatment was still under discussion.

| 7.3 | It was noted that the latest forecast projected the available free reserves at March 2013 would be £2.7 million, which was well below the £10 million minimum target. VS advised that the risk of whether the increase in fees would be subject to judicial review (JR) remained. Members noted that a JR would have to occur within 3 months of Council's decision to increase the fees. |

ACTION	Update Members on JR situation.
BY	Mark Smith
WHEN	24 January meeting

8   **Update on IT**

8.1   MS advised Members that the interim Head of IT was now in position and this would assist the project management in delivering on all programmes.

9   **Fitness to practise efficiencies**

9.1   Members thought that the FtP report covered the main areas but sought assurance that the efficiencies were on track. Members noted that the remit of the Corporate Efficiency Board was widening its focus to consider VFM across all areas of the business.

10   **Any other business**

10.1   Members discussed the frequency of FRG meetings and agreed to continue with Bi-Monthly meetings.

10.2   Members asked that 1.5 hours be allowed for meetings.

11   **Date of next meeting**

11.1   The date of the next meeting is 24 January 2013.

The meeting closed at 1.50 p.m.

Item 6
FITC/13/02
24 January 2013

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Finance and IT committee

Terms of Reference – Finance and IT committee

Action:	For discussion.
Issue:	At its meeting, Council asked for a number of amendments to be made to the Finance and IT committee's Terms of Reference, prior to the Committee's inaugural meeting in January 2013. This report outlines the changes made.
Core regulatory function:	Supporting functions.
Corporate objectives:	**Strategic objective 7:** We will develop effective policies, efficient services and governance processes that support our staff to fulfil their functions.
Decision required:	None. Committee is asked to note changes made.
Annexes:	The following annexes are attached to this paper: • Annexe 1: The terms of reference of the Finance and IT committee
Further information:	If you require clarification about any point in the paper or would like further information please contact the author or the director named below.

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Context:	1	Council considered a paper on "Committee Terms of Reference" (NMC/12/162) at its meeting on 22 November. Following discussions, Council agreed that a number of amendments be made to the Finance and IT committee terms of reference, namely to "amend the draft Terms of Reference to omit 1.10 (Appropriate responses to reports from the Audit Committee) and to include within the Terms of Reference monitoring of IT strategy and implementation, reserves position, and registration fees."
	2	These changes are reflected within the terms of reference annexed to this report.
	3	Council also requested that the NMC standing orders state that each committee of Council should meet no less than 4 times per year and that committee membership (excluding partner members) should not exceed 10.
	4	These changes are also reflected – for the sake of completeness – within the committee terms of reference.
Discussion:	5	**Recommendation: Committee is asked to note the amendments (as set out within the annexe) to its terms of reference.**
Public protection implications:	6	By ensuring that governance arrangements are clear and fit for purpose, Council will ensure that the NMC conducts business in a transparent and accountable way. This will help reinforce public protection and increase public confidence in the NMC's operations.
Resource implications:	7	No resources implications arising.
Equality and diversity implications:	8	By improving the clarity of decision making within the NMC, the organisation will support increased access to decision making processes and the rationale for policies for all sections of the general public.
Stakeholder engagement:	9	Increasing the clarity and transparency of governance arrangements will help support engagement with external bodies and the wider public.
Risk implications:	10	The adoption of the proposed terms of reference will help the avoidance of risk associated with unclear or unsuitable redundancy payments being made, and the issues connected with accountability that such issues raise.
Legal implications:	11	None.

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ANNEXE 1

Terms of Reference

Finance & IT Committee

The Finance and IT Committee, which is a committee of the Council established under the powers in Article 3 (12), is responsible for advising the Council on the development and implementation of appropriate financial and information technology plans and policies, which enable the NMC to fulfil its statutory functions, maintain sound financial health and robust control over its information technology systems. The Committee shall meet at least four times a year.

1.   Remit

1.   The remit of the Finance & IT Committee is to advise Council on:

1.1   The Council's financial strategy.

1.2   The management of key financial risks to ensure the financial sustainability of the Council.

1.3   A proposed annual income and expenditure budget including levels of fees and charges.

1.4   The existence of sufficient detailed analysis of financial options, sensitivities and risks in relation to the financial strategy and plans.

1.5   The adequacy of funding of the corporate plan through the financial strategy to ensure Council meets its regulatory core business.

1.6   Actual income and expenditure throughout the year and projected outturn compared with the annual budget and financial strategy.

1.7   Developmental expenditure and specific areas that may be considered high risk that may or will result in significant additional future financial commitments, including:

1.7.1 tax positions

1.7.2 pensions strategy/options.

1.7.3 reserves position

1.8   Various financial policies and the effectiveness of these.

1.9   Business cases for expenditure in excess of £1 million.

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ANNEXE 1

1.10 The Council's IT strategy including monitoring and implementation.

1.11 Plans and proposals in respect to the development and improvement of IT systems.

2. The Committee may request such external legal, accountancy, technical or other professional advice as it thinks fit for the proper discharge of its functions

3. The Committee will report formally to Council annually on its activities.

4. Recording of information

4.1 The Committee will meet at least quarterly and report promptly to Council on each of its meetings.

4.2 A member of the governance team shall act as secretary. Detailed papers provided to Committee members will be held by the Assistant Director of Governance and Planning and be available to any Council member.

4.3 A record of the meeting will be taken by the secretary. The secretary shall be entitled to be present during all parts of a meeting.

5. Membership

5.1 The Committee shall consist as a minimum of three Council members and at least one registrant and one lay member. The Committee may include partners with appropriate knowledge and experience appointed by the Council. One member should be a qualified accountant and one an independent member of the Audit Committee. The maximum number of members shall be 10.

5.2 The Committee may co-opt members who shall be entitled to attend and speak at meetings but not entitled to vote or count towards the quorum.

5.3 The Chair of Council shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote.

5.4 Quorum will be half the membership plus one.

5.5 Officer attendance will include the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and other directors as required.

6. Other

6.1 The Committee shall establish a process of performance review and, at least once a year, review its own performance, constitution and terms of reference to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness and recommend any changes it considers necessary to the Council for approval.

Item 8
FITC/13/03
24 January 2013

Finance and IT Committee

ICT update

Action: For information.

Issue: The purpose of this paper is to update members on progress on developing the NMC's IT systems. The original draft strategy was approved by Council which included stabilising the current IT systems and evolving solutions for the future.

Core regulatory function: Supporting functions.

Corporate objectives: The subject of this paper contributes to the following objectives:
Objective 1: We will safeguard the public's health and wellbeing by keeping an accessible, accurate register of all nurses and midwives who are required to demonstrate that they continue to be fit to practise.
Objective 7: We will develop effective policies, efficient services and governance processes that support our staff to fulfil all our functions.

Decision required: The Committee is asked to note this interim report on the delivery of the ICT strategy.

Annexes: Detailed descriptions of the rationale for the proposed actions necessary for the delivery of the first phase of the ICT strategy.

Further information: If you require clarification about any point in the paper or would like further information please contact the author or the director named below.

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Context:

1   Council approved a draft strategy in September 2012 and have asked for regular updates on progress.

2   The strategy comprised of three stages:

    2.1   Stabilisation: fix the existing systems and bring them up to date

    2.2   Evolve: design the systems needed for the future

    2.3   Transform: implement the new systems and ways of working.

3   Council approved plans to stabilise the existing systems with the expectation that the management would report on the specification for new systems between June and November 2013 (the exact timing will be dependent on when the business users will be ready to specify their needs, following the recruitment of management; introduction of new ways of working and the streamlining of business processes).

4   This is the first programme update on the progress of the IT developments to Council.

5   Further to this Committee's discussions, Council will be asked to note this paper at its meeting on 31 January.

Discussion:

6   Following approval of the ICT strategy in September, work has commenced to design, develop and deliver the separate projects and other elements in line with the agreed strategy to ensure that they meet both the current and future requirements of the NMC. This paper addresses the work that has now been completed and the future work planned for each of these areas. Further detail on the proposed actions are included in the Annexe.

7   The approach described in the recently approved ICT strategy includes three key stages of stabilisation, evolution and transformation. Whilst it is accepted that these are all essential, it is important to recognise that some activities from each of these stages will need to be carried out concurrently rather than the stages being completed in a consecutive step-wise fashion.

8   This approach will enable the more rapid introductions of solutions that will be developed over time rather than adopting a "big bang" approach of replacing entire systems with the associated greater risk. Much of the work to date has concentrated on "stabilisation" activities however, where possible the output of such work will be reused to form the basis of the evolve phase of the strategy.

Discussion: 9 In the following table, the "Current Position" column details the issues included in the original strategy paper (shown in italics) together with further information that has been added subsequently. The other columns detail: the actions taken to date, the identified next steps; start date & timescales and the estimated level of expenditure in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

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Key area to be addressed	Current Position	Actions Taken	Next Steps	Start Date	Costs 2012 - 13	Costs 2013 - 14
10 Registration system -	*The Wiser system is technically obsolete. The underlying code is no longer supported and the workflow engine was never released into production and has never been supported. This element is responsible for the processing of incoming documents and the management of automated processes such as handling payments* The proposal was to rewrite WISER in modern coding language whilst retaining the current functionality and replacing the workflow engine. The system remains end of life however; further research has shown that the current coding system will be supported by Microsoft under Windows 7 until	Issues of stability have been resolved by the migration of the database on to a modern database platform – **Completed** Work commissioned to determine whether current application can be supported under Windows 7 - **Completed** Work commissioned to review benefits & costs of code rewrite and replacement of current workflow Business Process Management System (BPMS) – **Completed**	A project will be initiated to determine business requirements, select & procure alternative software This work will then document & migrate current processes into the new BPMS - estimated effort required 1200 days, estimated project time 9 months	Feb '13	£50,000 (resource costs) £10,000 (WISER Windows 7 work)	£700,000 (resource costs) £125,000 (software costs)

	2015. The immediate requirement to carry out the code rewrite is therefore reduced. The bigger issue is that posed by the unsupported but stable workflow or business process management system (CRMC). The replacement of this component of the registration system should therefore be regarded as the higher priority					
11 CMS / WISER integration	*Keeping the two systems 'in sync' is a labour-intensive process, which is prone to error. Migrating the underlying databases to a common open platform with common reporting tools will make it much easier to keep the systems 'in check' and reduce the risk of error considerably.*	Work has been carried out to investigate the options for integrating these two key operational systems and determine the most appropriate approach to the required for the underlying information and system architecture – **Initial report completed** This will involve the use of an existing CRM database and the modification of the data sources within WISER and CMS to ensure: • data is accurate and consistent • data is not duplicated across systems	Upgrade the current CRM system to the latest version – estimated time 3 months Analyse and design changes required to the WISER & CMS applications - estimated time 6 months	Mar '13 Apr '13	£75,000	£60,000

		- data is accessible, enabling a central view of data from multiple source systems across the enterprise - duplication of effort to keep systems synchronised is eliminated - system interdependencies are minimised				
12 Management information	*Another labour-intensive process that is prone to error. By using common reporting tools to interrogate the common databases of CMS and Wiser, we should see an improvement in the speed and accuracy of information.*	A review of the options for the development of a Business Intelligence (BI) and Management Information platform (MI) was included in the work to investigate the integration of WISER & CMS – **Completed**	Select and procure appropriate software to deliver BI/MI platform – 3 months Analysis of data sources and development of data warehouse & reporting requirements – 2 months Selection & procurement of suitable presentation software for the delivery of reports to end users	Jan '13 Mar '13 May '13		£140,000 £80,000
13 Network infrastructure	*Many of the desktop and operating systems are either very near the end of their commercial life, i.e. they will soon be unsupported, or they have already exceeded it and*	In order to alleviate this problem a comprehensive audit and dependency review has been carried out – **Completed** The following elements will	Projects will be initiated to	Feb '13	£50,000	

	are already unsupported. The NMC effectively outsourced a "problem" in that the infrastructure was already nearing "end of life" at the time the outsourcing was put in place. Little investment has been made to rectify this situation in the subsequent two year period. Despite this, the infrastructure remains largely stable. Nevertheless, the age of many of the individual hardware and software components now precludes the use of more modern technologies and the indentified upgrades are essential in order to allow the organisation to introduce new ways of working	need to be replaced to provide a robust modern platform: • Telephone software – (current version of software now out of support and not compatible with Windows 7) • TRIM (Document management system) upgrade to version 7.1 • Desktop software - upgrade from XP to Windows 7 – includes the replacement of PC hardware as necessary • Office upgrade software from 2003 to 2010 • Exchange upgrade software from 2007 to 2010 Considerable effort is being devoted by the Interim CIO and ICT team to improving the relationships with the current outsource service providers to deliver the level of service required by the NMC. A series of meetings has been arranged and project deadlines agreed for the delivery of outstanding work	deliver these upgrades. These will be developed together with the accompanying business cases for approval by the Change Management Project Board. To be combined as desktop refresh project	Jan '13 – 6 months Mar '13 – 3 months May '13 – 4 months Jun '13 – 6 months	£50,000	£200,000 £250,000 £450,000 £400,000

14 Programme & Project resource capacity	In order to deliver the stabilisation and evolve phase of the strategy it will be necessary to increase the resource capacity for the following skill sets: • Programme management • Project management • PMO • Business analysis • System analysis • Testing	The capacity required has been identified and a resource plan created for the delivery of the ICT programme The costs for 2012/13 and 2013/14 are estimated at £221,970 and £979,690 respectively. The costs for the resources are included in the estimates for each of the individual projects – **Completed** Recruitment of the required staff is already in progress	Additional resources will be recruited on the basis of the phased requirements			
					£235k	**£2,405k**

15   As stated above, much of this work has been related to the stabilisation and modernisation of the current ICT infrastructure. However, it is expected that some of the outputs will help inform the "evolve" stage of the strategy and will assist in the design for the blue print for future investment in IT.

16   An important component and driver for this stage will be determining the long term vision for the organisation with a degree of certainty and detail. We will want to explore how we want to work in the future and design high quality/low cost processes that support the new ways of working, using technology as an enabler.

17   The current strategy will continue to be refined in line with the developing needs of the organisation and Corporate Services business plan. Key to this will be the development of a clear information and applications architecture. This document will provide the underlying description of the services provided by the future state of the ICT infrastructure. It will provide the basis to support evolution of all the NMC systems and enhance the ability to provide public protection. The need for such ICT architecture was described in the KPMG report (NMC Review of the ICT Strategy – 07 August 2012) and it is an essential element in describing both the approach and detailing the individual components that will constitute the new NMC ICT landscape.

18   In defining the architecture the aim will be to consider the applications and services to be delivered and will also explore opportunities for how they are delivered including: cloud technologies, shared services models and the potential further outsourcing of ICT functions.

19   As the ICT systems are stabilised and modernised, work will also be carried out to define and test new ways of working with a view to completing the design work in QIII 2013. By this point we should have reached the point of knowing what we want and be in a position to come back to Council with findings and to seek approval for the next stage of investment.

20   The expected cost of the Evolve stage was originally estimated at £400k over two years. Some further allowance may be needed to free up key resource from the business. It is also expected that some resource may be freed up from the current proposed expenditure by the implementation of cost effective solutions wherever possible.

21   In line with the original paper, costs have not been estimated in this

paper for the Transform stage.

Public protection implications: 22 Providing assurance around the security and accuracy of the register is a key element of providing protection to the public.

Resource implications: 23 Resources have been identified at a high level and approved at the Council meeting in September. The organisation has set aside a significant sum over three years from 2013/14 – 2015/16 for investment in IT, as part of the organisation's longer term financial plans.

24 The proposed costs given in the original paper for 2012/13 and 2013/14 have been reviewed. These have been re-phased and are now estimated to be £235,000 and £2,405,000 respectively.

Equality and diversity implications: 25 We do not believe that this programme of work will have any implications for equality and diversity.

Stakeholder engagement: 26 Staff from the key business areas (Registration & ICT) have been engaged in the discussions regarding the approach to WISER and the issues have also been discussed at the Change Management Programme Board.

27 Staff have been made aware of the Council's desire to raise the profile of IT in the organisation and their approval of additional investment.

Risk implications: 28 The risks and mitigating actions highlighted in the original strategy paper were:

28.1 Delays in getting the approval needed - Decision brought forward to September Council – *Completed.*

28.2 Delays in securing a replacement Associate Director of IT - An interim is being sought. *Position filled from 13/11/2012*

28.3 Lack of effective project management - Additional resource has been allowed for in the proposal. The Change Management Programme Board will have oversight of this work. – *Additional programme & project resources have been identified and all project business cases are being submitted to Programme Board for approval*

28.4 Lack of internal resource required for the Evolve stage.

29 The following additional risks have been identified:

    29.1 There is a risk of slippage due to the need to first upgrade dependent systems before being able to move forward with the main system developments.

    29.2 The selection and procurement of suitable software / applications may delay the delivery of elements of the strategy.

    29.3 Difficulties in attracting the calibre of resources required to deliver the work will result in delays in implementing the strategy.

Legal implications: 30 None as yet identified.

Annexe 1

1   The provision of a core modern, secure and stable platform on which all the NMC's ICT services can be built is the first priority.

2   The current desktop infrastructure is based around the Windows XP operating system, which whilst still viable, offers little in the way of future development and is now hindering the future development of the NMC ICT systems as newer versions of software are not compatible with the current desktop. This prevents the adoption of newer ways of working.

3   The move to Windows 7 is therefore a key initial step in the stabilisation and subsequent transformation processes in moving towards the future strategy. However, there are a number of dependencies resulting from aging technologies that need to be resolved in order to allow this first stage of the new strategy to be implemented.

4   For example, the current telephone call centre software used by Registration and the WISER system are not compatible with Windows 7. Work is therefore in progress to resolve the latter of these two issues and the upgrade to the call centre telephone software is currently being scoped out as a distinct but related project to the upgrade of the base operating system.

5   In is anticipated that the work required upgrading the dependent software and the subsequent roll out of Windows 7 across the organisation, some of which can be carried out concurrently, will take 6 – 9 months. This is in line with the current plans.

6   A second major theme of work is around the key WISER registration system. It is recognised that the current WISER system which has been in place for the last decade is rapidly approaching end of life. Nevertheless, the system continues to perform a vital function for the organisation but its continued use does present a significant risk for the NMC.

7   In common with many systems of its age, WISER actually consists of a number of separate but closely linked modules that provide the range of functionality needed.

8   Three major issues have been identified with the application which the current strategy is due to address:

    8.1   The stability and security of the current application due to the old versions of the underlying software code used.

    8.2   The lack of integration with the Case Management System (CMS) and the issue this creates for data integrity across the NMC and

    8.3   The inability to generate accurate, consistent and , timely key management information from either system

9   The WISER software itself consists of two key components:

    9.1   The database and user interface and

9.2   A workflow system which is used to automate and manage certain business processes within the system (CRMC) - In many respects it is this latter element which presents the key risk for the NMC.

10   The workflow system is primarily used by the registration system WISER to process incoming scanned documents and store them in a repository and provide workflow services. Although to date the application has remained remarkably stable, should a major failure occur the NMC would not be able to undertake core functions such as take payments, process new entrants onto the Register, or deal with the large number of documents arriving at the NMC each day for the registration system.

11   All of the WISER software is written using Visual Basic 6. Visual Basic 6 is supported on both Windows 7 and Windows 8, for the lifetime of the Operating System.

12   What this means in practice is that Microsoft have committed to ensuring that VB6 applications will work on Windows 7 until Microsoft withdraw Windows 7 support, currently this will be in 2015. At that point VB6 deployments on Windows 8 will still be supported for some time to come.

13   The previously stated position regarding the security risk posed by retaining this old code is therefore not as great as perhaps originally perceived. Furthermore, the rewrite of the code would have to be on a strict like-for like basis to facilitate the testing of the new code and there would be no opportunity for improving any of the underlying business processes as a result of this work.

14   There remains however, the issue of finding experienced VB6 developers – most developers have moved onto newer platforms and there is the secondary issue that it takes a longer time than perhaps expected to develop using VB6 when compared to newer languages. The impact of this can be mitigated by restricting changes to the current system by minimising any further changes to the application.

15   As part of the current strategy, a new registration system is planned to be in place two years from now and therefore redevelopment of the existing system will provide little tangible benefit unless substantial parts of it can be reused in the new redesign. Moreover, this approach does not address the risk of the workflow system becoming unexpectedly inoperable.

16   If the development of a new system takes significantly to longer to develop than currently planned – for example five years – then a decision to move the existing system to a new platform by porting the VB6 code becomes more relevant.

17   The current perception that a wholesale rewrite of the WISER code from VB6 to .NET on a like for like basis will provide a greater level of security is therefore not really appropriate and does little to either mitigate the potentially largest risk or move the organisation forward in the development of new functionality.

18   An alternative approach to the delivery of the desired end state and the reduction of the greatest risk is therefore proposed. Rather than rewriting the WISER software, this will include:

18.1 The selection and gradual implementation of a replacement of the current workflow system with an enterprise standard Business Process Management System (BPMS). As well as providing the basis of such functionality in terms of registration processes this software would be selected on the basis of becoming an enterprise-wide tool to ultimately deliver similar functionality within the CMS and to support business processes across other organisational systems e.g. finance & HR etc.

18.2 The selection and implementation of an intermediary database to include common information from WISER and the CMS which will both support the creation of management information and serve to improve the quality and integrity of data held within the two systems regarding registrants. It is proposed to use the Microsoft CRM database application to provide this function. There are number of advantages of selecting this particular technology, namely: It already exists within the NMC (albeit that it needs to be upgrade to the current version); it is designed in a more open format to enable it to be integrated with other technologies more easily; its widespread use will enable external recourses to support any future development to be procured more easily.

18.3 The selection and implementation of a business information management tool to enable data to be extracted from WISER and the CMS (and ultimately all the organisation's key systems) and facilitate the development of appropriate suites of management information reports

19 The immediate concerns regarding the stability of the WISER database have already been addressed as a result of the upgrade of the underlying database. Further work is now being specified with the aim of improving performance by reviewing the current configuration of the storage infrastructure. Similar work will also be carried out on the CMS.

20 It is recognised that this proposal represents a variation in approach to delivering the initial changes to the WISER application however, it is believed that it will deliver a more appropriate outcome and one that better fits with the longer term development of the overall NMC ICT strategy whilst minimising risk and making best use of resources.

Item 8
FITC/13/03
24 January 2013

**Nursing &
Midwifery
Council**

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